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English 167: Human, Nonhuman, Antihuman
(Adapted, with thanks, from Professor Heather Dubrow)

Taking Lecture Notes

Your first “close reading” assignment: the syllabus, essay topics and assignments:

It's easy-- and risky-- to misread or forget instructions, especially at the beginning of the semester. So it's a good idea to check the syllabus carefully a few weeks into the semester and from time to time after that. Be sure you read instructions on paper topics and exams a couple of times in the process of working on them.

Tailor your note-taking to the type of learning in each course and to your own style of learning: In English 167 take careful notes on concepts, problems and definitions as well as major facts. Look for and note the overall shape of the lecture, its key points and key examples.

I will typically put a bare bones outline of the lecture topics on the overhead projector and refer back to that outline as I lecture. If you take a few minutes before class to record my lecture outline, you can use it to shape the categories of your lecture notes as I speak.

Develop a method of taking notes that allows you to get the key points and emphases of the lecture down but also to incorporate your responses. For example, you could divide each notebook page, putting lecture notes on the right and saving a left hand column for your comments and questions, either as you take notes or later, as you review them

For definitions, set them off from the rest of your notes and make certain you note both the definition and one example. Always review definitions and try to use them in your own close reading and writing almost immediately.