

## TURN UP, TUNE IN, TAKE NOTES!

### Turn Up

The first, critical point is to be there - and on time. At their first meeting with students, professors explain how the class will work (e.g. structure and content of syllabus, sequence of topics, suggested reading for each topic, times and place of meetings, etc.).

Lectures are often self-contained (i.e. one topic per lecture) but the benefit of lectures is cumulative.

Not only will your professors make cross-references to other lectures in their course but, as Explorations has an integrated curriculum, will make references to what you are studying in your other courses too.



### Tune In

This should be easy, after all, all Explorations faculty are incredibly interesting lecturers! Okay, we boast. Despite our charisma, you may still be distracted by thoughts of your job, your love life, last nights' soap opera. So, some hints to help you focus:

1. Get as close as you can (physically and mentally) to the lecturer and the lecture topic. If you sit at the back of a lecture hall, you'll get less out of it than if you sit up front.
2. Focus on the lecture topic even before the lecture begins. Go over the topic in your mind, identifying what you already know and don't know about the topic.
3. Maintain an open questioning attitude to what's being said. Train one part of your mind to listen acutely whilst another part maintains a silent, critical dialogue with the

professor - posing questions and noting marginal comments for later follow-up (Meaning? Reasons? Evidence? Compare? etc.).

Active participation in lectures does five things:

1. It increases our attention span.
2. It helps us get at the meaning behind the lecturer's words.
3. It sharpens our critical intelligence.
4. It allows us to record the main ideas, key concepts, competing explanatory theories and illustrations used.
5. It enables us to retain much more of the lecture content.

We, your professors, know this which is why you will find that our lectures are not just about us talking to you. You will be asked questions, do mini quizzes, discuss with your classmates, watch videos and many other things. All designed to maximize your learning.

#### A NOTE ON ETIQUETTE

Tuning in to lectures is a skill. It can be difficult if you find the environment contains distractions. So, please switch off your cell phones and, if you find the laptop screen of others draws your eyes, sit in front of the hall. If you use a laptop in lectures be considerate of others; turn off sound and adjust the screen's position, etc. You won't be tuned in if you use your laptop to send IMs in class, play backgammon, catch up on email. Not only will this distract you and those around you, it is grossly insulting to your professor and your peers.

#### Take Notes

Taking notes is one of the best ways to stay alert and gain most from lectures, but how many notes and what sort? Taking lecture notes demands a different technique from taking notes from the printed page. You can re-read a book - but a lecture is a unique event whose emotional impact can never be successfully reproduced, even by video-recording.

You don't attend a lecture to record its content verbatim. You go to be intellectually stimulated, to capture and retain its essence. The best way to do that is through the lecture notes. With practice, you can certainly capture the essential content of a lecture.

The skill of note taking comprises six practical tasks:

1. **Concentrate on essentials** - Go for the main points of the lecture, not details. Professors often give an overview at the start of a lecture and a summary at the end. Watch out for these. Take as few notes as possible but sufficient to enable you to recall and revise all the essential content - that is, the key ideas, concepts, theories, etc.
2. **Try to capture the architectural shape of the lecture** - Think of your notes as a skeleton or outline of the lecture you could explain to another person. Bring out the overall design, shape and sequence of the arguments deployed by the professor.

3. **Use bold capitals, headlines, sub-heads, and underlining** - Provide plenty of guideposts and signs to assist later retrieval and revision. Distinguish major from minor points and provide plenty of light and shade.
4. **Jot down words and phrases, not whole sentences** - You haven't time to record exactly what's said (except for exact titles of books, etc.), so keep notes brief. You can fill out your outline when you revise your notes for essays or exams. Keep your notes clear and uncluttered. Don't begrudge the cost of the paper!
5. **Use diagrams wherever possible** - You don't need to be a graphic artist. Use blocks and circles to link trains of thought and to feature significant connections and relationships. Use colour if you think it helps.
6. **Keep your notes legible** - Notes must be in a form in which they can serve you later. Illegible notes are more trouble than they are worth. You'll get little or no value from notes taken on scrappy paper, which can't be filed and retrieved at will or which are difficult to decipher. You can train yourself to write faster and legibly. Practice it!

