

## Tips for Critical Reading

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### *Before you start the reading:*

- Make sure you are ready to concentrate. Find the most effective place to study and use it regularly.
- Reread the syllabus and think about past midterms, quizzes, and papers. What is the overall theme of this section? Remember: Professors choose assignments that are related to the topic you are studying! If you don't understand why the assignment is relevant, ASK the professor!
- Skim the articles for repeated terms and words of interest. This helps provide a framework from which you can identify and focus on the key points in the reading.
- Don't forget to look at the background information: What do I already know about this topic? What do you know about the author? Where is the reading coming from?

### *While you are reading:*

- Split the reading up so you can stay focused.
- Keep a pen handy to make comments as you read. Hint: A coding system helps to save time! Try using question marks when you're confused and exclamation marks when you are surprised or disagree with the author.
- Refer back to focus questions often while reading so that you can get the most important information out of the reading. Highlight or underline text that will make up the answer to any focus questions.
- Summarize important paragraphs by jotting down notes next to them. When you finish the reading, these short paragraphs will help you tie together the major themes.
- If you are having trouble understanding or absorbing the assignment, try reading out loud.
- Don't get too caught up in difficult vocabulary. Move on if you understand the major theme.
- Sometimes it helps to skip to the conclusion or end of reading questions. This gives you a quick summary of the reading and focus area that will help you identify the key points.
- It's okay to have a conversation or dialogue with the author. Disagree or agree with the author, and be sure to ask questions! You should have an opinion about the reading.

### *When you have finished the reading:*

- When you have finished a chapter or specific section, jot down notes about the major themes and ideas.
- Use the comments you made while reading to outline the article. Not only will this help you understand the assignment, but you'll have an outline ready for the next paper!
- If you had to read multiple articles or books, try to tie them together through common concepts found throughout the different texts.
- Again, look back on the syllabus and past assignments. What are the main themes that the reading addressed?
- When you're done, ask yourself: "What do I think about the reading? What do I think about this topic or idea? Do I agree or disagree with the author? What would the author say about what I want to say?"