

Study Skills Series

Sponsored by the Master of Divinity Program

Presented by Carletta Witzel, Student Success Center

October 5, 2011

**Part I**

**Habits of Effective Students**

**Organization**

* Keep and read your syllabus for each class
	+ Know all dates for tests, projects and papers
	+ Know what’s expected for papers and projects
	+ Know what’s expected for class readings
	+ Know how grades are given and assignments are weighted
	+ Know classroom rules
	+ Record scores as you earn them so you can estimate your grade
* Use a calendar or planner to keep track of all appointments and due dates
	+ For classes and other life activities
* Prioritize (and revise as necessary
* Don’t miss classes. Don’t ever miss exams.
* Know what support is available – office hours, tutors, study groups
* Use pocket folders or a file drawer to keep everything.
	+ Notes, finished papers, returned papers
	+ Use a separate folder for each course

**A time and a place to study**

* A designated place where you regularly study
	+ Quiet, with fewer distractions
	+ Not the same place used for sleep or other activities
	+ Keep study materials and tools there (or have them organized to easily bring with you
	+ Turn off your cell phone ringer and instant messaging
* Plan a study schedule
	+ Designate enough time for adequate study (usually 2-3 hours per week per credit hour)
	+ Stick to your study plan consistently. Breaking your habit once makes it easier to break it again.
	+ Not having anything due tomorrow does not mean you don’t have anything to work on.
	+ Be prepared to add extra study time if needed.
* Stay focused
	+ Plan to study when you are alert, not sleepy or hungry
	+ Break up reading time with a few minutes to review or take notes
	+ Keep a “later” journal to record things you want to remember but which aren’t related to what you are studying.

**Note-taking (yes, take notes)**

* Sit in the “T” Zone – front rows and along the center aisle, if there is one.
* Use a separate notebook or section of a notebook for each class
* Put the date and topic at the top of each day’s notes
* Review what’s going to be covered in class before the lecture to help focus your attention
* Look for visual and verbal cues from your lecturer to identify important concepts
* Write down all of the important ideas, but not word for word.
* Develop your own shorthand system or abbreviations
* Review your notes after class (on the same day) for a 60% increase in memory retention
* Review your notes again just before the next class to identify areas that need clarification
* Pay special attention to new vocabulary – especially content words

**Being a professional student**

* Know your instructor’s names.
	+ Find out how to pronounce them.
	+ Find out how and when it’s best to contact them.
* Be alert and attentive during class
	+ Never use lecture time to sleep, surf the web, read e-mail, or send text messages
	+ Turn off your phone
* Be on time to classes and other appointments
	+ If you make an appointment to meet with your instructor, keep it!
* If you don’t understand, politely ask for clarification. If you need to ask a lot, schedule an appointment during your instructor’s office hours
* Present professional looking papers – at a minimum, typed, with a cover sheet.
* If you must miss a class, notify your instructor and arrange to get notes from a classmate. Don’t ask, “Did I miss anything important?”
* If you join a study group, do your share. Prepare yourself ahead of time to be a strong participant.
* Expect to work for good grades. Being a student is hard work for almost everyone.
* If you don’t agree with a grade you’ve received, arrange an appointment to discuss it during office hours. Be prepared with good reasons for your disagreement, but also, be prepared to listen and learn.
* Practice strong academic integrity