The acid test is this: will you be able to read through your notes the next day and recapture the essential arguments? You'll never be asked to reproduce the whole of a lecture. You may be asked to discuss intelligently the essential subject-matter of a lecture.

Too many notes simply obscure the overall shape and conceal the essential content of a lecture. So, go for skeleton notes - and leave plenty of margins and space round your notes. Don't begrudge the paper! You'll find you'll need that space to write marginal notes (e.g. to make connections), to add queries and follow-up points when you come to re-read your notes for revision purposes.

After the lecture it is important to work with your notes to maximize your understanding. This is much easier done the same night than when the final exam is due!

1. **Read your notes within twenty-four hours** - By reading your notes, you reinforce learning and prevent too-rapid fading of lecture material. Fill gaps, identify queries and note points for immediate follow up. Remember to take up these queries in tutorials/workshops.
2. **File your notes at least weekly** - Even your best lecture notes are useless if you can't find them. Use a separate binder, or section of a binder for each class. Create a 'list of contents' page at the front and add to it each time you file your notes. Use 'post-it' flags to mark where material in one course links to another. Don't be tempted to only file electronically. Computers DO crash.
3. **Edit your notes every few weeks** - Editing means re-reading, amending, cross-referencing and improving your notes by enriching their content. Underline, use colour-coding for highlighting - do anything that makes your notes more lively, vivid and memorable.

Your notes are not a static document. Use them as the base of your study. Using a loose leaf binder helps, you can add a 'journal page' detailing your reflections on the material of each session and your learning journey.

## GRADES, GRADES, GRADES

We know. No matter how often we tell you that the value of an education is greater than a grade, it is the grades that matter! A couple of things to remember:

1. This is NOT high school, everyone here is a straight A student. So, don't fret if you see a B or a C. The benchmark here is different.
2. There are plenty of opportunities to maximize your grade-start at the YWSLC

### Grading Guidance

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Percent Range</u>	<u>Comments</u>
A+	95-100	Outstanding performance. Represents work of exceptional quality. Content, organization and style all at a high comprehension of the subject and use of existing research and literature where appropriate. Also uses sound critical thinking, has innovative ideas on the subject, and shows engagement with the topic.
A	90-94	Good performance. Represents work of good quality with no major weaknesses. Writing is clear and explicit and topic coverage and comprehension is more than adequate. Shows some degree of critical thinking and engagement in the work. Good use of existing knowledge on the subject.
A-	85-89	
B+	80-84	
B	75-79	Satisfactory performance. Adequate work. Shows fair comprehension of the subject, but has some weaknesses in content, style and/or organization of the paper. Minimal critical awareness or engagement in the work. Adequate use of the literature.
B-	70-74	
C+	65-69	Marginal performance. Minimally adequate work, barely at a passing level. Serious flaws in content, organization and/or style. Poor comprehension of the subject, and minimal engagement in the paper. Poor use of research and existing literature.
C	60-64	
C-	55-59	
D	50-54	Failing work.
F	0-49	

## ACADEMIC ADVISING

Leonard Thong, Advising for *current SFU students*. To book an appointment:

*email*      leonardt@sfu.ca



"I found Academic Advising very helpful...Leonard is very responsive, available and timely and that makes things a lot easier when a student is working against registration deadlines."

## CONTACT US

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## PLANNING YOUR DEGREE

Many students arrive at University undecided about their major. Others think they know, but discover a subject that interests them even more. Keep an open mind about your major. Take courses that spark your interest, courses that you are curious about, and courses in the major(s) you are considering. Know that you have time to experiment: most majors take up only half of the 120 credits you need to graduate with a BA. You have about a year and a half to try things out - time to test your ideas or discover unexpected talents and interests.

