

Advice from the Aces

The advice below is from students who have taken my courses and earned an A. Every semester, I update this list with insights from students who earned top grades. These are their [unedited, except to make it third-person] strategies for how they succeeded in the course, and their advice to you for how to do well in any class I teach. (And, to this day, I have no idea what "hard hat" means!)

- ◆ Be prepared at all time, make sure to do all your assignments and submit them on time.
- ◆ Study, take notes, show up, and do the assignments
- ◆ Be ready for a difficult course. This class is no joke at all!
- ◆ Pay attention to EVERYTHING.
- ◆ Ask Professor Davis for help and to make sure to study each day.
- ◆ Professor Davis can be a hard hat sometimes, but his class is going to be fun and entertaining. It's going to be a lot of hard work so buckle up and enjoy the ride.
- ◆ Be prepared to do a lot of reading and come to class!
- ◆ Take sufficient and important notes and pay attention to what Professor Davis emphasizes during lecture.
- ◆ When there are contrasting subtopics under a single heading, you need to make sure you understand all the subtle differences between them. The professor tests for your understanding of when to use one approach as opposed to another. Literally 75% of each test are critical thinking questions in the aforementioned format.
- ◆ Ask questions. Integrate old material into what you are learning while you learn it. Think while Professor Davis is lecturing. Many lectures for other courses are spent collecting review material for tests or sleeping; this is not such a course.
- ◆ The value of lecture does not necessarily lie in the material you receive, but learning how to think, and that is a skill you will need to learn.
- ◆ Taking any course from Professor Davis will be a test of your self-discipline, intelligence, and motivation. If you don't plan on applying these three attributes to their fullest, leave now. If you want to be pushed to an intellectual level that you honestly can't conceive of right now, get ready to work hard for a payoff that will put you heads and shoulders above those around you for the long run.
- ◆ Read the textbook, go to lectures, study + you'll be fine! When Professor Davis says he likes something, memorize it because it WILL be on the exam --multiple times.
- ◆ What I would say to people in Professor Davis's future classes is to not take themselves so damn seriously. Honestly, lots of people I knew hated his class simply because he was having *fun!* He has a degree in *Positive Psychology*, for crying out loud! What did they think he was gonna do, drone at them for an hour and a half? So, to people in his future classes, I say this: Professor Davis is trying to make your course interesting. Please, show some gratitude.
- ◆ When Professor Davis says "Look it up," it is very likely to be on the exam.
- ◆ Take detailed notes.
- ◆ Do not freak out after taking the first exam. It does not necessarily get easier, but you get used to the form/pattern.
- ◆ Dedicate the amount of time recommended, if not more, to complete the case study and journal article review.
- ◆ The assignments were very useful as preparation for other classes.
- ◆ Be an active listener and engage in class discussions.
- ◆ Professor Davis will challenge you to think beyond the shallow, so be prepared to challenge yourself.

- ◆ I do think what made a difference was always attending class and following along with what we were learning. Also - trying to understand the overall concept beyond that specific example.
- ◆ If I had to say what was most effective, I would have to say the biggest thing is to read the book on your own and summarize the points. In class we start from the same material but build past it quickly, and if the first time you've seen it is in class you won't have a complete picture. Your synopsis of the book will also automatically keep you prepared for debates and the essays, and if your notes are particularly detailed you'll even have a study guide ready for the exams. Obviously going to class is still fairly mandatory, but this class really does integrate the reading material in a way that you'll be doing yourself a disservice by ignoring it.
- ◆ My advice to future students is simple: take good notes.
- ◆ I hardly touched the textbook and relied solely on notes that I took in class to study for exams. If you do your due diligence by showing up and taking clear, detailed notes, you will be in a great position to get an A in the class. In addition to being great study material for the exams, well-written notes also serve as invaluable tools to rock the fishbowls/debates/discussions and the papers. Don't be lazy; write everything down!
- ◆ When Professor Davis wants you to get an intuitive sense of something, get an intuitive sense of it. If it's not intuitive, you probably don't get it. If you don't get it, you won't know when to apply it. If you don't know when to apply it, you won't be able to defend when you do apply it. And if you don't defend, you won't ace. In summary, intuitize.
- ◆ Focus attention on the examples given during the lecture. The content of the slides is in the textbook as well as on blackboard and easy to refer to. Tying examples to the information helps reinforce it.
- ◆ ***(NB: This is from a statistics student and was written for future statistics students, but I think it's good advice in general.)*** The library, google and the book are all your best friends [in statistics]. No, I'm serious- they are. Be sure to read the book before class or at the very least have half of it done before class and the rest done right after. Give yourself time to read it over because some materials are difficult to grasp the first time around. Sure [statistics is] not the most entertaining subject and the wording can be complicated, but put on your reading glasses and read it twice if you need to. If you do not understand something, google it. Really- google it. There are various materials and tutorials out there that will help you. This class [statistics] is not difficult, but it does require that you put in the time and effort into it. I can assure you that it is not your regular 'textbook' approach, and you will get out of it a lot more than you think. Also, use your brains. That helps a lot! Lastly, when it's around the end of the school year, just because you think you know what to do and what tests to run on the exam, DO NOT procrastinate! You will need the allotted time to figure out the answers to the exam. Why are all of these important? Because long after you leave this class, even if you don't ever do statistics again, I can guarantee you that you'll be able to spot inaccurate information (and know what questions to ask to find out what most likely made it inaccurate) better than you think.
- ◆ ***(NB: This is from a statistics student and was written for future statistics students, but I think it's good advice in general.)*** Come prepared to class! Reading the textbook isn't enough—take detailed notes on the assigned chapters, and do the problem sets as well. You'll have extra notes to refer during class when you are confused. Most of your time spent on the tests won't be running the actual statistics, but figuring out which test to run, so learn the difference between types of data as soon as possible!! Google and YouTube will be your best friends. You should be able to defend every response you give, so creating a flowchart with your rationale before you solve a problem should be helpful. Lastly, don't be

afraid to participate in class. I've found that explaining yourself to other people helps you better understand the material.

- ◆ ***(NB: This is from a statistics student and was written for future statistics students, but I think it's good advice in general.)*** Hard work and consistency will make you achieve an A in this class. There will be hard times for sure, but if you read the chapters beforehand, pay close attention in the class, and spend at least 15+ hours on lab reports and take home exams, you will do fine (I don't mean "you will get high grades" because your grades will not be very high, as the tests and lab reports are very challenging, but there will be a curve). Oh don't forget to GOOGLE and learn by yourself, too. Dr. Davis seems harsh, but he has a very kind heart. He does want you all to do well. I didn't even know how to use excel and have never heard of SPSS when I started this class. Even I could manage to get an A, I am sure you all can.

Professor Davis's Advice

- ◆ Come to class
- ◆ Read the chapter before class – lectures are aimed at presenting material for the second time
- ◆ Try to solve your own questions before emailing the professor
- ◆ Do not cram or wait until the last minute
- ◆ Prepare for at least twice as long as the lecture
- ◆ Exams are predictable – take advantage!
- ◆ Bring your passion!