

COMPS SHARING EVENT OUTLINE

October 2007

I. What are some pre-comp thoughts you had?

Devon: Treat your significant other well.

Brigitte: Begin to gather the articles/journals from the past three years in the spring semester. As time permits, begin to organize them into themes BEFORE studying them. This makes it easier to study because topics will be understood better across time. I did not read the MONITOR, AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST, or the JCD articles given for comps

Steve: Viewed it as game prep, and wanted to do it in the easiest/ most streamlined way as possible. I was actually pumped the night before.

II. How did you prepare?

-What did you read?

Nadia: I read the key articles for each theme and used summaries from others

Devon: Printed out all articles, arranged by theme/topic. Those articles that did not fit into a major theme I often did not read.

Brigitte: Read thematically and you don't have to read every thing on the subject. Decide early on whether to work with others to share the load of readings and make summaries you can share (some cohorts do this, others do not)

Steve: All of my special year, then I read summaries that fit with the recurring themes from other 2 years. I looked to past year outlines for their themes, and then added the new ones from my year.

-Did you do practice questions?

Nadia: I think it is important to do these because it will help you see if you are prepared to answer the exam questions.

Devon: I only completed one practice question, but writing is a strength of mine. Make SURE that you can STAY WITHIN THE TIME LIMIT

Brigitte: Do practice questions in areas once you have read several articles on that topic and feel you know it pretty well. Have your advisor give you a question in that area. It seems like 1 1/2 hours is not enough time for an answer, but it is and in the test you even have a little more time than that. I had plenty of time for each of my answers and was able to go back and proofread and change things. Do several questions and get feedback

Steve: I did 8 and handicapped myself by giving myself less time, checking my email, talking to people while in the computer lab. I then got feedback from faculty, which was very beneficial. I figured, if I could complete good answers in a handicapped situation, then test day I should be fine.

-Did you work with others?

Nadia: I talked with other for social support and exam advice, but I primarily studied alone.

Devon: USE EACH OTHER. I could not have survived without Jill and we shared nearly all of our materials. Use the outlines from people before you, but as you read articles, compare the summaries to your own perceptions of the articles

Steve: Nah, but I did vent a couple times to some nice people.

-What is this outline thing?-

Nadia: This is very important. I conducted a qualitative analysis of the recent literature and key classes to produce exam themes. Then I organized my summaries into the themes and studied the themes. I continued to reduce my working guide to the 40 page limit so I can use it for the exam.

Devon: Do NOT try to memorize every detail. Just get the gist of the article. Your study guide can contain the specifics for you. Comps is more about synthesis than it is about specifics. Organize your study guide however it works best for you. Use what's worked for you in the past, don't be scared to experiment with new things. Making the study guide from all those articles is probably what seemed most daunting to me; just pull the most important parts out of the articles.

Brigitte: At least loosely begin to have an outline, again by theme because it will save you time later in preparing your study guide. Remember, you don't have to have every article in it on the topic. Believe me, you will throw away articles close to the end. By the week before the test your outline should be complete and you are reading over it each day so that you know where things are in the outline and can reference them quickly. By the day before you take the test you will feel like you can't study any more. You're done!

Steve: Outline was Steve's lifeline! Used past outlines to create mine, did not reinvent the wheel. Used just outline during practice questions, as well. Divided by themes and subthemes.

III. How did you take care of yourself and manage your anxiety before the exam?

Nadia: I talked with other students, my advisor, and other faculty about the exam to help reduce my stress. I rewarded myself for studying with small and bug gifts depending on how much I studied.

Devon: I stressed out a LOT. I didn't manage my stress well. Take care with pharmacological interventions if you need to. I appreciated less thinking activities such as movie-watching, beverage-consumption, and TV. I let my fiancée do the laundry and make dinner.

Brigitte: my advisor helped to keep me grounded. He asked "what proof do you have that you will not pass?" He assured me that most pass and gave me good feedback about my practice test answers. I tried to get exercise during the time before the test to relieve stress but I admit that towards the end I was taking a sleep aid and not getting much exercise because I worried about

studying all of the time. However, I always knew that this was a temporary situation and I would get exercise again when I was finished.

Steve: Exercise and viewed the test as an opportunity to kick ass, not something anxiety provoking. I went golfing the night before to clear my head.

IV. Alright, now it's test time...

-How did you approach answering questions?

Nadia: created an outline for 5-10 minutes, then turned my bullet points into paragraphs

Devon: Use outlines and structure your answers before you start writing. Budget your time so you can finish an answer, complete the next one, and then go back and edit both answers

Brigitte: I studied thematically and so my outline was set up that way. I would decide on a question to answer and be able to go to that place in my study guide for the references I needed. Use the paper you are given to set up an outline before answering on computer (do this with practice questions too).

Steve: Used the question itself to create an outline... used subheadings to direct myself and the reader. At this point, the answer almost wrote itself. I can show folks this technique if interested.

-How did you take care of yourself/manage anxiety during the test?

Nadia: created a mantra and put it on each page of my guide,

Devon: Bring things to snack, things that will remind you of home, whatever will make you feel better

Brigitte: I was very anxious at first, but concentrated on answering the question in the allotted time so that by lunch the first day, I thought "this is not as bad as I had imagined". I also knew that I could miss two and still pass so I thought if my early ones blew it due to nerves, I still could pass.

Steve: Deep breaths, walked around a little bit, stretched, chatted with people in hallway.

-How did you use your outline?

Nadia: I used my guide a lot, esp. for the question details.

Devon: Use your study guide to help write your outline and determine what your argument is! You don't always have to actually believe your argument—just be able to support it!

Steve: I used my outline for EVERYTHING! I looked at the question, and then pulled from themes/literature that helped illustrate my point. The literature and outline is my ammunition, it can be used in multiple ways to answer the same question.

-What were your post-test thoughts?

Devon: Celebrate and relax; there's nothing more you can do at this point

Brigitte: I had a sense that I answered the questions and that I should pass. They were not great answers I told myself but they were good enough. Although we could take our answers home and proofread and fix grammar, I would not advise it. I started to do that and I began to get anxious about my answers and stopped after the second answer. Then, all I could do is wait and get busy with other things.

Steve: That's it!? It was bittersweet. Spent the summer studying, then...it's done. Kinda weird.

V. F ya! I passed....Orals!?

Nadia: Not a big deal. Dress nice and talk a lot. Think about your overall career goals and share them with the group.

Devon: I did little (read: nothing) to prepare....you may want to do more than me. Prepare a few cites for major things, such as important major articles.

Brigitte: felt like I was preparing for an interview such as for practicum placement and so my anxiety was manageable. I had trouble in comps with remembering some references but the questions were reasonable and related to my interests. Don't sweat these. You have to not be able to speak to not pass.

Steve: I did zero prep, just got a cup of coffee and chatted. I looked at it is a cool opportunity to have a professional dialogue.

VI. Any additional thoughts about this process that I should know about?

Brigitte: Call or email if you need encouragement. We can help you ground yourself again. It is not impossible. Bring in something for the test that is a comfort to you or gives you encouragement. People had written me cards, and I had them with me. I also had Bible verses in front of me that helped too.

Steve: It is what it is folks...**DO WHAT WORKS FOR YOU and MAKE IT HAPPEN!** Ask folks who have done it before for advice if you think it will help.