When you decide what you want to major in, plan your course selection to meet the requirements for admission to that program. You will find those requirements in the SFU Calendar. The Advisor for Explorations can help you plan how to complete those requirements. When you are certain about your intended major, you can make an appointment with the student advisor for the program.

After your first year and a half, choose your courses to meet graduation requirements. You need to know how many courses and credits are required for your major - and you need to complete breadth requirements (WQB) before you can graduate. A WQB Worksheet for the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences can be found on the next page of this handbook. Use it to plan or keep track of your WQB courses.

**WQB REQUIREMENTS IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
Worksheet for Explorations Students

	WQB Requirements	Credits	Course Planning	Completed Credits*
These credits must be fulfilled by courses outside your major.	B-HUM	6	EXPL 120-3	
	B-HUM		EXPL 160-3	
	B-SCI	6		
	B-SCI			
	B-SOC	6	EXPL 110-3	
	B-SOC		EXPL 150-3	
	UB	12	EXPL 130-3 or 140-3	
	UB		EXPL 170-3	
	UB			
	UB			
These credits can be fulfilled within your major or outside it.	W	3		
	Upper Division W	3		
	Q	3		
	Q	3		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>42</b>		

**Looking for Undesignated Breadth (UB)?**

These are courses taken outside your major. They may have a B-HUM, B-SCI, or B-SOC designation - or no B designation at all.

**Looking for a lower division W course?**

The following departments in Arts and Social Sciences offer lower division W courses: FPA, CRIM, ENGL, HIST, HUM, PHIL, PSYC, SA. (It is highly recommended that your upper division W course be within your major program.)

**Looking for a lower division Q course?**

The following departments in Arts and Social Sciences offer lower division Q courses: BUEC, CRIM, ECON, FPA, FREN, GEOG, IS, PHIL, POL, PSYC, SA.

**Looking for a lower division B course?**

The following departments in Arts and Social Sciences offer lower division B courses: ARCH, FPA, COGS, CRIM, ECON, ENGL, FREN, GDST, GEOG, IS, HIST, HUM, LAS, LING, PHIL, POL, PYSC, SA, WS.

★ Note: You must achieve a minimum grade of C- for a course to fulfill WQB requirements.



“Throw off the bowlines, Sail away from the safe harbour.  
Catch the trade winds in your sails.  
Explore. Dream. Discover.”  
-Mark Twain

# ATTACHMENT II: REFLEXIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENT

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## Me, Myself, and I...

Using the First Person in  
Academic Writing

Presented by  
The Student Learning Commons

SFU




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### 1. Understanding reflexive writing...

"Reflexive writing" means coupling our own personal experience with

- careful observation
- critical thinking about an aspect of our experience.






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## Writing as self-reflection...

At the heart of reflexive writing is story-telling:

- WHAT happened
- HOW it happened
- WHAT that means to us or to others.




The key is that self-reflexive writing **ENGAGES** both ourselves and our readers.

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## Writing as self-reflection...


Self-reflexive writing is also a form of academic argumentation. Our "story" needs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a clear <u>STANCE</u> or <u>PURPOSE</u></li> <li>• an understanding of <u>AUDIENCE</u></li> <li>• a central position or <u>THESIS</u></li> </ul>		<p>why write?</p> <p>what does my reader expect?</p> <p>what do I believe?</p>
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## Me, Myself, and I...EXERCISE 1



After viewing this clip...


- What is one significant thing you noticed about people's behaviour?
- How does your own experience help you make sense of, or explain, their behaviour?

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## 2. Taking a "subject position"...

In disciplines that use *qualitative* research methods (i.e. interviews, observations), researchers often include personal roles and experience when writing about the research. Why do that?



- ☛ We're aware that we are part of the process
- ☛ Our presence or actions may even have *shaped* the process
- ☛ It's impossible to be a "disembodied researcher"