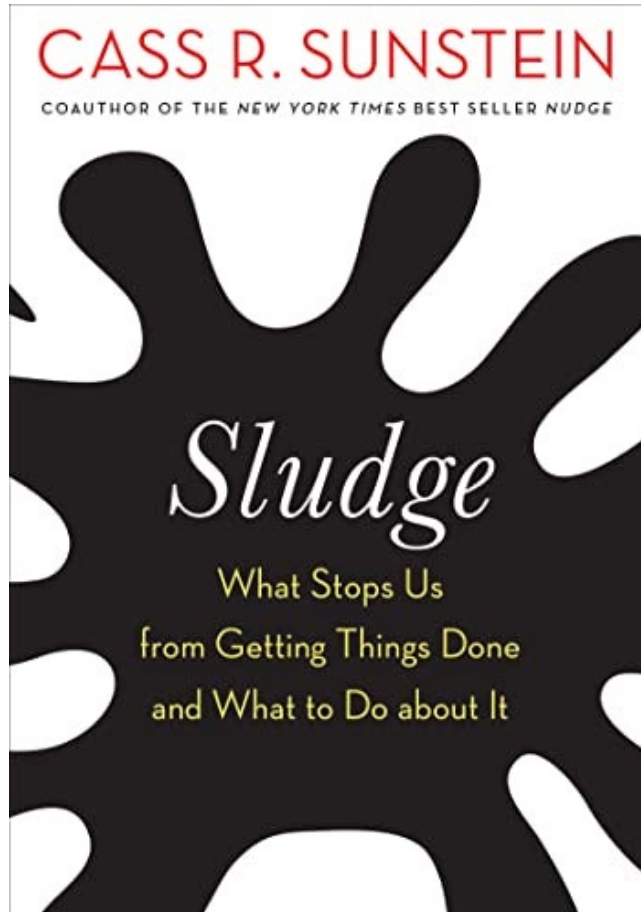
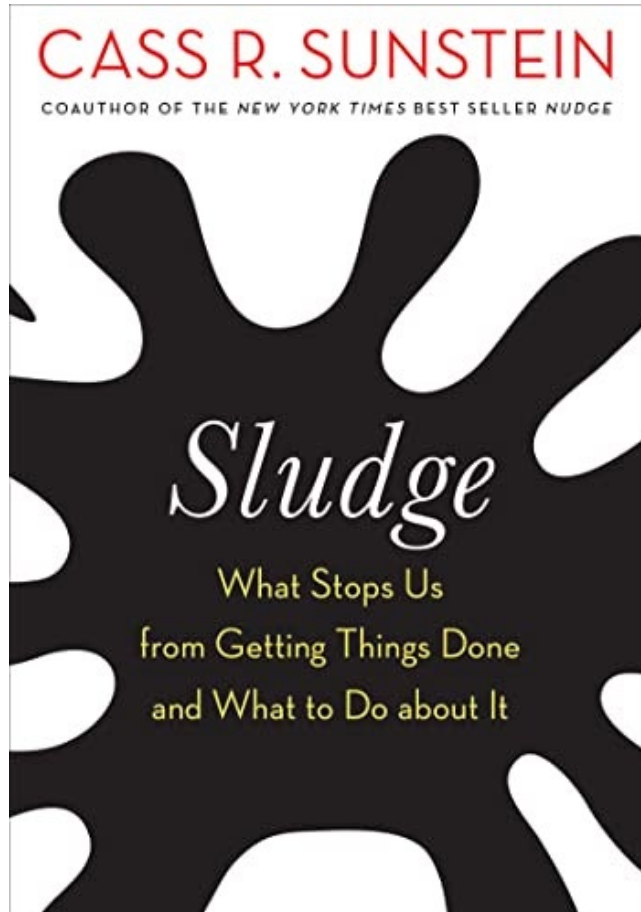


Sludge in academia – what it is



- *Cass R. Sunstein, Harvard University law professor & tech advisory group to WHO on behavioral insights and sciences for health*
 - Recently highlighted in [Inside Higher Ed](#).
 - Sludge can be “understood to consist of frictions that separate people from what they want to get.”
 - **Sludge represents the extra (and often unnecessary) time and energy need to do relatively straightforward tasks**
 - Origin may be well-intended (e.g. self-governance, accountability)
 - Leads to a decrease in morale, leaves less time and energy for other thinking and creativity

Sludge in academia – where do you see it



- Take 5 minutes to talk with your table
 - Identify at least three sources of sludge either in your workload or the workload of your faculty
 - Ask:
 - What do we do here that makes no sense to you?*
 - What are the biggest obstacles to getting things done?*
 - Which of our practices seem stricter than they need to be?*
 - If there is one thing you could change, what would it be?*
 - Identify commonalties, low-hanging fruit
 - Be ready to report back to the room by table

Sludge in academia – what we can do about it

- **Simple 5-step process**

- Announce
 - *Define, create awareness*
- Identify
 - *Redundancies, over burdensome committee work, processes too long or too frequent, inequities in workload*
- Prioritize
 - *What can you work on now, what is most needed*
- Focus
- Reduce
 - *Teaching innovation, committee term limits, committee → 1 person, change staff/faculty balance of workload*

- **Benefits**

- Improve morale and climate
- Address inequities in workload, especially service → COACHE
- Identify under-supported efforts
- Better use of resources, right-sizing tasks
- Allows unit leaders to be more efficient (e.g. performance review, budget, faculty workload, hiring)
- Build trust within and across units

- *Trickle down effects can lead to better student, staff, and faculty recruitment and retention*