

Tips for Success in a Large Lecture Class

Adapted from Jonathan Golding's "Teaching the Large Lecture Class"

- Large classes require special preparation and time management in ways that are different than methods you have used for typical classes
- A large class is going to require self-discipline and work on your part.
- Specific aspects of how you approach class will need to be modified
- Size of class inhibits certain interactive techniques like discussion, question & answer exchanges, and lots of grade earning opportunities.
- Large classes make it harder for the instructor to get to know students individually. Avoid falling into the trap of thinking you are anonymous and therefore have less personal responsibility.
- Plan to be in class and ready early from day one and stay a few minutes after each class if possible to talk to your instructor. This can make an enormous impact on what instructors think about you, and that can make a difference in your level of success in the course.
- Assume attendance is mandatory-treat it that way, no matter what.
- Show up early for class and attend every class
- Sit up front where you can see and hear everything and latecomers or other student behaviors will not distract you.
- Reduce the sense of anonymity-sit within 12 feet of the front of the class and make eye contact with the instructor-be present.
- Be prepared to be an active listener and an active learner, more planning will be required, tasks that seem trivial in a small class gain more importance in large classes; get and look over all handouts.
- Your syllabus is your life-line, your key to success in the class.
- Know how many and what type of exams there will be, and where & when they will be held.
- Take note of any other opportunities for earning grades or points.
- Know the goals, rules, policies and requirements for the class (absences, make-up tests, outside assignments, cheating, plagiarism).
- Avoid uncivil and disruptive behaviors that can affect your achievement: arriving late, sleeping in class, talking to classmates during class, reading the newspaper, listening to headphones, talking on cell phones-know the rules for the class, they're in the syllabus.
- If there are books or articles on reserve, go early to gain access-there will be an onslaught of students trying to access the materials later.
- Accomplishing course goals and objectives is your responsibility.

- Have your materials ready and look over the previous lecture's notes.
- Keep materials organized with dates and topics written at the top of each page; do not depend on instructor Power Points as your notes.
- Actively take your own notes in an organized format (ex: Cornell Method w/ dual columns) and write on one side of the sheet of paper.
- Take both lecture and reading notes, review frequently and compare.
- Complete reading and assignments *before* class, have questions ready.
- Type of lecture: traditional (hierarchical organization of major and minor points), case study (situation illustrating general principle or problem solving strategy)---different types = different note taking.
- Organize your notes, even re-write them if necessary-organized information is learned better and easier to recall.
- Think about what you write. Listen actively-write your questions, predictions and comments in your notes; use symbols for emphasis.
- If a question is asked that you don't know how to answer, write it down and find the answer before the next class.
- Main points of a lecture tend to be presented at the beginning and end.
- Do not pack up before class is dismissed and completely over---instructors often summarize their key points and preview the next class right in the last minutes at the end and sometimes give questions for credit or clues to exam questions at the end of class.
- Think actively about the course material, decide and support your position or opinion regarding controversial issues, comment in your notes about connections between course material and your experience or information that relates to other courses you are taking.
- Your main goal is to learn; strive for understanding not memorizing.
- Re-read your notes and summarize main points of each lecture within 24 hours of the lecture-review, compare, and summarize the weeks' worth of notes from class and reading each weekend.
- Get serious; be ready to pay attention immediately.
- Get rid of excess energy and take care of needs (restroom etc.) before class so all attention can be on the lecture once it starts.
- Assume all exams will include lecture material.
- Know what to expect on exams.
- Like it or not, exams are the most efficient method for evaluating students in large classes, and typically they are multiple choice. Remember that it *is* possible to have multiple choice questions that evaluate depth of understanding, and application knowledge of a topic. Know the style and format the instructor will use.

- Be clear as to what needs to be done prior to exam day, where the exam will be held, when, and what to bring (ex: ID, #2 pencils, calculators, etc.).
- On exam day, be on time and be ready. Length of time available for the exam is typically strictly limited. Everything must be done quickly and efficiently. Improve your chances of success by knowing what to expect and what to do on exam day.
- Learn from exams so you can improve how you prepare for the next exam.
- TAs are critical for success in a large class---use them! Meet with them. Show them by your words and actions how dedicated you are to achieving in the course. Use TAs as sounding boards for discussing your ideas and understanding of the course topics.
- Keep in mind that TAs are also students learning the ropes and they work closely with the faculty instructor.
- Be proactive. Form study groups or partnerships, note partners to review notes with weekly, and ask for review sessions and study guides, then do what TAs and instructors suggest.