

Here's the story:

Tom Lehrer recently released the copyrights to all of the songs that he ever wrote. Among them was a song I had not been aware of (since it was never published), entitled "Don't Major in Physics." As a retired UCSC physics faculty member, I thought there might be others who would be interested in it, so I copied Tom's lyrics and made a score, which I sent to the Chair of our Physics department.

I never received a response. Perhaps it was too irreverent, or too irrelevant, or too misogynistic or perhaps all three, although I had invited anyone to contribute a verse with lyrics that might express an alternate opinion.

Then about a week or so later I was surprised to receive an email from Sue Broadston. She was my first graduate student at UCSC. I had not heard from her in years. Shortly after finishing at UCSC she was hired by Cabrillo College, and has been teaching physics there ever since. So I wrote back to her, and included Tom's "Don't Major in Physics." Then amazingly, she wrote back, with the lyrics of a verse, which she called "Go for it! Major in Physics". It is printed below, followed by Tom's original song.

Go for it! Major in Physics

Words by
Sue Broadston

Music by
Kurt Weill

Oh, there once was a lis-some young co-ed, Who loved learn-ing phys-ics and math.

9 But they said "Do not trou-ble your head, For it's sure-ly too rough of a path."

17 But hap-pi-ly she did ig-nore them, and went where cur-i-os-i-ty led.

25

Ab6 Eb Bb7 Eb

- There she found that the real and the best men Were charmed by the brains in her head.

33

Chorus: Ebmaj7 Ebm6 Eb Ebm6 Eb

- So, now: Go for it! Major in physics, There's no better course you can find.

41

Bbdim Bb7 Eb

And learn of this world that we live in, As you cherish your man and his mind.

Sue Broadston's lyrics, extracted from the above score:

Verse: Oh, there once was a lissome young co-ed,
 Who loved learning physics and math.
 But they said "Do not trouble your head,
 For it's surely too rough of a path."
 But happily she did ignore them,
 And went where curiosity led.
 There she found that the real and the best men
 Were charmed by the brains in her head.

Chorus: **So, now: Go for it! Major in physics,
 There's no better course you can find.
 And learn of this world that we live in,
 As you cherish your man with his mind.**

Note:

If anyone would like to contribute an additional verse (or two), along the lines of the above, please send such to me. Since Tom Lehrer's original song consists of three verses, it would enhance "Go for It! Major in Physics" to have three verses here also. Tom Lehrer's lyrics follow on the next page.

Don't Major in Physics

words by Tom Lehrer

music: "The Trouble with Women" by Kurt Weill
(from One Touch of Venus)

1st student: Oh, I once loved a sweet physics student,
The loveliest girl one could find,
But I tried to get close and I cudent,
For she said that she wasn't "that kind."

More often a king weds a commoner
Than a physicist makes a housewife,
For they only are versed in phenomemer
That have nothing to do with real life.

Chorus: **So, don't ever major in Physics,
Try History, English or Gov,
For you may learn a lot about science,
But you won't learn a thing about love.**

2nd student: Oh, I too loved a young Physics major,
She was pretty and healthy and pure.
But I wouldn't take one now on a wager,
For they all are like her I am sure.

She didn't like couches or hammocks
Or walks in the moonlight for two.
All she thought of was thermodynammocks,
So what, tell me what, could I do?

(Chorus)

3rd student: Now I have the opposite status:
I like physics and my girl does not.
I tried showing her my apparatus,
But a blank smile was all that I got.

She asked me why I was in physics,
And advised me to transfer to Ec,
And whenever I tried to talk physics,
All she wanted to do was to neck! (Ugh!)

(Chorus)

A final note: A copy of this three-page pdf ([go_for_it.pdf](#)) is available at <https://scott.physics.ucsc.edu/songs/physics/>, along with an mp3 sound file ([go_for_it.mp3](#), made from a MIDI file), that plays the tune.