Making Notes for Essays

Student 1
In terms of taking notes from a book or something that’s more of a print resource, then I like to take notes by hand. And, usually I organise this according to topic or how, erm, or to the outline of my essay. And, erm, so, I organise it by point and then I find particular quotes in the print resource that I would like to use and I just kind of write it and copy it into my notes.

Student 2
So, I generally take notes based on main argument and then quotations, so this is very different by subject. For politics, this is what I can speak for, you would tend to read a text, pick up what the author is generally trying to say and then to illustrate that you have understood it, you can pick up one or two quotations. And then, when I am noting I always note for a plan, so if I am noting for an essay plan, I'll attempt to make my points clear at the beginning of the plan and then try and note around what I am trying to say in the essay.

Student 3
It depends on how you take notes, I usually note down the things I think, rather than the resources themselves, 'cos you find the resources themselves. When I have my own ideas about a work, I do find those useful, er, for the essay itself. I usually, kind of, integrate essay plans and notes together. Erm, sort of, keeping the question in mind. Notes can be useful for revision as well, when, erm, you are not exactly going to get asked the same essay question.
Student 4

(Laughs) I think it’s very difficult to, sort of, pick that up that skill anywhere else because you’re never dealing with so much information in such a short space of time. And that means, I think you can’t just, at school, you know, you would be encouraged to note as much as you feel necessary, but here it is very much, you need to be targeted with what you do, and you don’t pick up whole books and read them cover to cover, but you sort of take sections and you take up what is necessary and useful to you.