**Teaching and Learning Centre podcasts: the DISSERTATION SERIES**

**Revising and preparing for** **exams** **– KEY POINTS**

**USE PAST PAPERS**

* Find past exam papers on the LSE Library’s website.
* Search for themes that recur among the questions asked in past exams and seek out the different ways your professors have formulated questions about the same topics.
* Instead of reviewing your course week by week, try to group ideas and topics together in a new way – a way that makes sense to you, across the themes you identify among the past exam papers.
* Build your own “repertoire” of material: the themes and topics you select to specialise in.

**PRACTICE**

* Use past exam questions to practice the skills you’ll need when you sit the exams: developing, planning, and writing a logical argument, clearly (in a limited amount of time with a pen and paper).
* First, practice what you’ll need to do in the first 10 minutes (of about an hour, for one essay). Analyse the question carefully to understand what you are being asked to do, develop a concise response to the question, then develop that response – your argument – over two or three or four main points. Try to list relevant evidence, theories, examples, counterexamples for each of the main points.
* Then, practice writing full answers in about 55 minutes (or in the amount of time you’ll have for each of your exam questions.
* Most importantly, READ your practice plans and essays. Determine where you are making clear, well-supported points and where you still need to understand more about the question or problem. Use your writing to guide your revision.
* If you have trouble making a judgement on your writing, ask someone else to have a look at it with you.

**WORK WITH OTHERS**

* Consider forming a study group for exam revision. Keep the group small (4-5 persons) and keep the sessions short and focussed. Set shared, achievable goals for each meeting – and share the responsibility of setting the agenda, making copies, sending reminders, etc.
* As always, take advantage of the support available at the school: teachers in your department, advisers in the LSE100 Writing Lab advisers, Royal Literary Fund Fellows, study advisers at the Teaching and Learning Centre.

**PLAN YOUR REVISION**

* Start your revision early!
* Be sure your plan includes all your activities: dissertation or research work, paid work, volunteering, time with family and friends, leisure time, etc.
* Be realistic about how much you can do in any one day.
* Be flexible and ready to adjust your plan if some material seems to require more time.
* Keep your plan on the wall, on your phone, in your calendar…where ever you’ll see it on a daily basis.

In preparing for exams, instead of focussing on **memorising** lots of facts, authors, and dates, prioritise

* **understanding** the material you’ve studied,
* **recognising** the implications and applications of the theories you’ve learned, and
* **making your own connections** among different parts of your course.

Memorising lecture notes and slides prepares you to write exam essays where you simply reproduce this material, or try to write everything you can think of about a topic – without building any kind of narrative or argument. In exam essays, like in other essays, you should make a clear point within a structured, analytical, logically flowing argument.