

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

I created this document not only to help you succeed in my class, but also to help you succeed in your other classes. Although some of the tips and suggestions are specific to this course, most of this guide can be applied to any class you take here at UNLV. As I am always looking to improve, feel free to inform me of any tips you feel should be included in this guide that you would like to share with other students.

Classroom Strategies.....Page 1

This section will provide you with strategies for approaching the classroom setting. It will discuss strategies for taking notes in class, participating, and getting the most out of the lectures and in-class activities.

Studying Strategies.....Page 2

This section will provide you with tips for studying at home. It includes suggestions for taking notes, reading for understanding, and other helpful ideas for studying at home both for exams and for preparing for class.

Test-Taking Strategies.....Page 3

This section will provide you with strategies for taking the class exams. As our exams are predominantly multiple choice, these tips will generally be more relevant for multiple-choice exams, but many of these suggestions can also be used for taking other exams.

Writing Strategies.....Page 3

This section will provide you with tips for composing written assignments. Although some of these tips may seem basic, they are important factors to remember when writing a response both for written assignments and discussion questions.

Strategies for Citations and Avoiding Plagiarism.....Page 4

This section will provide you with strategies for citing your work and avoiding plagiarism. Because I do not have a preferred style guide, I will not be providing citation examples, but this section will address common mistakes in citing work and avoiding plagiarism.

Miscellaneous Strategies.....Page 5

This final section will provide you with miscellaneous strategies that did not fit into any of the above categories. I will also provide you with links to informational websites and list the resources available to you at UNLV to help you improve.

Classroom Strategies

- Always come to class prepared. Read the assigned readings and come to class with questions, if you have any, about the assigned readings or topics.
- Sit in the front. It is easy to get distracted if you sit near the back. Sometimes, it is also more difficult to hear, and you may not get as much out of the lectures.
- Try to have a small snack or meal before coming to class. You don't want to be starving when you arrive, but at the same time, you don't want to risk a food coma either.

- Bring bottled water to class. It will help you stay hydrated and alert.
- Take notes. I do not allow electronic devices because studies have shown that students do better on exams when they are forced to take notes by hand and not by typing on a laptop or tablet. You can read more about it here: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/>
 - Note-taking is an acquired skill. You do not want to write all of the lecture down word for word. Listen (and look for on the PowerPoint slides) for key words and concepts.
 - You can find note-taking tips all over the internet or through asking friends, but in the end, it is best to find a strategy that works best for you.
- Ask questions in class! It is a cliché, but there are really no dumb questions. If you have a question, or if something is unclear, you are most likely not the only one who is confused. Bonus hint: asking questions will help with your participation points!
- When possible, we will try to discuss current events as they relate to the topics being covered in the lecture. Try to watch or read some of the news to keep informed of the big issues surrounding both the United States and abroad. Pay careful attention to what is happening in the country you are assigned. This will also help with participation points! Remembering these key issues as they pertain to the reading can help to increase your understanding of the material.

Studying Strategies

- Make studying a part of your schedule. It is easy to get caught up with other classes, new college experiences and friends, and other daily activities, such as a job or raising a family.
 - Set aside a few hours each week for each of your classes. In this class, you will probably need at least an hour or two to read through the assigned readings for the class
 - Take a break from studying (approximately 10 minutes for every hour you study) to stretch, have a snack, etc. This will help you to stay alert and to retain more of the material.
- Take notes as you study. This will help you to remember the key concepts for class discussions. Additionally, you will also have great notes for the exam, which may be a few weeks after the material has been covered. Having good notes (both from studying at home and from taking notes in class) will help you tremendously on the exams.
- Write down questions and ways that the material relates to current events. This will help to refresh your memory when the topics are brought up in class. You will also have talking points already planned out so you can get full credit for classroom participation.
- If you own your textbook highlighting the information and writing notes in the margin can be helpful for jogging your memory. It will also help you to find the key phrases and ideas in the text when you are studying for exams.
- When you can, make a table for easily comparing course material. For example, you might create a table to compare parliamentary and presidential systems.
- Use the textbook website! There is a link to the textbook website on WebCampus, or you can link to: <http://college.cqpress.com/sites/principlescp/home.aspx>. The publisher provides summaries, flashcards, practice quizzes, and more. These can help to supplement your reading and our class discussions.

