

## Preparing for an Essay Exam

- Get a sense for the type of essay exam the professor generally gives; e.g., short vs. long thought questions.
- Try to get some idea of the general area that will be covered; i.e., concepts, issues, theories, etc.
- Carefully review lecture notes to ascertain which broad areas have constituted central discussion topics.
- Carefully review text(s). Link and/or supplement major areas here with those in your notes.
- Mentally test yourself: What major concepts and relationships were covered? Now, what details support these?
- Be able to write a concise outline, covering the material.
- Remember: Present a sound generalization then prove it with appropriate detail.
- Be familiar with the terminology used in the course. Be able to understand concepts and use appropriate terms.

## Taking the Exam

- Listen for any oral directions, if any.
- Read the questions carefully. What are they asking?
- Be sure you understand the question. What is the controlling idea? What are the key words? Underline them.
- How is the answer to be given? Is the question asking for fact? Opinion? Explanation? Comparison?
- If the question seems ambiguous:
  - a. Seek clarification from the professor;
  - b. if still not clear, state your interpretation of the question before attempting to answer it. Remember, essay questions are aimed at concepts and the emphasis in the course; so you must be able to conceptualize, succinctly respond, and support your generalization with sufficient details.
- Define any vague terms; for example, some terms may have ambiguous implications if not clearly defined.
- Think through your answer. Then go back and reread the question to make sure that you are answering what is asked.

## Writing the Answers

- Remember to take time to think, make notes, and prepare a rough outline before you begin to write the essay:
  - a. Develop the summary statement.
  - b. Support the statement with details.
- Once you have your summary in outline form, expand upon it and write it in written form, tactfully and clearly.
- Budget your time so that you are not forced to rush through your final essay because you spend too much time on the earlier one(s).
- Allow a little time to proofread for grammar, spelling errors, omissions, etc.