

## EFFECTIVE READING STRATEGIES

### Before

- Find a location that works for you.
- Read before class.
- Read one document several times.
- Decide what you need to gain from the reading and keep this in mind as you read: the author's argument? information for your own argument? support for your own argument
- Read the "extraneous" material:
  - The preface provides information about the author's objective, the organizational plan of the book, how the book is different from others on the market, and the author's background and qualifications.
  - The introduction lays the foundation for the rest of the text in the form of an overview and background information that will make it easier to digest information in the subsequent chapters.
- Preview the document: look at title and section headings to gauge the main idea and to get a general idea of the content and organization.

### **How to decide if you need to scan, skim, or read the document:**

SCAN if you are looking for only one detail or the main idea.

SKIM if you need to read quickly for key words and sentences in order to get a general idea

READ (and reread) if you need to understand all or most of the text.

### During

- Take notes: Write in your book, Highlight or underline key ideas or arguments, Develop your own shorthand, Put key words or phrases near paragraphs so you can easily find them again
- In a complicated article, you may need to stop after each paragraph and check to see if you understood what you just read. If you can't summarize it, read the passage again.
- Paraphrase ideas or write down your thoughts after finishing a unit (a chapter or an article section, or even a very complicated paragraph).

### **Words or Phrases you don't know**

It is not efficient to use a dictionary or ask another person for help every time you don't understand a word or phrase. Can you figure it out from context clues? Is there a definition in the article or its footnotes? Is it critical to your purpose in reading the document? If not, move on. If so, look it up.

### After

- Write down:
  - The most important ideas
  - Remaining questions
  - Your own thoughts
  - How you want to use this information
- It can be helpful to identify:
  - Why did the writer write this?
  - What is the writer's methodology?
  - What are the main ideas?
  - What are the major details related to these main ideas?
- Evaluate the author's motivations, ideas, and examples
  - Do you agree or disagree? Why?
  - Would other scholars you have read agree or disagree? Why?

- Connect scholars/readings to one another as you read. Scholarship is an ongoing conversation and typically texts assigned in a course are meant to be speaking to each other.
- If you can't do these things, you may need to reread.
- Talk to someone else about the material.