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Moderation Debriefing: So You Wanna go to Graduate School?

Various discussions and points of view were exposed during the moderation of *So You Wanna go to Graduate School*. This debriefing provides a summary of the main points that were covered during the discussion of this article.

- Reconciliation of attending school for knowledge as opposed to job preparation.
 - This was one of the main points that the paper brought out. The fact that as graduate students you must be engaged and very interested in your area of study. It would much more difficult to complete the program if this is not the case. But then we must reconcile this engagement with the fact that we are in most cases attending graduate school to further our careers as well. This creates a duality within our graduate education in that we are investing money and attending graduate school to further our careers, we need to find and focus on fields of study that are of interest to us. Thus the class came to the conclusion that the way to reconcile this is to make sure you are studying something you are interested that relates to the real world. This was also demonstrated in the cost potential of attending graduate school. Someone with a BA who has 2-5 years work experience and worked over the time will be ahead of students who go into graduate school. So we must be aware of this and be able to reconcile this sacrifice with the long term implications it could have on ourselves and our careers.
- Experience vs. job record
 - The article focuses a lot of time on how many people attend graduate school in order to teach. It also points out the flaws that graduate students are never actively taught how to teach, and instead their studies focus on research. This creates teachers that go into the field unprepared for their jobs.
- Mention was made of how the article strays from geography. Much of it had to do with the in and outs of general upper education, and seemingly could apply to any other graduate degree program.
- Transition from undergrad to graduate school was also mentioned to have been harder than anticipated.
- Target audience of the paper was PHD students
 - The paper was targeted at PHD students. This made parts of the second half of it not as relevant to our class. Topics in the second half included such things as financial aid, working with specific faculty, and in general how Hornbeck advises students to pick graduate

schools. Much of this knowledge could be overkill for MA programs, or not as applicable as the students would not have the same resources or forethought and knowledge into their specialties as post graduate students would.

- Differences between Hornbeck's personal statement and CSULB personal statement.
 - Hornbeck's personal statement states the personal statement is there to obtain certain types of graduate students. This was contrasted to CSULB's personal statement in which the purpose was to demonstrate your writing capability as well as find students who generally could match up with professors in the program and who seemed likely to be able to complete the program.
- Changing of focus and thesis topics
 - The class discussed how there seems to be a rush for professors to find out your areas of study and thesis topics. Mention was made how in the beginning of geog 596 we were asked our specific areas of study and many of us said things that were not quite true (in the rush to have anything to say) or have changed significantly. This was demonstrated as part of the overall graduate student experience and process.