Note Taking in Lecture and Discussion-Based Classes

Before class: prepare to listen to and follow the class lecture/discussion
✓ Check your syllabus for clues (How does the reading relate to the course description/objectives? Is there a lecture/discussion topic indicated?)
✓ Look over your notes from the previous class, if related
✓ Do the assigned reading and make notes
✓ Read actively, keeping questions in mind

During class: consider these suggestions
✓ Write on one side of the page only (use the “blank” side during reviews for questions, text notes, etc.)
✓ Put a date and topic heading at the top of each day’s notes
✓ Pay attention to information not included in the readings
✓ Indicate the page number of the text if the instructor mentions it
✓ Star anything your instructor implies will be included on the test
✓ Put a question mark next to anything that needs clarification
✓ If possible, compare notes with someone else
✓ Listen actively – write the main ideas and enough detail that the ideas make sense (don’t try to write every word)

In a discussion-based class: be prepared to go with the flow
✓ Write down the QUESTION being discussed
✓ Try concept mapping, since discussions aren’t always organized and sequential (question in the center of the page, boxed)
✓ Listen for themes, issues, relationships, definitions, main ideas, the “big picture”
✓ Keep track of who’s speaking (“P” professor, “S” student, “M” myself)
✓ Pay attention to ideas the professor expands upon, repeats, emphasizes
✓ Be aware of the professor’s opinion

After class: take time to review your notes
✓ On the “blank” side of the page, write out questions based on the notes
✓ For a discussion-based class, summarize the discussion
✓ If possible, include page numbers from the readings that support/refute ideas discussed in class
✓ Reflect and record your reaction to points in the discussion
✓ Predict potential exam questions
✓ Make time for brief, active reviews to improve retention/recall (1st review the same day, 2nd review the following day, 3rd review within the week, 4th review within the month/before the test)