

# Open book exams

## In an open book exam

you are evaluated on understanding rather than recall and memorization.

### *You will be expected to*

- apply material to new situations
- analyze elements and relationships
- synthesize, or structure
- evaluate using your material as evidence

### **Access to content (books, notes, etc.) varies by instructor.**

The exam can be take home or in the classroom with questions seen or unseen before exam time

### **Do not underestimate the preparation needed for an open book exam:**

your time will be limited, so the key is proper organization in order to quickly find data, quotes, examples, and/or arguments you use in your answers.

### ***Preparation:***

- Keep current on readings and assignments in class
- Prepare brief, concise notes on ideas and concepts being tested
- Carefully select what you intend to bring with you to the exam, and note anything significant about what you do not
- Include your own commentary on the information that will provide fuel for your arguments, and demonstrate that you have thought this through
- Anticipate with model questions, but not model answers. Challenge yourself instead with how you would answer questions, and what options and resources you may need to consider.

### **Organize your reference materials, your "open book:"**

Make your reference materials as user-friendly as possible so that you don't lose time locating what you need

- **Familiarize yourself** with the format, layout and structure of your text books and source materials
- **Organize these with your class notes** for speedy retrieval, and index ideas and concepts with pointers and/or page numbers in the source material (Develop a system of tabs/sticky notes, color coding, concept maps, etc. to mark important summaries, headings, sections)
- **Write short, manageable summaries** of content for each grouping
- **List out data and formulas** separately for easy access

### ***Test taking:***

- **Read the questions carefully** to understand what is expected.
- **Make good use of time**  
Quickly review the number of questions and note how much time each could take.

First answer the questions that you are confident of and/or for which you will not need much time checking out the resources. Leave more complex and difficult questions for later

- **Don't over-answer**

Aim for concise, accurate, thoughtful answers that are based in evidence.

### **Use quotations**

- to illustrate a point, or act as a discussion point
- to draw on the authority of the source
- because you could not say it better

### **Quotations can be short**

Three or four words can be extremely effective when they are worked into the structure of your sentence

**A reference to a quote** may be as effective as the quote itself

**Guard against over-quoting.** It is your words and your argument; extensive quoting may detract from your point or argument