Using Past Papers
VALUE MaP
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Student Learning Advisory Service
Long-term Revision Planning

• Revise systematically: little and often
• Start by getting a measure of the job
  – When, where, how long…? Exam timetable
  – This will appear on your SDS
  – Click on the “Exams” button
  – You will find: [n.b. illustrative example only; in red!]
    • Module SP310
    • Location Gillingham (Medway)
    • Day Friday
    • Date 03.06.2016
    • Start time 14.00
    • Finish time 17.00
The Examinations Time-table, 2016

• Monday 9th May to Friday 17th June
• Weeks 25 to 30
• Including Saturdays; excluding Sundays and Bank Holidays

• http://www.kent.ac.uk/student-records/exams/timetable.html
The Examinations Time-table, 2016

• Stage 1: Generally, Monday 23rd >
  – N.B. There may be some exceptions e.g. some core Law modules

• Stage 2 & 3: Monday 9th May >

• Note instructions from Examinations Office: it is your responsibility to check your SDS entry regularly for updates
Long-term Revision Planning

– Check out past papers
  • Key topics to be revised
  • Rubrics (instructions): how long; how many questions; how are marks allocated etc.

– Check out Kent exam regulations
  • What will you be allowed to take in?
  • Other ‘rules of the game’
  • [http://www.kent.ac.uk/student-records/exams/students/?tab=regulations](http://www.kent.ac.uk/student-records/exams/students/?tab=regulations)
Exam information for candidates

Regulations

The following is an extract from the General Regulations for Students.

General Regulation III(4) Of the Conduct of Examinations

1. Candidates may not leave an examination room during the first 30 minutes of a session. Candidates may enter an examination room at any time during a session. However, where a candidate enters an examination room more than 30 minutes after the start of a session, the relevant Board of Examiners shall have discretion to decide whether and how marks awarded in such circumstances are to be used. Candidates who enter an examination room after the start of a session will not as a result be granted additional time for the examination.

2. Except where allowed by the examination instructions, no candidate may introduct into the examination room any book, manuscript or other object or material relevant to the subject of the examination.

3. Every candidate is forbidden to communicate in any way or to seek assistance from or give assistance to another candidate in the examination room.

4. No candidate may remove from the examination room any papers except the question paper and such books or other material as the examination instructions permit to be introduced into the examination room.

5. Any candidate suspected of using or attempting to use any unfair means, including copying, or attempting to copy from the work of another candidate in the examination room, will be reported immediately by the Invigilator to the Academic Registrar. Such a person will undergo internal disciplinary action, which may include failure in the whole or in part of the examination.

6. Should a candidate act in such a way as to disturb or inconvenience any other candidate he will be warned and may, at the discretion of the Invigilator, be dismissed from the session.

7. Any candidate permitted to leave the examination room temporarily must be accompanied by an Invigilator.

8. Smoking is not permitted during examinations.
Past Exam Papers

- May be on **Moodle** for your modules
- **Templeman** library website: [http://www.kent.ac.uk/library/resources/index.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/library/resources/index.html)
- Click on Past Exam Papers:
Past Exam Papers

Type in Module code
UNIVERSITY OF KENT
S0326/2012

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

LEVEL C EXAMINATION

BSc (HONS) SOCIAL SCIENCES / BA (HONS) CRIMINAL JUSTICE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN: HISTORY AND POLITICS FROM 1500

Wednesday 6 June 2012: 9.30am – 12.30pm

Instructions

Time allowed: THREE hours

There are NINE questions

Candidates should answer THREE questions: Section A Question 1 AND one question from Section B AND one question from Section C

All questions carry equal marks

Download the pdf
UNIVERSITY OF KENT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

LEVEL C EXAMINATION

HISTORY

The Northumbrian Renaissance: Bede and his World

Time Allowed: Two Hours

Tuesday, 30 May 2006: 14.00 – 16.00

There are TWO questions. Candidates should answer BOTH questions. In Question One, you must comment on THREE of the passages; in Question Two you must write ONE essay.
The paper contains THREE questions, ONE in Section A and TWO in Section B. Answer TWO questions, question 1 and ONE question from Section B.

Calculators are not permitted.

Answer each question in a separate book.
There are **TEN** questions. There are **TWO** sections **A** and **B**. Candidates should answer **FOUR** questions, including at least **TWO** questions from section **A**. The remaining questions may be taken from either **TWO** questions from section **A** or from section **B**. Candidates must **NOT** answer both of questions 6 and 7.

All answers will be weighted equally in marking.

Material used in one answer should not be substantially duplicated in answer to another.

Candidates are supplied with a list of names of cases contained in the lecture handouts.

Candidates may refer to a copy of *Blackstone's Statutes on Contract, Tort and Restitution*, or to copies of the text of any legislation contained therein. Such material may be underlined or shaded with a translucent marker but must not be otherwise annotated. Copies of annotated editions of the legislation are not permitted. The ‘explanatory notes’ attached to the official version of legislation are not permitted.
Using Past Papers- General Principles

• Draw up a list of likely **topics** – *not* questions
• Check how frequently that topic appears in exams
• Use that information to target your revision
• Focus on the topic, not the question
• Towards the end of the revision phase…
  – Start to practice writing answers
    • informally – just writing outline sketch answers
    • formally – under timed exam conditions
• Beware of unnecessary panic!
  – OMG, I can’t do any of the questions…..
Prediction v. anticipation

• Never use past papers for ‘crystal-ball’ predictions
  – E.g, “They set that topic on the last paper, it won’t come up this time.”

