Dr. Gene Rhea Tucker

Ten Tips for Writing Essay Exams

1. Use paragraphs, complete sentences, and other proper forms of writing.

2. Answer the question asked of you, do not write about a different topic you may know better.

3. Do not merely repeat the question. It is not cute and it does not answer the question.

4. Be specific and use examples. Make assertions, and then back up those assertions with examples from the readings and lectures. Prove that you read, listened, and understood the material. You must explain WHY!

5. When you have the essay questions ahead of time, plan out your answers. Think about how much time you have for the exam and how much time you want to spend on each question.

6. Strike through mistakes with a single line; do not scribble out misspellings, etc.

7. Avoid abbreviations for words that should be spelled out, such as “w/” for “with,” “b/c” for “because,” “govt.” for “government,” etc. Abbreviations should only be used for commonly abbreviated terms like “USA” for “United States of America” or “UK” for the “United Kingdom.” Do not use things like “2” for “two” or “b4” for “before,” this is a piece of formal writing not a text message!

8. Do not use contractions.

9. Avoid slang and a joking or personal tone and do not give your opinion unless the question asks for it.

10. **Remember, this is a piece of formal writing.**