



letters from the dorm

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A different way to learning

Even though you might be taught to learn in a particular way at law school, there's nothing that says you can't apply your own way of thinking, if that's what suits you best



April Xiaoyi Xu, Harvard Law School

There are characters that you'll meet at the start and never see again. There are characters that become more important as time goes on. Plots thicken and, at the heart of it all, there are conflicts that need resolving. Learning about a law case is, as I learned this year, not boring - it's like watching a movie.

The first year of a law school like Harvard Law School is called 1L. As many first year law students come to learn, this year is about learning to practically use an X-ray to deconstruct everything about a person's life. Noah Feldman, a professor at Harvard, said in a talk that under such an X-ray nothing looks beautiful or interesting.

However, Gerald Frug, another professor at the school, said that the learning process is more like watching a movie, and I'd tend to agree. I'm a creative writer - I have a tendency to add flavour to my learning instead of analysing facts in a precise manner - so you can understand why I initially

became somewhat disillusioned at the start of my first year thanks to this "X-ray" approach to learning. I told my friends and family that law school was stifling my creativity.

Even though there was always something in every class that I found compelling and seemed to justify my reasons for choosing to go to Harvard, there seemed to be little time to think of my studies in any creative way - not when I had so much reading, legal research, and writing to do. I did not get to synthesise everything in a way that I found stimulating until it was nearly the exam period.

Law school is perhaps one of the most stressful academic environments to be in. As one professor remarked at my orientation, Harvard Law School students are "at the pinnacle" and "are winners". When my non-Harvard school friends visit me, they often remark on the stress levels they can almost feel as a tangible thing on campus.

Given how important the 1L exams are, it's not surprising that everyone's stress levels are at an all-time high. I felt really stressed in the week leading up to reading week, but I was able to get rid of this feeling by finally learning to

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April started thinking like a story-lover to learn better. Photo: provided by April Xiaoyi Xu

synthesise information from my studies like Frug suggests. I started applying what I do best to the case studies - I thought like a story-lover. I tried to understand the individuals and parties involved in the lawsuits as characters. What were their motivations? What did the players from different cases share in common? How did they differ? How does law come into play?

This might not seem like a huge thing to everyone, but it was to me. The deconstructive way of learning a case taught at law school is not for me. I realised that I could apply a different way of thinking to my studies to make them more fun and more appealing to me. Thanks to this, I was able to find the joy in law school that I was looking for.



Here's how new law will affect e-commerce operators

China's e-commerce law, which took effect on January 1 this year, could hinder the growth of small-scale e-commerce operators, especially "daigou" (代购) or freelance retailers, in the domestic market.

Among them are mainlanders who are studying abroad and seeking to earn some extra pocket money. They earn good money by shipping foreign goods - ranging from food and cosmetics to clothes and bags - to China to satisfy the country's surging demand for overseas products.

According to the new law, though, e-commerce operators with fewer resources are at a disadvantage. They should all hold business licences from both the exporting countries and China, and should pay taxes. Otherwise, they may face criminal prosecution.

Ding Ding, who is studying at the University of Heidelberg in Germany, uses e-platforms to export European antiques she collects from local fairs.

She is thinking about expanding her business by opening her own shop on Taobao. Because of the new e-commerce law, she said she hopes to obtain a business licence soon.

"Getting a licence is too complicated," said Ding, who is concerned about her business. "I'm also busy with my studies, so I'll keep

The new law aims to help clean up China's reputation as a major source of fake goods

an eye on law enforcement and Taobao's reactions, before I make my next move."

Unlike people who buy products overseas and sell them online, Cai Chenran operates in a different way. Cai, who is studying Japanese at Sun Yat-sen University, in Guangdong province, serves as an agent for an online cosmetics shop on Taobao selling coloured contact lenses bought by "daigou" from Japan. She puts advertisements on WeChat to attract buyers, including her friends, and passes on the orders to her boss, who will deliver the products to customers directly.

However, after the new law was introduced, their products were held up at customs where they can be heavily taxed.

Cai said: "Worse still, our online shop on Taobao has closed, so now we can only contact consumers via WeChat."



The new law aims to help clean up China's reputation as a major source of fake goods, and also tackles other important aspects of e-commerce, including false advertising, consumer protection, data protection and cybersecurity.

