Ways to learn this kind of material

Focus on what you learn in class, but use the text as a basic reference that will help you understand this material. You need BOTH. Reading each assignment in the text before the class in which I begin to discuss the material. Don’t underline or box sentences this time, but do mark places that are not clear to you so that you can get them clarified in class.

Read the assignment again shortly after the class, underlining this time. Things that did not mean much the first time will stand out or be clearer this time. Now you can note what parts of the text I repeated, what parts I didn’t emphasize (and assume you can understand from the text), and any parts of the text I said were less important). I will cover material that is NOT in the textbook. For this, use notes from class, class slides, and any handouts or website material.

When you do assignments, use the text (and class notes).

Before a quiz or test, go through everything again – text, other readings, handouts, notes. Now you may rely more on your first underlining, and spend less time on examples. Look for common ideas and themes, and for connections.

No text is ideal for everyone. If you don’t like this text, you can look at others in my office, and borrow one of them.

Come to office hours.

Want more practice?

1. Try some of the exercises at the end of text chapters.
2. Try exercises on the CD that comes with the textbook. You can use these exercises to make sure you understand things like the difference between independent and dependent variable, etc.
3. As you read ER articles that report on studies, identify the parts of the study, e.g., population, kind of sample, a hypothesis, dependent variable. You can do this with assignments from other classes also.
4. Come to office hours. Laurie or I will ask you questions about the material. A few minutes of individual help can save you a lot of time.

Questions you may have:

1. What terms are important? Focus on those that I put on the board or define on an overhead – and those listed at the end of each chapter of the text. The index in the text also is a glossary.

Memorizing definitions for many of terms we cover early in this class is not all that helpful, in part because many early definitions use other new terms. Besides, I want to know if you can use the term, not whether or not you can define it. I rarely ask for a definition on a test. Instead, questions on the test use the terms or ask you to use the term. Thus I am likely to ask you to write a hypothesis, identify the dependent variable in a hypothesis, or operationalize a variable.

2. Yes, I will ask about assigned articles that are on ER, on a website, etc. I may ask you to illustrate something using one of these studies. Also, I may ask a questions about a study that anyone who has read the study can answer – but anyone who hasn’t read it ….

3. What of material from recitation? I will ask Laurie to write questions, and we will go over the exam together.

Format of each test.

I cover a lot of material quickly using multiple choice questions. You can explain your answer, if you see a second answer that you are tempted to circle.

The rest of the test is short answer, with some multiple-choice scattered through. Test questions should look familiar. They will be similar to questions that asked in class and in recitation.

Nothing on the first quiz or first test should surprise you, and there are NO trick questions. I want valid measurement of what you have learned. Understanding the questions is part of the test.