Study Skills Journal Prompts

Entry #1
This first Study Skills Journal assignment is based on a set of four videos by Dr. Stephen Chew, a Psychology professor at Samford University, focused on study strategies that work and study strategies that don't work in college (Spoiler alert: procrastination is a "doesn't work" strategy.) (Spoiler alert 2: reading the textbook over and over again is also a "doesn't work" strategy)

Watch each of the videos (they total about 37 minutes) and answer the Study Skill Journal questions.

1. Watch the video and describe 2 or 3 things that you found new/interesting/important
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RH95h36NChI&t=9s

2. Watch the video and describe 2 or 3 things that you found new/interesting/important
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9O7y7XEC66M

3. Watch the video and describe 2 or 3 things that you found new/interesting/important
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xeHh5DnC1w&t=1s

4. Watch the video and describe 2 or 3 things that you found new/interesting/important
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9GrOxhYZdQ&t=1s

5. In the box below, provide a list of strategies that you will use this term to be successful in class. Indicate which of these strategies is new for you.

Entry #2
One of the most common ways that students study for an exam is to simply re-read their notes and textbook materials. This is called "passive" learning, and for most student is NOT an effective strategy.

Far more effective is to use “active learning.” This leads to what Dr. Chew (from Study Journal 1) called “deep processing.” In this assignment, you will explore various active learning techniques, and decide which might be most effective for you, drawing on both previous experience as well as any insights you might have gained from the Study Skills Journal 1 videos.

There are many active learning strategies that are recommended by countless books, blogs, articles and videos. Your task this week is to investigate some of these sources. You can use either the sources recommended below, or others that you might have found on your own or in other classes.
"The A Game" book, written by Kenneth Sufka, has a great set of strategies for being successful in college. The book is available through the WSU library.

Great active learning strategies recommended from this book include 1) concept mapping, 2) notation reduction and 3) setting personal learning objectives for individual study sessions.

**Study Skills for Biology classes from Butte College** ([Links to an external site.](#))

**Study Skills from Georgetown College**

1. What is the difference between “passive" learning and "active" learning/deep processing? Describe which category your current study strategies fall into (Descriptions are more than just one-word answers. The more deeply you describe, the more valuable this exercise will be.) [Be honest in answering this question. There is no right or wrong answer. This is about metacognition (not about impressing your professor).]

2. Identify at least one NEW type of active learning strategy that you found. This should be a strategy that you think might be helpful to you and that you have not tried before. Describe the strategy and describe why you think it might be helpful. You can write about more than one strategy if you're excited to try more than one (but don't over-do it!).

   [Note: In Study Journal 3 (next week), I'll ask you to post an example of your attempt to use this new active learning strategy to develop deeper processing course concepts. Be sure to start using your new active learning strategy right away--you'll have a hard time if you procrastinate on Study Journal 3 next week!]

3. WSU generally expects that students work an average of three hours outside of class for each hour of instruction during class.

   Bio 106 is scheduled as 3 hours of lecture + 3 hours of lab each week. That is a total of 6 hours in class. When we add in three hours outside of class for each hour in class, that comes out to a total of 18 hours inside plus outside of class that you are expected to spend on class each week. That expectation of work-hours is the reason that you only have to be enrolled in 12 credits to be a full-time student.

   You might spend 18 hours per week on BIOL 160. Or you might spend 15 hours per week or 28 hours per week. Whatever time you do spend on class, you should make it worthwhile time. Dr. Chew (in the Study Journal 1 videos) discussed setting out a plan, each time you do coursework. I'd like you to set out a plan now. [This is entirely about you setting a plan and being honest with yourself about how well you stick to this plan--metacognition in the terms that Dr. Chew presented.]

   Please detail out the Bio 106 work that you're going to do each day this coming week. Please write more than just "study biology 106". Write down the times you're going to work on class and details such as "do the pre-reading for Lab Week 2" or "read
Chapter 2" or "take notes on the Chapter 2 lecture videos" or "draw concept map for atoms and molecules." If you know that you won't be able to work on class on one day or another, write "no Biol 106 work today." So below describe when and what are you going to do to work on Biol 106:

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

**Entry #3**

In Study Skills Journal #2 (last week), you identified a new active learning study strategy that you said you would try out. This week, I want you to report on your initial experience trying this active learning study strategy.

1. Look back at the daily schedule you planned in Study Journal 2 (last week). How closely did you stick to this schedule? What things caused you to vary from your planned schedule? If you think this deviation from your plan hurt your progress in class, what can you do to mitigate (reduce) the problem in future weeks?

