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	<p>IN MY OPINION   TRUMAN CAPPS</p> <h1>Everyone can't 'B' winners</h1>				

Daytime TV is basically the epitome of sloth. A medium generally reserved for people who, for whatever reason, are sitting around watching TV in the middle of the day rather than working, it caters to their perceived laziness with a parade of advertisements shilling labor-saving products. Amid the ads for herbal supplements, miracle diets, online dating sites and ShamWow towels, it's clear we've started to shift our responsibilities off ourselves and onto other people and things in our environment.

No longer is it our own fault that we're fat -- it's because of a hormone deficiency that a pill can fix. The reason we can't find suitable partners isn't because we spend all of our time inside playing World of Warcraft, it's because we haven't been matched to a member of the opposite sex based on 29 dimensions that apparently determine happiness. The economy isn't a

mess because of our rampant speculation in the housing market, it's because people haven't been buying enough ShamWow towels.

This shift in responsibility has now become evident in higher education. A recent study from the University of California, Irvine reported that 1/3 of students surveyed expected a B simply for showing up to class on a regular basis. An increasing number of college professors say students will visit them during office hours attempting to haggle a higher grade on a paper, arguing that they tried very, very hard and the professor was unfair in giving them a C or a B- for what the student thought was a really strong effort.

Just in case you've forgotten, a B is traditionally defined as "above average." So what this means is that a significant percentage of America's future leaders and entrepreneurs think they're above average simply by virtue of the fact that they know how to show up to a specified location on time with some semblance of regularity.

How about that for an ego problem – I've been called pompous before, but I've never assumed that my professor will give me a good grade because I made his or her class that much more awesome by coming in every day and just being me. To be fair, though, we students aren't the only ones with this problem – President Bush showed up to work just about every day (when he wasn't on vacation) and still seemed to fancy himself as an above average leader.

I'm mystified by the commonly held notion that professors "give" us our grades. They give us our grades in the sense that they pull out a marker and write a letter on the papers we hand in or calculate a percentage at the end of the term, but they make these decisions based on material that we create and give to them.

Professors don't "give" us grades – they look at our work and evaluate it against their standard of quality, and the grade reflects how close we came to what they were looking for. Sure, it's tough to know exactly what a professor expects of you – thank God they print that sort of information on the syllabus. Effort does factor into the equation; it always takes effort to make something good. However, it's fully possible to expend a decent amount of effort and make something bad. The real trick, I suppose, is to make the effort in your classes to actually learn something and then incorporate that effort into your essay writing and test-taking endeavors. Just because you spend a few hours on something doesn't mean it's going to be any good – take this column, for instance.

I think this problem is rooted in our upbringing, where we were taught that everyone was a winner and, if we tried hard enough, we can do literally anything. As useful as these ideas may have been to our youthful psyches, they were perpetuated throughout our schooling and they evidently persist today in our world of grade inflation and deferred responsibility.

The simple fact is that we can't all be winners (as evidenced by the University of Washington's football team) and trying alone is not a one-shot formula for achieving your dreams. If it were, half of the adults in this country would be astronauts, and the other half would be princesses.

If you want to succeed, you do have to try, but you also have to learn and compromise. That means actively participating in your classes, not just showing up, and also learning to sacrifice some more of your leisure time to really go the extra mile on your term paper. It means eating right and exercising, not just taking a pill and hoping for the best. It means going out and meeting people instead of entering facts about yourself into a Web browser.

As far as ShamWow is concerned, though, you can just keep on doing what you're doing.  
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