

WRITING EXAM ESSAYS

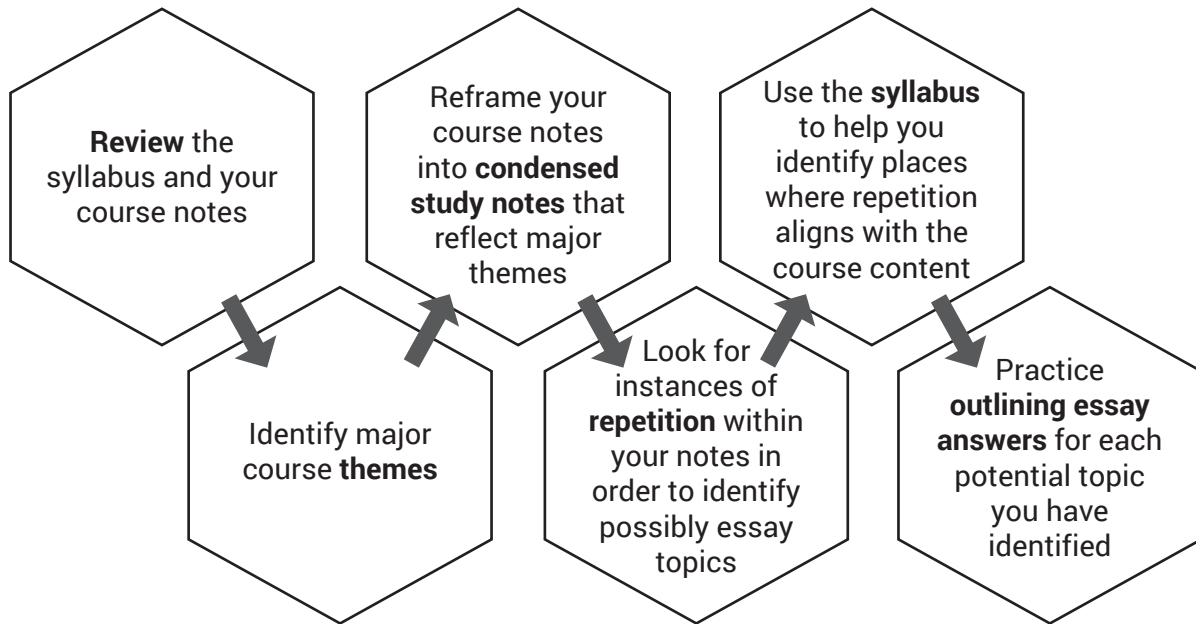


Writing essays during a timed exam can feel stressful. This handout offers helpful strategies for studying and navigating the exam.



Studying Tips

Because reviewing a semester's worth of texts and notes can be overwhelming, it is important to develop a **strategic approach** to studying. Here's one that you may find useful:



Try organizing your notes into **cue cards** to both condense and reorder the course material, allowing you to see new connections.

You can also try designing and answering **anticipated essay questions**. This strategy would work well in a small-group setting as well.

Exam Tips

Understand the Question



- Identify important **keywords** that will help clarify the approach to the material and the kind of work your prof will be evaluating. This will tell you how to answer the question.
- Possible keywords: analyze, describe, evaluate, compare, contrast, apply, identify, explain, discuss

Organize Your Time



- Use the **amount of time allotted** for the exam in addition to the **weight** of each question to determine how much time to spend on the essay
- Leave yourself a few minutes to **outline** and **revise** each question
- **Stick to your plan**—don't be alarmed when other students leave the exam before you're finished!

Outline and Plan



- Develop an outline that includes a **thesis**, **main points** for each body paragraph, specific **examples** you will use to support your main points, and a brief **conclusion**
- Your thesis should answer all aspects of the exam question

Write



- Your writing needs to be **legible**—your prof can't give you marks for sentences they can't read
- Refer frequently to your **outline** to keep yourself on track
- Answer "**so what?**" by deliberately explaining the significance of your evidence and how it answers the exam question
- Avoid **repetition**
- **Edit** and **revise** your answers

Bring your student card and all necessary writing utensils to the exam.