• Instead, look for repeated topics/themes
  – What are the areas that occur regularly on past papers, albeit with different instructions/emphasis
New module – no past papers?

• Sometimes this happens!
• Not a calamity
  – All changes to modules + introduction of new modules are subject to rigorous scrutiny and a QA process
• You will have
  – Reading lists
  – Lecture lists & notes from lectures
  – Seminar lists & notes from seminars
New module – no past papers?

- The module specification
  - http://www.kent.ac.uk/stms/studying/modules/index.html
  - http://www.kent.ac.uk/socsci/studying/module-specs/index.html
  - http://www.kent.ac.uk/humanities/studying/modules/
    - Pay particular attention to this
    - Especially the specific learning outcomes
New module – no past papers?

– The module catalogue
– [https://www.kent.ac.uk/courses/modulecatalogue/](https://www.kent.ac.uk/courses/modulecatalogue/)
  • This will follow the module specification
  • Look for learning outcomes

• Use all of the above to draw up lists of possible topics
Noting topics

- Look closely at past papers over the last 3 or 4 years: current version of module
  - But not exclusively!
- Try not to list too many sub-topics
- Concentrate on the main areas
- Look at frequency
  - Simple 5-bar tally?
- Once you have a list of topics, map this against any detailed module outline provided by your school
Noting topics

• Map against all the other areas of information outlined above
• Don’t spend too long on this ‘audit’!
• Quick check – say 30 mins. per module
• Add to/adjust/refine topics
• But by contextualising your exam paper topics you will have a definitive list for revision
Format/changes

- As well as looking for topics on past papers, remember to check the format.
- Read the rubric for each paper and work out the structure of the exam.
- There are times when the format of an exam changes.
- Generally, this will be announced by your school.
Format/changes

• If there is a change, the Module Convenor should make sure that students are aware
• However, it is advisable to check with your seminar leader to see if there are any changes!
• It’s important to confirm that the exam is what you expect
  – Avoid unpleasant surprises on the day
Dealing with anxiety/ selecting topics

- Now you have a list of topics, and are familiar with the examination process, you can use past papers to begin revising.
- Understandably, many people are anxious about exams.
- Using past papers successfully should enable you to manage any anxiety.
- Combined with a successful revision process, you will be in more control of the exam.
Dealing with anxiety/ selecting topics

• You will have your ‘weak’ modules and your ‘strong’ ones
• Similarly, you will have topics you are uncertain about and those you are comfortable with
• The question then arises, “Where do I start?”
• Think about the kind of person you are, and what has worked well in the past…
Dealing with anxiety/ selecting topics

• Model 1
  • Start with the areas you are more sure of
  • Builds confidence
  • Establishes a ‘can do’ mentality
  • For you, reduces anxiety
  • Then move on to the ‘harder’ areas
  • [Don’t procrastinate by staying with the ‘comfortable’ areas too long!]
Dealing with anxiety/ selecting topics

• Model 2
• Start with the subjects you are less sure of
• Focus on the ‘bad’ areas
• Work intensively to eliminate/reduce difficult areas
• You will feel you have begun to face up to the hard areas of revision and the exams
• For you, reduces anxiety…
Dealing with anxiety/ selecting topics

• General advice to reduce anxiety…
  – Start with small ‘chunks’ of practice/information
  – Work to a time-table
  – Give yourself frequent short breaks
  – Include brief reviews constantly
  – Build up to higher levels of concentration/activity
  – Build up to full practice answers (see below)
  – Don’t be too ambitious at first!
Practice questions – general principles

• No matter how comprehensive and accurate your list of topics is, the exam is more than ‘throwing knowledge’ at the paper!
• It is about how you apply and evaluate your knowledge
• You need to understand the ways in which the exam assesses the module: what + how
Practice questions – general principles

- 1. In reviewing past papers, check how topics are often assessed: context and instructions
- 2. Revision/working with past papers will never be truly effective unless it ends in some kind of rehearsal of the exam experience
- Build up to practice questions
Practice questions

• Start with an open book approach
• Establish an orderly writing area, but surround yourself with books and notes
• Be generous with the time! But realistic..
  – One day spent on what would be a 20 minute response in the exam is ineffective
  – Forty minutes to make sure you really ‘get it’ is sensibly elastic!
Practice questions

- Gradually increase the rigour of your practice
- Step 1: closed book, no material – but flexible on time
- Step 2: closed book, stick to the ‘real’ exam time as much as possible
- Step 3: as ‘real’ as possible a rehearsal of the actual exam – even if you run out of time! [See “Exam techniques” for advice on this!]
Final thoughts

• Be systematic
• Review past papers for all modules
• Define specific topics
• Set sensible time-controlled targets
• Start gradually
• Combine the ‘what’ with the ‘how’!
• Practice actual questions
• Work with others?
  – Sharing the burden, + spreading the skills and knowledge?
Good luck.....

- For all your studies, and for the 2016 Examinations!
- Any questions: Shaun Theobald
  - srt@kent.ac.uk
- Further support:
  - www.kent.ac.uk/uelt/learning