

## **STUDYING FROM AND FOR EXAMS**

### **HOW TO LEARN FROM YOUR PREVIOUS EXAM:**

1. Don't dismiss your exam. Learning from your mistakes is the most important phase of learning. Don't look at the grade and forget the exam forever! If you respect your own efforts to learn, you must try to see where and why you made mistakes so you can improve your knowledge. What you take from this class depends crucially on you!
2. Carefully review your work and form questions. Go back over the exam by (a) carefully re-reading the questions and your answer along with the comments; (b) consult your text to see how you might have missed something. (c) Bring any questions you cannot answer yourself to me and we'll discuss them.
3. Adjust your methods. Ask yourself this question: How can I change the way I studied the last time to improve for the next time?

### **SOME GENERAL TIPS ABOUT STUDYING:**

1. Cramming at the last minute will not work very well in philosophy.
2. Reread the Tips for Studying Philosophy handout. Follow the advice there.
3. Reread slowly and carefully the material we've covered, keeping the study questions in mind.
4. Discuss the questions (and the issues, generally) with other students in such a way that you really test each other; force each other to be clear and precise about what he or she is explaining.
5. Invest yourself in these issues--try to honestly make them matter to you.
6. Explain something you are studying to someone outside the class--teach it to them.
7. Bring up questions with me.

### **MORE SPECIFIC ADVICE AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXAMS**

Here are some general instructions and the advice for the kinds of questions you can see on an exam. Being familiar with the instructions ahead of time will allow you to focus your energies on studying the material. As you study, please consult me with any questions you have on the material or the exam format and I'll be happy to help you out!

#### **MULTIPLE CHOICE/TRUE FALSE ADVICE**

Go through the exam a first time and answer all the items you know. This allows you to complete part of the exam without wasting too much time on a difficult question. Once through the test this way, go over it again and answer any questions that are now obvious. For the rest, don't just guess blindly. Try to eliminate some of the

choices as incorrect. This raises your chances of guessing correctly. Once the whole exam is done, go back over your answers and check for accuracy in copying the answers into your test booklet.

**ESSAY QUESTION ADVICE**

Outline your answer on a blank, back page of the exam before writing it. If a question baffles you, start writing on the back page of your paper anything that might possibly be relevant. This starts your memory working and shows you that you do have some relevant ideas. If you are still at a loss, admit it and write a question you can answer, and answer it. This will get you at least a few points more than if you write nothing at all. In your essay, please remember to explain everything as carefully as you can. Do not assume your reader already knows what you are talking about. (Hint: When you criticize the positions, try pointing out gaps in reasoning, counterexamples, or absurd or undesirable consequences.) Check your work once you're done. (This is very important.)

**HERE'S A REMINDER ABOUT WHAT MAY BE ON THE EXAM:**

Issues discussed in any of the readings. Remember, this includes a handout at the beginning of the course as well as the textbook readings. Also remember that the introductions to textbook chapters are "readings" too.

Issues discussed in class by both professor and students. These issues might have been raised during group work.

You will be expected to be able to accurately recall the arguments of our authors and make criticisms of their positions. Remember, a criticism is not just an expression of disagreement with their conclusion or premises. You must be able to think of reasons for your position.