Final Exam Tips & Tricks
Strategies and best-practices for nailing your Fall 2017 final exams

“MEMORY DATA DUMP”
Use a piece of blank scrap paper in your exam. Right at the beginning of the exam, before you even look at the test, write down everything that you are worried you may forget (formulas, vocab definitions, key concepts, etc.). This off-loads the information out of the abstract space of your mind and memory, and makes it concrete by writing it down. “off-loading” the information relieves the anxiety of trying to hold it in our memory and recall for the entirety of the exam. It’s like creating a “cheat sheet” for yourself.

PREVIEW THE WHOLE TEST
Before starting the exam, look over it in it’s entirety. Are there sections that may take longer? (essays and short answers vs. multiple choice). Mark all the problems that you know you can do! When you’re taking the test and you find a question you can’t do, skip it and come back to it later. The answer may be hiding in another question, or you may remember it as you continue.

USE ALL THE EXAM TIME
Use all the exam time to review all your answers on the exam once you have completed it. Most of the small errors can be caught simply by review.

IF YOU’RE ANXIOUS, FOCUS ON YOUR ENVIRONMENT
If you are starting to feel anxious, start focusing on something you can see, smell, taste, touch and hear. Focus on either your hands or your feet. See how warm you can make them feel. The point of these techniques is to try to get you out of your head and prevent an anxious spiral by focusing on your body and your space.

CHEW GUM!
Chew gum while you study and while you are taking the exam (if allowed). If we introduce other sensory stimulations while we’re studying (especially for memorization) then it helps us access that information by mimicking the context in which we learned it.

USE A FIDGET TWISTER
Fidget twisters or stress balls, etc. can be a HUGE anxiety reliever during exams. By having something we can engage in physically, it satisfied our feeling for “fight or flight” that creates anxiety. This is an especially good technique for anyone with ADD/ADHD who additionally needs that physical outlet to help their brain process information.

BE WELL RESTED AND WELL FED
I know, I know. It’s finals and you’re busy getting all your work done and taking care of yourself may be your last priority. But remember, our brains need 2 things to be effective: sleep and glucose (food). Don’t let all your preparation and studying go to waste by not taking care of your body as well!