Liang Xinlu



Personal Dev

Letters from the dorm



My #10yearchallenge

Forget cringey photos from years long gone – here's how one Hongkonger used the popular Instagram challenge to examine her personal decade-long journey from shy to social



Tacye Hong, University of Cambridge

was one of the millions of people that liked the photo of the egg on Instagram. It was part of my continuing efforts to be cool – to keep on top of the current trends and memes online. This article is modelled on another recent internet phenomenon – the #10yearchallenge.

I graduated primary school in 2009, with very little fanfare. That's because swine flu had broken out at St. Paul's Convent School – the secondary school I was to attend after summer – and my graduation ceremony had been cancelled.

In 2009, I was incredibly shy and awkward. Without a graduation ceremony helping to bookend my life at primary school, and without a mobile phone to keep in touch with my classmates, I lost touch with many of my primary school friends that year. I tried my best, when I started secondary school at St. Paul's, to meet new people and be everyone's friend. It was a struggle – I found it hard to keep up with my

studies, and I was intimidated by those who could speak English fluently.

Fast-forward to 2019. I've just wrapped up my first semester as a graduate student at the University of Cambridge in Britain. There are around 40 students in the programme. The vibe feels less like that of first-year university, and more like it did back in primary and secondary school. While I might have been expected to know everyone's name back then, though, I have yet to learn all of my classmates' names. It could be knowing that we are competing with each other for funding, for research opportunities, and supervisors that stops us from becoming friends with one another. It could also be that with age comes the realisation you can't make friends with everyone. Even if you do, you aren't guaranteed their friendship for life.

I am surrounded by people who are passionate about their careers, and who are focused on their studies. They come from all walks of life and from universities from many

The person that I am now is way more confident than the person I was 10 years ago



Tacye has changed a lot between 2009 and 2019

parts of the world. I try not to be intimidated by them – there will always be someone who knows more than you about something. I recognise what imposter syndrome is, and I try (and sometimes fail) not to doubt my own accomplishments.

The person that I am now is way more confident than the person I was 10 years ago. I do, against my better knowledge, still get intimidated by my peers. I don't think this will ever entirely go away – I haven't changed that much. I can't wait to see what the next decade will bring, though. One thing's for sure, though, it will bring more grey hairs than I ever had in primary school. In fact, I found one just the other day ...

Mainland tech firms use apps to teach English



Modern China

Technology is playing a bigger role than ever in education on the mainland, so it's no big surprise that a lot of young people are using apps to learn English. Half of the leading paid-for apps in the Apple app store are meant to help people boost their language skills.

For example, *Mint Reading* promises to help users finish reading three English novels within 100 days. The app is popular because it involves daily, 10-minute reading segments. *English Lullishuo*, on the other hand, provides readers with quality material from *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, and other foreign media.

The app developers mainly use a community-based rewarding strategy, with students sharing their progress on social media such as WeChat every day. Those who complete all their assignments receive gifts, including English books.

Quite a few WeChat users have jumped on the bandwagon out of peer pressure.

Yu Ke, a second-year student at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, felt "left behind" by her roommates who shared their English-learning experiences on WeChat.

So she decided to take action. She said: "I felt so dispirited when everyone else was putting their links on WeChat."



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Some students, meanwhile, are just curious about the English-learning apps or take them up as a challenge.

Li Shuang, a Chinese student from Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan, first heard about *English Lullishuo* after reading an article on WeChat. Unlike Yu, Li considered the fact that the app would fully reimburse the fees if she completed all the courses with an overall score of 90 or more, before deciding to use it.

"It pushes you to work harder when you see others sharing their thoughts and notes online," she says.

"This enhances my productivity and confidence in English because I get 'likes' from my family and friends."

However, there are those who believe that this online industry is merely a "crazy fad".

Chen Ziyang, a second-year journalism student at Sun Yat-sen University, in Guangdong province, says the education apps are annoying. "Those posts spoil the fun of browsing others' lives on WeChat. They are fragmented and the performance-price ratio is low."

Other students say they use the apps without posting their progress online. Li Ling, an English PhD student from Sun Yat-sen University, said: "I think studying is my own business. You cannot improve your English by posting your learning experiences on WeChat."

Liang Xinlu