

EXAM PREPARATION CHECKLIST

BUCKNER F. MELTON, JR.

Many freshmen arrive at college unprepared for the demands of college education, or fail to take these demands seriously, or both. To avoid these dangers and maximize the possibility of success in my courses, I strongly advise that you read and abide by this list carefully and thoroughly as you prepare for exams. While complying with this checklist is no guarantee of a passing grade, doing so will maximize your chances. You should be able to answer “yes” to all of these questions.

The basics

- ❑ **Am I serious about wanting to earn college credit and get a college degree?** Do I understand that these things don’t happen automatically but instead require a lot of hard work throughout my college career? Am I able and willing to do that work on my own initiative?
- ❑ **Am I getting plenty of exercise and rest? Am I eating enough healthful foods, staying away from junk food, and taking care of my personal hygiene?** (These are matters that don’t directly involve this course, but if you can’t answer “Yes” here, the odds are that your college performance as a whole isn’t as good as it could be.)
- ❑ **Do I have one or more issues going on in my personal life that may be affecting my ability to focus on my education?** If so, am I tapping into resources (friends, family, advisors, therapy) to help me manage these issues? Do I understand that, whatever these issues are, I am ultimately responsible for my own college performance? (These are matters that don’t directly involve this course, but if you can’t answer “Yes” here, the odds are that your college performance as a whole isn’t as good as it could be.)
- ❑ **Have I read the course syllabus, schedule, and other administrative materials carefully and thoroughly?** Do I know the course policies, requirements, and testing dates, so I won’t be surprised or blindsided by these or other things and so I know what is expected of me?

In class

- ❑ **Am I taking thorough class notes each day?** If I must miss class for some reason, do I have a system/plan in place to get notes from at least two classmates before the next quiz?
- ❑ **If I am confused as to the facts/ideas presented in class, or as to the relationships between and among them, am I asking Dr. Melton about them in class or after class?** When Dr. Melton asks the class if anyone has questions, am I speaking up if I have questions, rather than keeping silent because I am afraid of looking stupid, or because I am not really interested?

Out of class

- ❑ **Am I spending AT LEAST five hours of serious study on the material of this course each week, not including the two class meetings?** If I am, and I still sense that this isn’t enough time for me to grasp the material, am I spending more?

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Out of class (continued)

- ❑ **Am I studying the Course Outline carefully and thoroughly?** Do I always read a few pages ahead in the Course Outline before coming to class?
- ❑ **Am I carefully studying my class notes each week?** Do I understand them? Do I think they're thorough enough and understandable? If not, am I working on changing how I take notes? Have I read Dr. Melton's handouts on how and why to take notes?
- ❑ **If I'm having trouble grasping the information in my class notes and in the Course Outline, have I read and studied the free optional textbooks that I can download from Dr. Melton's website?**

Putting it all together

- ❑ **Am I making consistently high grades on the weekly quizzes?** If not, do I understand why, and am I taking steps to address the problem?
- ❑ **Do I believe I have a good understanding of the material presented in class and in the course outline?** To put this another way, do I understand the major themes of the course and see how they relate to the facts/ideas presented in the course? Do I remember these facts/ideas? Do I grasp the relationships between and among these facts/ideas (cause and effect)?
- ❑ **Am I writing out thorough practice answers to every possible essay question and every possible short answer/ID question in the Course outline?** Am I getting a classmate to read and critique these practice answers? Am I reading and critiquing fellow students' practice answers?