

PREPARING FOR EXAMINATIONS

*from the
Effective Study Series*

provided by
GCSU Counseling Services

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BEFORE THE EXAM

Starting the first day of class:

- Use SQ3R (see *Reading for Comprehension* brochure) as you read assignments. Master it as you go along.
- Notice what topics are emphasized in class.
- Notice the relationships between lectures and the text.
- Keep up with specialized vocabulary.

As soon as possible:

- Find out what material the exam will cover.
- Find out what the exam format will be (essay, objective, combination, etc.)

Two to three weeks before the exam:

- Set up separate review time for the exam (in addition to the daily preparation schedule). This should still be in short chunks of time (see *Suggestions for Scheduling* brochure).
- Divide material into logical sections and work on one section at a time. Terminology is a good place to start if you're weak in that area.
- Start with your weakest subject first. According to most experts, this can give you a real sense of accomplishment, though you personally may prefer to start with one that you already feel pretty good about.

The day before the exam:

- Schedule a final review session the night before the exam.
- Get to bed at a decent hour. You'll do a lot better being rested and alert rather than trying to cram for hours and arriving at the exam feeling mentally and physically exhausted. In addition, memories are consolidated during sleep. Therefore, you're better off reviewing, sleeping, and then doing one final review before the exam than you are cramming.

THE DAY OF THE EXAM

- Eat a light breakfast, even if you don't usually do so. Have your usual amount of caffeine.
- Get to class in plenty of time so you don't feel rushed. If you find that others' discussion of the material makes you anxious, wait in the hall or restroom until exam time.
- Try to relax your shoulders, neck, and jaw muscles. Breathe deeply from your diaphragm. Practice positive, realistic self-talk ("I'll do my best").
- See separate brochures for hints on essay and objective exams.

AFTER THE EXAM

If you get your exam back, go over it! Find out not only what you did wrong, but why. A couple of hours here can save a lot of grief in the future both in terms of taking exams in general, and exams in the specific course.

- Did you simply not learn the material? Schedule more study time.
- Did you not understand major concepts? Ask more questions in class. Be sure you understand as you go along.
- Did you do things on the exam that cost you points even though you knew the material? For example, did you rush carelessly through details, or spend so much time on details that you never got around to stating general concepts?
- Did you not follow directions?
- Notice what you did right, and why. This can make future preparation much less threatening.

If these tips don't work for you, a counselor can help you with an individualized plan.