

# HOW TO GET AN 'A' IN THIS COURSE

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## Study Guide # 3

There is no secret or magical formula for doing well in this course. The strategy for doing well in this course is the same as it is for most other courses that you take at the college level. In order to establish an 'A' pace for this course, you should therefore:

1. ***Carefully and thoroughly read and study the assigned material when it is due. "Reading over" the assigned material is NOT good enough.*** You should notate and outline assigned reading material as you read it. If there are any parts of the reading that you do not understand or feel that you need additional elaboration or clarification, then you should raise the appropriate questions in class or arrange to see me during office hours to go over any parts of the assigned material that you do not understand. The rule of thumb for 'A' level pace in a college course is that you should spend one to two hours of homework preparation for every one hour of class time. (Two hours of preparation for every one hour of class time for a 15 hour "full time" university course load equals out to a total of 45 hours of schoolwork per week, which is about the amount of time most people who work full time spend at their jobs.)
2. ***Attend class regularly, be attentive, take good notes, and actively participate in class activities and discussions. Getting someone else's class notes for classes you miss is NOT good enough.*** If you are not in class, you will miss important material not covered in the text including lectures, class discussions, demonstrations, exercises, films, etc that will be included on the tests. Class participation is a swing factor in the final grade worth up to a letter grade in either direction so if you are in it for the 'A' then you need to be there to get full credit. Also, getting someone else's notes for classes you miss is a poor substitute for not being there yourself. People write notes to themselves, not to a generalized audience. Notes are taken in order to jar your memory of what material was presented in class. If you were not there in the first place, you have no memory to jar. What might make sense to other students taking notes for themselves may make no sense to you. You are also presuming that the person who took the notes got down all the information presented in an accurate and complete manner, which is not always the case.
3. ***Know about the forest and the trees. Knowing just the "main points" is NOT good enough.*** I expect all students who pass the course to get the general ideas and the main points (forest). However, if you are in it for the 'A,' then I expect that you have both breadth (forest) and depth (trees) of understanding of the material. In other words, you should not only know what the name of the forest is and where it is, you should also be able to identify and distinguish among the different types of trees in the forest. So learn about the individual trees in the forest—know them, hug them, make friends with them.
4. ***Take adequate time to make final preparations for tests. Cramming is NOT good enough.*** There is no quick substitute for spending concerted time studying for tests. If you are unsure about how to go about preparing for tests, you should consult my study skills handout on taking college level examinations.
5. ***Complete assigned projects and papers on time and according to the directions provided. Disorganized, rushed, and/or late projects or papers are NOT good enough.*** Papers and projects that are analytical, interpretive, and relate findings to the material presented in class and in the text will get the highest scores.