2. Did the active learning strategy you focused on over the past week help you make deeper connections between the concepts of scientific inquiry, Darwin's descent with modification hypothesis, the processes of natural selection and speciation? Do you think you were able to gain deeper understanding of how each of these concepts connects to the bigger picture? In other words, did the active learning strategy help you to develop deeper processing?

3. Now think about the paper that is due on Thurs Sept 17. How will the information in the videos, and what you've learned so far about the strategy you chose last week, help you prepare for and write the paper?

Please detail out the Bio 106 work that you're going to do each day this coming week. Please write more than just "study biology 106". Write down the times you're going to work on class and details such as "do the pre-reading for Lab Week 4" or "read Chapter 25" or "write Paper #1." If you know that you won't be able to work on class on one day or another, write "no Biol 106 work today."
Remember, be reasonable. Don't write out a schedule that has you doing the minimum (or less than the minimum) amount of work at the very last minute. Just as importantly, don't write out a schedule that you can't stick to and that asks too much of you. Plan on studying smarter, not necessarily longer.

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Entry #4
Are you working as hard and as effectively as you think you should? Why are you working this hard? That might seem like an odd question for a professor to ask, but it's an important question. Where is your motivation coming from?

1. Look back at the daily schedule you planned in Study Journal 3. Maybe you stuck with the scheduling technique you started with. Maybe you realized that you needed a change. How did it go? What things caused you to vary from your planned schedule? If you think this deviation from your plan hurt your progress in class, what can you do to mitigate (reduce) the problem in future weeks?

2. In Study Journal 3, you described a deep-processing learning strategy that you were going to try. Are you sticking with it and/or have you tried out other deep-processing strategies? If yes, describe how that's going. If not, why not?

3. In Study Journal 3, we focused on growth mindset. How have you done maintaining growth mindset regarding our biology class during this past week?

4. In grade school, you were trained to do what the teacher wanted in order to earn a good grade. That's an entirely extrinsic (or external) motivational scheme. But educational research clearly shows that college students who are driven by intrinsic (or internal) motivation tend to be more successful than students who are extrinsically motivated (Augustyniak et al., 2016). That is, the more you focus on learning and growing (rather than on grades), the higher your grades will be.
Think of a time when you exhibited internal motivation. You wanted to learn something hard just for the sake of learning it. Maybe it was learning to play the piano. Or maybe it was training to run a 10K race. Maybe it was learning how to repair an engine.

Now think about how you went about learning it. When you really want to learn something, you probably start from the most basic level (called "first principles"). You practice them and practice them, not just once, but so that they are part of you. Then you likely make some elementary connections between those principles ("when I do this, this other thing happens"). Then you make higher-level connections ("If I want this to happen, I need to do these things first"). At each step, you practice until you have mastered it. I'll bet these general learning strategies helped you learn the skill you wanted to master, and likely they've helped with most things that you've wanted to achieve.

OK. Here's the question. What are general learning principles that you use when you really want to learn something (that is, when you have shown internal motivation) just for the sake of learning? How can you apply these general learning principles to Biology 106?

5. OK, you know the drill. Write out a reasonable schedule for the coming week.

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Entry #5
Keep working on that metacognition--the awareness and learning about how you can best learn. This Study Journal 5 is a key one because comes after our first paper and first exam. There is still plenty of time to turn things around (if you have to turn things around). So put some good thought into how you're approaching class!

1. Look back at the daily schedule you planned in Study Journal 3. How closely did you stick to this schedule? What things caused you to vary from your planned schedule? If
you think this deviation from your plan hurt your progress in class, what can you do to mitigate (reduce) the problem in future weeks?

2. The person who originated the concept of growth mindset (and the alternative concept of the fixed mindset) is Stanford Psychologist, Carol Dweck. Watch this video of Dr. Dweck, speaking about those concepts: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_X0mgOOSpLU

Entry #6
We're heading into the last third of the semester. Time to take stock of where you are and where you're going.

1. We're now in Week 10 of the 16-week fall semester. You've taken 2 exams and written 2 papers for Bio 106, and you're beginning to draft out the sections of your final lab report on the NEON project. Most (if not all) of you are taking multiple classes, and likely you have one other science lab course and/or a math class and maybe a UCORE class -- all of them have projects and exams, too. It's a good time to take stock of where you are, what you have going for you, and where you're going.

Describe at least three resources that you can count on for support over the next several weeks. It might be a spouse or parents. Or it might be WSU Vancouver resources like the Cougar Food Pantry, or the Student Resource Center. Or perhaps it's a good friend. Just take some time to appreciate the people and places you can turn to if you need it.

