**I know how to read. What do I have to learn?**

**PRIOR EXPERIENCE**

What reading you’ve done in the past – how much you read, what types of things you read, and how much you enjoy reading – can all impact how well you will do in a university. You may underestimate how much you read, given the number of texts, social media posts, and other electronic forms of “reading” you might not consider when thinking about “reading.” Most online reading is fairly brief and is often direct and to the point.

**READING AT A UNIVERSITY LEVEL**

The reading done for university courses is often longer, drier, and more complex than that you encounter online. Courses often rely heavily on textbooks and lectures to give you knowledge that you’re expected to absorb, understand, and apply critically. Because you’re expected to independently read and digest information from textbooks, primary sources, websites, and other sources, you’llneed a variety of reading strategies to be successful. Each type (or genre) of reading requires different types of strategies.

**READING AND WRITING ARE RELATED**

Reading and writing both depend on the rhetorical situation, which means that an author (writer/speaker) is communicating something to an audience for a particular purpose within a particular context. The awareness you use of audience, purpose and context for reading will help with writing, and vice versa. In fact, readers build meaning as they read, just as authors do when they write. You are constructing a text as you read, which is why scholars like Karen Rosenberg use the term, “rhetorical reading” in her article, “Reading Games: Strategies for Reading Scholarly Sources.” This article provides great guidance on strategies for reading a variety of scholarly sources, which include articles and textbooks.

**ACTIVE READING**

Reflecting this rhetorical view of reading, Charles Bazerman, in his textbook, *The Informed Writer: Using Sources in the Disciplines,* describes how being an active reader can benefit students. He writes, “real intellectual exchange begins when we react to what we read,” (16). In other words, annotating and responding to readings in writing helps a person engage intellectually and emotionally with a text. They are “exchanging” ideas with the author via the text, enacting a discussion by putting their own thoughts next to those of the author they’re reading. This engagement is a way to make the reading more meaningful and memorable, and therefore, more useful to you as a student when it comes to application of knowledge – for exams, written work, and discussion. Various

note-taking and writing strategies work well with you’re reading something for the purposes of writing and/or using that reading for a future assignment, like an exam. (See more about active reading in the next chapter).

**READING STRATEGIES**

* Read (or at least skim) all parts of the reading. Sometimes the cover, title, preface, introduction, illustrations, appendices, epilogue, footnotes and “about the author” sections can provide you with valuable information.
* Identify the genre of the reading. What kind of reading is it? (Journal article? Mass media? Novel? Textbook?) Why was it written? Who does the author assume is going to read this work? (Books about politics written for an audience of political scientists, for example, might be very different from books about politics written for the general public, for historians, or for sociologists.)
* Consider the author. What do you know or what can you learn about this person? Why did he or she write the book? What sources of information and/or methods did he or she use to gather the information presented in the book?
* Guess why your instructor assigned the reading. How does it fit in with other readings, class discussions, major course themes, or the purpose of the class?
* Get out a calendar and plan your reading. Get out a calendar and plan your reading. Plot the number of days or hours that it may take you to complete the reading. Be realistic. It may help to read one chapter of the reading

and then revise your calendar—some readings take longer than others of a similar length.

* As you read, record your reactions and questions. Any reaction or question is valid, from the specific (“What’s that word mean?”) to the general (“What’s her point?”). Write them down now so that you’ll remember them later. These reactions and questions can serve as material for class discussion, or they can be the jumping off point for brainstorming.
* Read with a friend. Find someone else who is reading the same book. Set reading goals together and plan to share your reactions to sections of the reading before class, after class, over e-mail, and so on.
* Visit your instructor during office hours to discuss the reading. Your instructor will set aside hours when he or she will be available to meet with students. This is a great time to talk about the reading, ask questions, share your reactions, and get to know your instructor. You can do this with a friend or in a small group as well.
* Think about what is missing in the reading. Issues, events, or ideas that are missing, left out, avoided, or not discussed/addressed in the book might be important. Thinking about these omissions can give you a critical perspective on the reading by showing you what the author (consciously or unconsciously) doesn’t want to deal with.
* If you know you will have to answer a particular question in response to the reading, read with that question in mind. Sometimes faculty will give you essay questions or exam topics in advance. As you read the text, refer back to those questions and think about your emerging answers to them.

**DISCIPLINE/FIELD-SPECIFIC READING**

At universities, we divide scholarship, research, and teaching into majors or fields. These are referred to as “disciplines.” For example, computer science, English, and biology are all disciplines, fields, and majors. Every discipline has many sub-disciplines or fields. For example, cybersecurity, writing studies, or marine biology. Because different disciplines and sub-disciplines do different things, they read and write (and cite things!) differently.

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