

What To Do The First Week and Beyond

Clarify the instructor's course goals and objectives

- Read carefully the course description in your syllabus.
- In the first week's lectures, listen for goals and objectives, main themes, and topics--the organizing structure for the course—not merely facts and concepts.
- The first part of a Princeton course is often the most conceptually challenging- professors introduce theory, their conceptual framework. Don't let it throw you, get the most you can and return to it later. Your understanding will grow if you have a good basis.
- Skim/scan the textbook chapters and/or course packet. Get a sense of what is to come and how the course is put together-look at the last topic to see where the course is going.

Managing time and tasks

- Identify time in your schedule when you can do assignments, homework (ideally during the day). Begin to establish a routine in which you devote regular blocks of time to the same activities each week (e.g. reading for CHEM 201 10-11 AM every Tuesday). Make an "appointment" in your planner to prepare for class.
- Spend a little time (even 5-10 minutes) on an assignment (even a big one) the day it is given. E.g., look over all the problems in the problem set and note any ideas. Skim a reading. Read an essay assignment and jot down your initial responses or what you'd do to get started.
- Do assignments and study when you are most alert and socialize, etc. at other times (i.e. work early, study late)
- Identify at most three extra-curricular activities you will engage in regularly during the term in order to reduce to one or, at most, two for the semester.

Getting the most out of class time—listening & note making

- Prep (at least a little) for each class meeting, so you can follow the lecture/discussion.
- Listen for big concepts and memorable examples and write them down. Add details to your notes later, after class.
- In your notes write down your own thoughts, insights, and connections you make during class.
- Think of your notes as a study tool to use later—how can you make them most helpful now for future studying?
- Take notes on your notes—review your notes soon after class to fill gaps, make them coherent, label and organize sections—turn them into a comprehensive study tool.

Making the most of the time you spend reading

- You will have huge reading loads; do some on a regular basis, even if you can't do it all. Think of reading in layers: skim and scan all your readings initially (top layer), and if that's all you have time for before class, return to it after class using class notes to guide you in a deeper layer or level of reading.
- Refer to the syllabus not just for assignments and due dates but for information about the topic and theme a reading relates to. Use the topic to pose a question or set your purpose to guide your reading.
- Determine why a reading was assigned—how it fits into the course—and what you are expected to take away from it.
- Write a brief summary after you read—it's more practical than highlighting.
- Connect the text to the course. Take 3 extra minutes after you finish a reading to write down how the reading relates to main course themes and/or that day's topics.
- Identify comments to make and questions to ask later in precept/seminar. Write these right in the text (margin or at the top of the first page), so you can refer to them during class.

Exam Prep

- Select, organize and reduce information (by annotating, listing out bullet points, writing brief summaries, etc.) as the semester unfolds—don't wait until just before the exam to do these things.
- Integrate/Synthesize your knowledge (e.g. combine lecture with text notes).
- Start test prep from day one by creating a study tool which organizes and reduces course content and can grow as the course unfolds.
- Get input from your instructors on your study methods.
- Practice the kinds of tasks you will be asked to do on the exam.
- Work collaboratively.
- Use memorization methods sparingly—memorized facts and formulae won't help you very much—instead seek to truly understand what you are learning.
- Anticipate exam questions when studying.