How to Organize Your Own Study Group

Meeting as a study group is an opportunity for you and your peers to come together and create a space to discuss course material. By pooling resources, you make your studying more efficient and fun!

Why do it?
Study groups are a great way to meet people in your class and review what you’ve been learning through group discussion. It is an opportunity for students of all learning styles to share notes, re-articulate concepts, and develop good study habits. By committing to weekly meetings, you’re getting guaranteed study time and the chance to get some support from classmates.

Ground rules
When entering a study group everyone should understand that you’re all meeting in a free and open space. This means that students who attend should be given the opportunity to speak and contribute to the group in a way that they feel comfortable. Establish some ground rules at your first meeting to ensure that this happens. (I.e. when one person is talking, others should not, etc.)

Tips on getting started:
TIP 1: To collect other willing students ask your lecture teacher to make an announcement in class to tell your classmates you’re interested in creating a study group and make yourself available via e-mail or other social network options.

TIP 2: When finding a space to meet, you may find an informal space like the Learning Zone located in 113 McCaul on the first floor a good space to meet. There are also rooms in the library that are available on a first come first serve basis. There are many ways to conduct study groups and below are some activities that we’ve found successful.

How to organize your group:
- Set meeting times for 1-2 hours
- Take breaks
- Bring snacks
- Groups of 3-4 people work well
- Pick a regular time and a place and try to be as consistent as possible
**How to run a study group:**

ONE: Consider using a rotating facilitator. A facilitator is someone who will “lead” discussion. They will ensure that everyone gets to contribute, keep discussion and time on track, email reminders to the group on upcoming meetings. Maybe rotate the role and responsibilities for each meeting.

TWO: Begin with an oral review of class notes. Go around the table and restate notes you’ve taken from lecture chronologically until everyone reaches the end of lecture.

THREE: Set an agenda. After reviewing the lecture notes as a group, pick specific terms or topics and focus on ways of exploring it visually or through group discussion. Assign time limit for each item and ask facilitator to monitor. Keep an eye on your time. It’s easy to get off track and that can eat into your time. Think about covering main ideas and concepts from lecture, for example important dates, definitions, new terms, art movements etc.

FOUR: Focus your discussion on a specific content or topic. This is an opportunity to use one of the activities listed below.

FIVE: Answer or develop a discussion question. These could be questions asked in lecture or questions in your text book or study guide; pick a question and discuss as a group. Identify the main idea in the question and define any new terms. Then locate a time period or a person of interest to fully answer the question. For larger groups, split into smaller groups to answer the question, then come back together as a group to review your answers.

SIX: Closing. It’s helpful to finish the session with a closing activity like a five minute free write where you write for five minutes about what you’ve just covered or reviewing the reading for the upcoming lecture. This helps solidify the information you’ve been discussing as a group and better prepares you for the next lecture. You may find it helpful to use pen and paper here if you normally use a computer for lecture, as this can build muscle memory and help with memory recall in an exam situation.

**Activities**

- Lecture review: Go around in a circle and read a point form lecture to fill out any gaps in your notes.
- Create a chart: Pick two or more topics or concepts like Northern, Southern and High Renaissance for example and compare the characteristics, locations, time period and artists.
- Flash cards: Create notes for images with title, author, date/time period, a brief visual description, and why it’s an important image.
- Mind Maps
- Timeline: create a visual timeline of the images, key dates or concepts covered in lecture to give contexts to where in history you are studying.