

# **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
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## **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
- C. Regurgitating Facts and Law: G.T.T.A.
- 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