This past fall semester, every first-year BCLC student was enrolled in a First Year Experience (FYE) course taught by their BCLC mentor and an instructor from the School of Business. Three of the lessons from that class particularly stuck with me.

One of the first things we did was create and practice "elevator pitches" to use at our networking forum. Trying to sell yourself in under 30 can be difficult. Where do you start? Or, more importantly, where do you stop? First, make your goal clear. What are you trying to get out of the conversation? Are you trying to land an internship or simply get to know the speaker's company and what it does? Once you've identified your purpose, tell them what you do! Try to make it memorable and unique. Do not just tell them your best qualities, show them you have put these qualities to use and demonstrate how your best qualities have contributed to your success.

And, in order to avoid standing there awkwardly at the end of the conversation, try to think of an engaging question to end with. This part is a little harder because it's going to change every time depending upon to whom you are talking. The best thing to do is be prepared and research in advance, if possible.

After our 4 years at school, we expect to land a job, hopefully in the field that we spent the last 4 years studying. However, most of us are 18 or 19 when we pick that field, so how do we decide what to study? This decision could impact what we do for the rest of our lives. Well, the MBTI personality test we took in the FYE class will help make that decision much easier. By answering a series of questions,
You then get your own personalized results describing what type of person you are. This fosters greater self-awareness and self-acceptance and can be put to use in many aspects of one’s life. From promoting your strengths in an interview to avoiding and resolving conflict in everyday life, the MBTI will make you aware of your strengths and weaknesses.

Who so much went into dining etiquette for a professional business dinner? I certainly did not, until my FYE class on it. Imagine sitting down to eat and seeing 3 forks on one side, 3 knives, a spoon, and another fork on the other. Next thing you know the salad comes out and what fork do you use? Thankfully, there are some tricks. Start with the basics: remember to put your napkin on your lap! And although this is a hard one for millennials, make sure your belongings (including smartphones!) are off the table. After these steps, you can take a breath; that is, until the first course arrives. Most likely there will be multiple courses and, if that is the case, make sure you are never the first one to begin eating. You must wait until everyone has their plates and the host should take the first bite.

Now, back to the utensils. If you can remember the “outside-in” rule, you will be set for each course. Utensils are placed in the order of use; that is, from the outside in. In North America, there are two different styles of eating: American and Continental. Both are acceptable; follow the style you are most comfortable with. However, to avoid confusion, I plan to learn one and stick with it.

It can take time to get accustomed to this new style of eating, so I would recommend doing some research beforehand or even making the background on your phone a picture of the table set.

Once you have finished your course, position your silverware to tell the server you are finished. You want to make sure you fold your used napkin and place it to the left of your place setting. You were probably nervous enough for this dinner, and you certainly do not need dining etiquette to add to your nerves, so prepare!

These are just three examples of topics we examined in our FYE course this past fall. I am already benefiting from this experience and looking forward to what Spring semester may bring.

- Riley Raffone