TAKING LAW SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS

The outline that follows is to be consulted, along with the separate handout of Example Examination Questions, while watching the video presentation.

I. Preparing for Law School Examinations
II. Types of Law School Examinations
III. Classic Mistakes In Answering Law School Examinations
IV. A Suggested Approach for In-Class Examinations
V. Take Home Examinations
VI. Common Questions About Law School Examinations
VII. After the Examination

Preparing for Law School Examinations
A. Professors are different
B. Examinations are different
C. Prepare for the particular professor and exam in question
   1. Old examinations
   2. Instructions
   3. Discussing the material with classmates

Types of Law School Examinations
A. Undergraduate
B. Public Policy
C. Kitchen Sink
D. Role Play
E. Multiple Choice/Short Answer
F. Weird

Classic Mistakes In Answering Law Examinations
A. Not Knowing the Material
   1. Not having done the work
   2. Not thinking about the exam when reviewing the work
B. Missing Major Issues
   1. Not answering the question that is asked
   2. Answering questions that you are not asked
   3. Failing to allocate time wisely
   4. Failing to break a long question down into shorter pieces


D. Failing to Make the Analysis Explicit
   1. The Problem Described
   2. Reason #1 for the failure: “It is so obvious that this conclusion follows from these facts and rules; I would look stupid if I said why.”
   3. Reason #2 for the failure: “It is not obvious at all which conclusion follows from these facts and rules; I must nevertheless sound authoritative and make it look like the answer is clear.”

E. Failing to Acknowledge Counterarguments

F. Not Employing common Sense At The Last Stage

A SUGGESTED APPROACH FOR IN-CLASS EXAMINATIONS

A. Step #1: Focus on the question asked.
B. Step #2: Identify the major issues that must be addressed.
C. Step #3: Allocate time among the issues.
D. Step #4: For each issue, state applicable law briefly; identify what is most problematic about applying that law to these facts and why.
E. Step #5: Analyze how you would resolve the most problematic part. Identify counterarguments.

TAKE HOME EXAMINATIONS

A. Word limits are equivalent to time limits.
B. Thinking and Analysis are even more vital.
C. Style is more important than on an in-class examination.

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT LAW SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS

A. What do I do when time is short?
B. What do I do if I am totally panicked by the question?
C. What do I do if I realize the last four paragraphs I have written are wrong?
D. The question asks me to be a judge (or lawyer or legislator). Can I be the kind of judge (or lawyer or legislator) I want to be, or do I have to be the kind of judge (or lawyer or legislator) the professor wants me to be?
E. What if the professor has no previous examinations available for review?
F. What if the professor emphasizes a mode of analysis (e.g. economics or literary theory) that I find totally alien?

G. What if the question is entirely open-ended? What approach shall I take?

H. I see many issues in this question. How do I know which ones the professor cares about most, and will give the most credit for in grading?

**After The Examination**

A. Discussing the Exam with Classmates

B. Receiving Your Grade

C. Reviewing Your Own Exam

D. Visiting Your Professor