

## APES: HOW TO WRITE ESSAYS (from P. J. Shlachtman)

### **DO !**

1. Read the question carefully, noting especially the instructional words (describe, compare, design, develop an argument, etc.)
2. Restating the question earns no points. Dive right in to save time.
3. Pace yourself! Look at the clock at the beginning of the essay portion. Break the time into four 22-minute periods. Stop working on each question when your time is up. You can always come back to the question if you have time.
4. Organize the question as it is asked. If it has three distinct parts, then organize your answer into three distinct parts.
5. Define your terms. Say something about each of the important terms you use.
6. Go into detail that is on the subject and to the point. Be sure to state the obvious. Remember that no detail is too small to be included as long as it is to the point.
7. Develop your ideas as completely as possible, but avoid repeating the same information.
8. Cite examples of major concepts.
9. Follow all instructions in the question carefully. If a question instructs you to choose three out of five topics to discuss, you will only be evaluated on the first three that you discuss, regardless of the quality of your fourth or fifth response.
10. In general, you are not penalized points for wrong information unless you contradict a correct for which you received credit. Attempt an answer to every question or part of a question. A blank paper earns no point.
11. One question on the test may test your understanding of how several topics from different parts of the course support a particular theme. Look for the common thread and answer each part of the question with respect to how that topic supports the theme. This question usually gives you a choice of several topics so that you can select the areas in you which you feel more proficient.
12. You maybe asked to design an experiment. There are many ways to answer this question, but the most important point is that your have to be creative, well organized and knowledgeable about how to do a lab.
13. For lab questions, write a testable hypothesis, identify variables, design a procedure that tests your hypothesis.
14. Write an ESSAY. Outlines and diagrams, no matter how elaborate and accurate are not essays and will not get you much, if any, credit by themselves.

### **DON'T**

1. Don't waste time on background information or a long introduction unless -the question calls for it.
2. Don't ramble - get to the point.
3. Don't use a pencil : use a ball point pen with blue or black ink.
4. Don't use felt tip pens or gel pens for essays.
5. Don't panic or get angry because you are unfamiliar with the question. You have probably heard something about the subject-be calm and think.
6. Don't scratch out excessively. One or two lines through the unwanted word should be enough.
7. Don't write sloppily. It is easy for a grader to miss an important word when he/she cannot read your handwriting.
8. Don't leave questions blank. Remember that each point you earn on an essay question is the equivalent of two correct multiple choice questions, and there is no penalty for a wrong guess. Make an effort on every question. **DON'T QUIT!**