STARS: S T A R S

NOTETAKING

Many students who don't do well academically admit that they skip class or have trouble taking lecture notes. The activity that goes on during class is the most important part of your Whitman College education. You are paying a lot for the instructor's lectures and expertise, as well as the discussion by your peers. Lecture notes are also the best way to prepare for exams. Most test questions come from the class lecture or discussion. Getting good notes from the class lecture is crucial to getting the most out of Whitman, otherwise you might as well be taking a correspondence course.

There are three steps to taking good notes from lectures:

1. LISTEN:

   Listening is easier to do if you are interested in what is being said. A way to spark interest is to come prepared by having read the assigned reading. Sit front and center so that you can see the instructor's expressions and body language. This will enable you to see the board clearly and is a way of committing yourself to being an active part of the class.

   Focus your attention on the speaker—whether it's the instructor or a student. Be aware of your attention and your daydreaming, and find a way that works for you to get yourself back on track. Force yourself to write down your distracting thoughts. Play the "devil's advocate" and think of oppositional points of view, or challenge yourself to think of questions about the lecture. Listen for conclusions or lists and pay attention to the speaker's interest level. The professor's use of superlatives usually indicates a point worth noting.

2. WRITE:

   There are several effective ways to take notes, but the bottom line is you want to have your notes reflect your understanding of what was said. Be a "thinking" tape recorder; in other words make the notes meaningful to you. Avoid adding your own thoughts unless you have a way of distinguishing your idea from that of the professor—there will be time for you to comment later.

   Leave spaces between separate points and leave room in the margins. Use symbols and incomplete sentences; just be sure that you understand what you write. Underline, use stars, arrows, or question marks to make your point. You can use an outline form if that is what you are used to, or if the professor lectures in that format. Using the "Cornell Method" of notetaking (developed by Walter Park) is simple: you draw a vertical line down the page two inches from the left-hand edge. In the right column you take notes in any form you like, then later fill in the left column with comments, questions, or titles that separate the notes by topic.

   (See the reverse side for an example of the Cornell Method of notetaking.)

3. RE-ORGANIZE:

   After class, take the time to review and reorganize your notes. This one activity will facilitate learning and decrease your study time before the test. Some students rewrite their notes using the Cornell Method, mapping, or key-word diagrams. If you do not have time to rewrite your notes, just review (and add comments to) them after class.

   Make sure that you understand your notes before you forget what was said. Students have reported that creating questions about the material that you don't understand or just forming a question that a particular section of notes answers, is an effective way to increase learning. This allows you to review your notes before the test by asking a question, then reading the answer.

Sample of the Cornell Method of Notetaking

9/20/99 FAUVISM & EXPRESSIONISM

meaning of fauvism →	*Fauvism 1905-1908 mostly in Paris or S. of France (means "beastly") Slide: Blue Nude, Henri Matisse 1907
key figures →	other artists: Andre Derain, Maurice de Vlaminck
Father of Fauvism is Gaugin	Evolved from Gauguin and Rousseau
Salient features →	The paintings are bold and vibrant, somewhat raw and distorted. Black outlines. Joyous mood. Upset the traditional order and harmony in French painting.
key players →	*Expressionism 1905-1920s Germany Slide: Street, Dresden Ernst Ludwig Kirchner 1908 other Expr. artists: Vassily Kandinsky ("Black Lines" 1913–painting in textbook), Emil Nolde, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Paul Klee, Otto Dix Style similar to or derived from Van Gogh, Edvard Munch Nietzsche plays a role
characteristics of Expressionism →	Paintings feature pathos, violence, morbidity–sometimes rage. Figures are distorted and fragmented. This movement is seen as Germany's move toward art independence from France.
**Find out/ask prof: What are the roots of origin??	

(Notes are based on text from An Incomplete Education by J. Jones and W. Wilson)