

PREPARING FOR EXAMS

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Preparing for Exams

- Preparation during the year
- Revision
- In the exam room
- What are the examiners looking for?

PREPARING DURING THE YEAR

Can you read your lecture notes now?

Will you understand them in 6 months' time?

Were you able to write everything down?

PREPARING DURING THE YEAR

- Reading for seminars
- Reading for essays
- Reading for general information
- Note-taking in seminars
- Bringing everything together

ORGANISING YOUR NOTES

- Decide on a system that works for you
- Organise as you go along, not just before the exams
- If you keep notes on a computer, back them up – and keep hard copies of all assignments
- How will you find the information that you want in six months' time?

WHAT SHOULD I REVISE?

- Look at the module outline and reading list.
- Access past exam papers on the ORB
- Use essay lists
- Look at seminar notes
- WORK WITH THE MATERIAL
 - What do you know?
 - What do you need to know?

HOW SHOULD YOU REVISE?

- Think about connections and themes
- Read your notes
- Build out from essays and seminar presentations
- Prepare crib sheet with key dates and facts
- WHATEVER WORKS FOR YOU!

WHAT ARE 'SUFFICIENT TOPICS'?

- In an ideal world, you would revise the entire module.

BUT

- In reality, you will probably need to make choices:
 - Make sure that you have covered the whole topic, so that you can tackle tricky questions
 - Remember that a particular topic may be dealt with over a number of weeks
 - Bear in mind that you may be asked to compare and contrast two or more events / topics
 - Unless you have attended most seminars, it is unlikely that you will be able simply to revise the weeks that you attended.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE MANY NOTES?

- If you do not have sufficient material to revise from, you will need to create or improve revision notes.
 - Identify any introductory / compulsory texts or books that are used extensively in the module.
 - Use the module reading list to identify key readings for the weekly seminars.
 - Ensure that you have access to these sources during revision – eg photocopy important articles or book chapters
 - Read, or re-read these sources, carefully, identifying the main arguments and noting important factual information.
 - If available, look at the powerpoint presentations for the module.
 - Above all, enjoy what you are reading – after all, you chose to take History at University!

USING PAST EXAM PAPERS AND ESSAY LISTS

- Past exam papers are available through the ORB: use them to identify the kinds of questions that may be asked. For example, do the questions ask for knowledge across the module, rather than on a topic-by-topic basis?
- Remember that essay questions will not be reproduced on the exam paper.
- Are there topics that were not covered on the essay list but which might come up in the exam?

PREPARING FOR THE EXAM

- Whilst revising, prepare brief notes to look through the night before the exam.
- Plan answers to previous exam questions.
- Practice writing answers in the time that will be allowed in the exam room: students sometimes prepare detailed plans, and then find they cannot cover all the material within the time.

DON'T OVERDO IT!

You need to pace yourself – don't leave it all until the last minute!

IN THE EXAM ROOM

- Read
- Plan
- Clock watch

But above all

DON'T PANIC!

READING THE EXAM PAPER

- Check the rubric – how many questions do you have to do?
- Read the questions that are on the paper, not the ones that you would like to be there!
- You can do any questions on the exam paper

READ QUESTIONS CAREFULLY

- Why did the United States enter the First World War in 1917?
- Why did the United States not enter the First World War until 1917?

What are the differences between these two questions? (Clue – it is more than just two words)

IT'S ALL IN THE PLANNING!

- Plan your answers – structure the argument, don't just list facts
- Plan all the answers at the start of the exam?
- When you've written the plan, re-read the exam question. (I've mentioned this twice – there's a reason for that). Have you answered it?

WATCH THE CLOCK

- Exams are usually two or three hours long.
- The usual requirement in history exams is to answer one question per hour, but CHECK
- Normally all questions are weighted equally, but CHECK
- Allow roughly equal time for each answer (if weighted equally!)
- Try to allow 5 – 10 minutes at the end to check your work

WHAT ARE THE EXAMINERS LOOKING FOR?

- NOT perfection!
- Have you understood the main principles of the module?
- Do you explain the context of each answer?
- Can you construct a good argument?
- Can you support your analysis with evidence?

WHAT IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?

- If you realise that you've made a mistake, DON'T PANIC – in the first year, only a pass is required, and the mark doesn't count towards your degree.
- If medical or personal problems affected your exam preparation or the exam itself, consider submitting an extenuating circumstances form
- See someone in the Department if in doubt.

AFTER THE EXAM

- Results will be available after the First Year Exam Board, online.
- The vast majority of students pass all exams and coursework first time round.
- If you are required to resubmit coursework or resit an examination, you will be given full information.
- Check your emails regularly for information.
- Resit examinations are usually at the beginning of September