Final Exam Preparation
Mariëlle Hoefnagels, OU Depts. of Zoology and Botany-Microbiology

First, take inventory. Complete this part of the form for EACH of your courses.

Class: ____________________________ # credits: __________________

These questions will help you plan a SCHEDULE for studying for finals.

- What day is the final?
- How many studying days do you have left before the final?
- Is the final comprehensive?
- How many lectures worth of material (total) do you have to study for the final?
- How many lectures worth of material do you have to study PER DAY before the final?
- Using your answer to the previous question, mark your studying goals for each class on your calendar. Monitor your progress each day!

You may have to prioritize your studying time for your finals based on factors like:

- how many credits the course is worth (the more credits, the greater the effect on your GPA)
- the point value of the final exam
- how close you are right now to a grade cutoff

These questions will help you plan a STRATEGY for studying for the final.

- What is your goal for your course grade?
- How many points is the final worth?
- What score do you have to earn on the final to get that grade?
- Are there any special grading policies that make some sections of the final worth more points than others?
- What resources are available to you in studying for the final?
  - class notes?
  - textbook?
  - review sheets or study guides?
  - class/book website with online videos, flashcards, audio files, etc.?
  - old exams?
  - Action Centers/tutoring/office hours?
  - other?

[See the next page for study tips and strategies]
Now that you've taken inventory of the final exam situation for all of your classes, these tips should help you study for ANY final.

Begin by figuring out what you already know about the material that will be on the final. What are some ways to figure out what you know and don’t know?

- Go back to old exams and see if you can explain why each correct answer is correct and why each wrong answer is wrong.
- Write down everything you can remember about a topic.
- Try to explain a topic to a friend.
- Choose ~20 vocabulary terms and see if you can construct a concept map that incorporates all of those ideas.

Now, don't waste time studying stuff you already know. Instead, focus on the things that (a) you are supposed to know that you never learned or (b) you haven't learned yet because it's new for the final.

These study techniques should help you learn the material you don't know yet. Keep in mind that the goal is to UNDERSTAND the material, not just memorize it.

- Master the material in the order it was presented in class. Later material often builds on earlier material, so it pays to master the early stuff first.
- Make up your own test questions.
- Write down everything you can remember about topics on study guides or vocabulary lists (or just from your notes). This is called “writing to learn” and it’s very powerful.
- Do targeted readings of just the specific topics that are giving you trouble. At this point, it might not be worth the time it takes to read entire chapters, but targeted readings should be useful.
- Practice drawing out diagrams of processes or complex structures.
- If you're studying processes, see if you can tell a story about it to yourself. If you’re studying structures, see if you can describe it to yourself.
- Studying with friends? Try this:
  - Trade your notes with your friends. See if you can identify ideas that are missing from your own or from your friend’s notes.
  - Take turns adding ideas to a group concept map.

And a few more pieces of advice ...

- Don't make guesses about what’s “important” enough to study. Your idea of what’s important is likely to be different from your professor’s.
- Don’t just study the stuff you like; confront the stuff that’s hard or complex.
- Ask your professor if he or she can suggest any study strategies unique to a specific course.
- Build time for breaks into your studying schedule to give your brain a chance to rest.
- For more advice on studying for finals and managing stress, try a Student Success Series seminar:
  http://www.ou.edu/univcoll/home/academic_resources/student_success_series.html