Test-Taking Strategies

- Do not try to search for the answers as you are taking the test. You WILL run out of time! Google is not your friend!
- Start studying (if you haven't already)!
 - Review the textbook website:
 - * Take the practice quizzes
 - * Use the flashcards to learn terminology
 - * Browse through the summaries to know the key points
 - Look at the end of the chapter of the text book for key concepts and additional problems and study help
- How to take the exam:
 - Pace yourself
 - Answer all of the questions you know first
 - Go back to the questions you are unsure of
 - * Spread your remaining equally time between the more difficult questions
 - * Eliminate as many answers as you can. If there are four choices, and you know that two are wrong, you have gone from a 25% chance of a correct answer to a 50% chance of a correct answer.
 - * If you are out of time, guess! You are not penalized for getting a wrong answer
 - SAVE your answers often! In the event your exam is force submitted because time runs out, give yourself the best chance at getting points. WebCampus seems finicky about how often it auto-saves, so do it every few minutes.
- Use a computer or laptop
 - DO NOT use a tablet, smartphone, etc.
 - Make sure you have battery power if using a laptop
 - Make sure you will have a stable internet connection
 - Unsure? Use the library to take your exams
- Do NOT use Google Chrome
 - Although rare, some glitches occur with Google Chrome because the browser is not supported by WebCampus. Use Firefox, Safari, or Internet Explorer.

Writing Strategies

Although we will not have a formal paper or long written assignment in this course, these tips are still useful for your annotated bibliography and abstract, as well as for papers you may write in other courses.

- Always start with a plan! You need to create an outline of the key points that you will address in your written assignment.
- When planning your assignment, consider the following points:
 - What is the assignment asking for? Specifically what questions do you need to answer to get full credit for the assignment?

- How does the assignment relate to what was covered in the text and in class?
- What sources, other than the classroom discussions and textbooks, are needed to answer each question of the assignment?
- Start early! If you have a week to write your assignment, do not wait until the last minute to throw something together. It will be reflected in your work.
- Give yourself a day (or at least a break of a few hours) to edit your paper. This is why it is important to start early. Having time between typing and editing can make a world of difference. You will catch mistakes or even come up with new ideas. Planning for editing also allows you to ensure you are turning in your best work.
- Take instructor comments into consideration. If you have comments from a previous assignment, use them to improve future papers. It is especially useful if the instructor has provided you with suggestions for improving your work. This can help you to understand what the instructor wants from you and you can better target your paper to the expectations of the course.
- When writing responses for discussion questions, make sure to be thoughtful. Do not simply agree or disagree. Add to the conversation by including your own experiences or by relating current events to the topic of discussion. Always remain courteous when formulating responses.
- Do not plagiarize. This will be discussed in the next section.

Strategies for Citations and Avoiding Plagiarism

- Plagiarism is a serious offense. It can result in you receiving an F for the course, or worse, expulsion from the university.
- Do not use Wikipedia. It is not a reliable source. Instead, use journal articles. Information from the government and organizations, which can be used to make a point in written assignments or discussion responses are generally reliable. Newspapers can also be good sources of information, as long as you consider potential media bias. Credible news sources are fine for the discussion forums.
- Consider your sources, and any bias that may exist in your sources. Try to examine more than one source when making a point or making an argument. The more sources you have, the more credible your argument becomes.
- Always remember to cite your sources.
 - If you got the information from somewhere, you need to inform the reader.
 - Any citation style is acceptable in this class, as long as you use one. Keep the formatting the same. I recommend that students use the style guide of their major since that is the style they will likely use through most of their academic career. Popular style guides include MLA, APA, and Chicago. For those of you who are political science majors, the APSA style is preferred.
 - Include a reference page for the full citation of your source.
 - Use in-text citations for citing material within your written assignment or discussion post.
- Do not copy entire blocks of information (i.e. paragraphs from a government website) even if you are citing it. Instead, rephrase the information in your own words (paraphrase) and cite the information with in-text and full references.

- This should go without saying, but DO NOT purchase papers from online sources, do not have your friend/family member write your paper, and do not attempt to copy large amounts of information.
- All annotated bibliographies and abstracts will be submitted through plagiarism-detection software. If you are caught plagiarizing, the penalties are severe. Do not risk your entire future. If you are having a difficult time with understanding the assignment, I am always available for discussion.

Miscellaneous Strategies

- On-Campus Resources
 - UNLV offers tutoring for all students taking classes. You are encouraged to use their services for this, or any of your other classes.
 - * Campus Location: Academic Success Center (ASC)
 - * Phone: (702) 895-3177
 - * Website: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>
 - * Email: tutoring@unlv.edu
 - The UNLV Writing Center provides free one-on-one or small-group assistance with writing. Walk-ins are available, but students with appointments will be given priority.
 - * Campus Location: Central Desert Complex (CDC), Building 3, Room 301
 - * Phone: (702) 895-3908
 - * Website: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>
 - * Email: writingcenter@unlv.edu
 - The UNLV Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel you have a disability, please contact them to discuss the options available to you that may make your studies easier.
 - * Campus Location: Student Services Complex (SSC), Room A143
 - * Phone: (702) 895-0866
 - * Website: <http://drc.unlv.edu/>
 - * Email: drc@unlv.edu
- Speed Reading Courses
 - Once a semester, the school offers speed reading courses. These can be costly, and the courses are normally on Saturdays, but they can be helpful if you want to increase your reading pace. I took one my first semester of graduate school here at UNLV. It helped me tremendously. I have tried to include the tips I learned there in this guide. You can see your academic advisor for more information on speed reading courses.