**Aiello’s Helpful Hints for the Free Response Section**

• You have 50 minutes to do two essay questions. Tentatively plan on 25 minutes per question. Realize that 50 minutes is a large amount of time if you use it wisely.

**Fight the Panic!**

• Focus on what you do know instead of what you don’t know. Remember that almost 200,000 other students are reading the same questions and many of them are panicking. Stay calm and earn more points than the mean.

• Read the first question and “work it” by crossing through useless information, underlining key directions and terms. Then read the question again.

• “Count it” by determining how many things you are asked to do. This helps to ensure that you will not miss out on opportunities to earn points.

• Take the time to “chart it” so that you do not accidently leave out some key part(s) of the answer. Usually a T-chart works well.

• After making the chart, “sketch it” by quickly brainstorming information to put in the chart. It is okay if some of the grids are empty, ideas might come to you as you work through the essay.

• All of this prewriting should have taken you 5 – 10 minutes, which still leaves you at least 15 minutes to write the essay. If you have done the sketch it part, you only need to turn the sketch into complete sentences!

• You do not need to write an introduction or restate the question as part of your answer. Just begin answering the first item.

• For each new topic, indent and begin a new paragraph, even if the paragraph is only one sentence long.

• You might underline key words in your answer,

• Write your answers in the order of the question. It makes it so much easier for the grader, and you want to make it easy for them to give you points.

• Assume that the grader is STUPID, so explain each term or concept that you use. You need to prove to them that you know the ideas.

• Be as precise and concise as you can. Write what you need and then move on.

• Do all of the parts of the question (A and B, all bulleted points), even if you are unsure. Write something for each topic, you will be surprised what earns points.

• Don’t just repeat words from the question without explaining them. For example, don’t write, “Rationalization is when you rationalize your reasons for doing something.”

• When possible, use specific names of researchers and theorists. If not certain, do not namedrop.

• Once you earn a point, you cannot lose it unless you directly contradict what you earned the point for. Proofread for any contradictions.

• You might want to skip a line or two between each “paragraph”. When you proofread, you can then add information into the space between paragraphs.

• Traditional rules of spelling, grammar, and punctuation are appreciated, but not the reason for gaining or not gaining points. Obviously, try to write as neat as the time allows, and do go back and try to correct mistakes.