

# Taking an Essay Exam

When taking an essay exam there are certain things you must keep in mind as you prepare to write. The most important one is the purpose for writing. You are not only conveying information, but also proving to your audience--the examiner--that you have mastered the information and can work with it.

## **PREPARING FOR THE EXAM**

- Study connections between ideas
- Understand the whole picture i.e., how the generalizations or concepts create the framework for the specific facts, and how the examples or details fill in the gaps
- Prepare practice questions.
- Outline how you would answer the test questions and write a practice response.

## **TAKING THE EXAM**

Remember that it's not simply what you say or how much you say, but HOW you say it that's important. You want to show your instructor that you have mastered the material.

### **Do a Data Dump**

- As soon as you are told to start, on a scratch piece of paper or the back cover of your blue book, write down everything that you are afraid you might forget.
- Create brief outlines for every question or connection you have studied and write down all important dates that you can remember.

### **Plan your time.**

- Determine how many minutes you can devote to each answer. Remember to spend more time on the questions that will earn you more points.

### **Read the questions thoroughly.**

- Read the question carefully in order to determine exactly what you are being asked to do.

### **Plan your answer.**

- Outline the main points you intend to make as you think through your answer

### **Write out your essay, using good writing techniques.**

- Create a thesis for your essay that you can defend. This sentence also functions as an introduction.
- Proceed immediately to explain, develop, and support your thesis, drawing upon materials from text(s), lectures, and class discussions. Make your main points stand out by writing distinct paragraphs, and indicate the relationship between them with transitions.
- Sum up your argument with a brief conclusion that lends your essay a clear sense of closure.

## **FINISHING THE EXAM**

### **Proofread your answer.**

- Reserve a few minutes after completing your essay to proofread it carefully.
- Make sure you answer the question that was asked.
- Also check sentence structure, spelling and punctuation.

Adapted from Indiana University - [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/essay\\_exam.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/essay_exam.shtml)