2. Now, remind yourself of your longer-term goals. Why are you in this class? How will success in this class help you further down the line? How will improving your study strategies help you move toward your goals (think back to the first few Study Journal assignments for reminders about various deep processing strategies)? Be as specific and forward-looking as you can.

3. Please make a schedule for the coming week for Bio 106 work. It's best if you write this out in your own calendar, too, or maybe scribble it out on paper and tape it to your computer screen or a notebook, so that you can refer back to it through the week to stay on track.

Entry #7
Time to get into the proper mindset to head into the home stretch of the semester.

1. Last week I reminded you that you've taken 2 exams, written 2 papers, and are working on your NEON research project and final report.

Think about the 2 papers you've completed. On which portions did you do well? Which portions gave you trouble? Are you satisfied with how you did? Why or why not?
Now consider the 2 exams you've completed. Ask yourself the same questions.

[Note: In Question 2 I will ask you about the steps you will take moving forward this semester. But while you're thinking about where you currently stand in the course, I'd like you also to remember that Biology 106 is a foundational course for the life sciences - but it's not the only science course you will take at WSU. How you perform in Bio 106 matters, of course, but you will also have opportunities to build upon the skills and knowledge you gain here when you advance into more specialized science courses. This course is designed to help you identify the areas where you are most comfortable and confident, as well as the areas where you may need to work to improve. BUT YOU ARE ALL CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING YOUR GOALS.

2. In the last couple of weeks of the term, we'll have Exam 3, an Issues Conference, and then the Final Exam. That's still a lot of opportunity to raise your grade (if it needs raising). What specific changes are you going to make to your strategies to improve your success on those remaining exams? [If you don't feel like you need to make changes, just say that.]

May I offer up visiting Drop-In hours with any of your instructors...? :)

3. Please detail out the work that you're going to do for Biology 106 each day this coming week. Please be specific in both times and the type of work you'll be accomplishing.

Remember, be reasonable. Don't write out a schedule that has you doing the minimum (or less than the minimum) amount of work at the very last minute. Just as importantly, don't write out a schedule that you can't stick to and that asks too much of you. Plan on studying smarter, not necessarily longer. And keep this list in a place where you can easily see it to remind yourself! :)

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Monday

Tuesday

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Entry #8
Planning for the home stretch -- make the most of the remaining weeks of the semester.

1. Look back at the daily schedule you planned in Study Journal 7. Did you stick to this schedule? If you veered from the schedule, why? If you think this deviation from your plan hurt your progress in class, what can you do to mitigate (reduce) the problem in the remaining weeks of the semester?

2. There are three (3) remaining assignments in Bio 106 for this semester: the final NEON project lab report, the Conference Report, and the Final Exam. Each of these is a writing assignment, and the good news is that together they represent ~30% of your final grade.

   That means that if you do as well as you can on each assignment, you have the potential to raise your final grade quite a bit.

   Reflect on how you've done over the term so far. Describe two or three specific actions that worked well for you, especially for the previous written assignments. What about these actions helped you?

   Describe 2-3 specific actions that didn't really help you succeed as you would have liked. Why didn't they help? Make a plan to focus on the strategies that worked, and not fall into the pattern of using strategies that didn't work in the past.

   [Remember that changing study habits can be hard and can take time. If you feel like you're getting something better out of new study strategies, even if they didn't immediately result in better grades, that may actually be a big success.]

3. **Remember to find time for yourself over the Thanksgiving week break from classes. You deserve it!!

   In preparation for the remaining 2 weeks of classes after Thanksgiving, plan out your schedule for completing your work for Bio 106. This is the last schedule I'll ask you to write. Make it a good one!

   Week of Nov 30 - Dec 6 (Mon - Sun):

   Sunday

   Monday

   Tuesday

   Wednesday

   Thursday
Entry #9
This is the last Study Skills Journal for the Fall 2020 semester! I saved these questions until the last week of classes, and I do hope that the thinking and writing that you do for yourself in these questions helps you to put the semester into perspective. I believe in you!!

1. Describe the growth in being a college student that you achieved this semester. That growth might involve incorporating new study strategies, or it might be developing more realistic scheduling and improving the diligence in sticking to those plans, or it might be becoming better at seeking help, or it might be exhibiting a growth mindset more consistently. And it was during a pandemic...

2. Where are you going from here? What classes are you taking next semester? What major are you going to pursue (or already on track for)? As you move on to next term and the terms after that, how are you going to keep exhibiting that growth and expanding that growth that you described in Question 1?