Exam Autopsy

Exam errors usually indicate knowledge gaps or errors in test-taking strategies. Performing an “Exam Autopsy” on returned tests can help you understand why you made errors and facilitate adjustments in your study and review techniques to improve your performance on later exams.

### Check what you did before the exam:

- Read and highlighted/underlined the textbook.
- Combined notes from the text with lecture notes.
- Prepared a test study guide.
- Studied with other students from class.
- Got assistance from the TA or Professor.
- Got ample sleep the night before the test.
- Previewed the assigned reading before class.
- Attended all lectures.
- Reviewed previous notes before the next lecture.
- Attended SI sessions or tutoring.

### Check what you did during the exam:

- Glance through the exam before doing any work.
- Read the instructions carefully.
- Complete the easiest questions first.
- Ask for clarification of unclear questions.
- Underlined key words in questions.
- Outlined my answers to essay questions.
- Became so anxious that it affected my performance.
- Budgeted my time based on question weight.
- Did the exam questions in order.
- Skipped hard questions to return to them later.

### So now what do I do with all of this???

Look at where you had the most difficulty from the Exam Autopsy Worksheet. Were most of your missed questions because of insufficient information? Or were they a result of careless mistakes?

Identifying where you struggle the most can help to pinpoint specific tactics for you to use either in preparation for or during the test. Based on where you struggle the most according to the worksheet, try some of the following approaches to improve before your next exam!

#### Insufficient Information or Lack of Test Wisdom:

- Attend tutoring, supplemental instruction, and/or study groups.
- Keep up with the material – falling behind can make you feel overwhelmed and even less motivated!
- Clarify concepts by asking questions during lecture and participating in class discussions.
- Visit the professor’s office hours.
- Review idea sheets on:
  - Getting it Write – Lecture Note Taking.
  - Reading Worksheet.
  - Hear What?! Active Listening.
  - Remember What? Memory Improvement.
  - 168 Hours – How will you use them?

#### Test Anxiety or Careless Mistakes:

- Underline key words in questions so you can keep track of important information and directions.
- Skip difficult questions and return to them later – your brain may need more thinking time to process the information before you answer it!
- Ask for help during the exam for clarification.
- Review idea sheets on:
  - Essay Test Tactics.
  - Objective Test Tactics – M/C & T/F
  - Learning Styles.
  - Test Anxiety.
  - The Study Cycle.