Student Guide to Close Reading Strategies

Close reading skills are important to practice as you encounter different kinds of difficult materials in college and beyond. When you close read a text, you're noticing **what** the text says and also analyzing **how** the text says what it says. Close reading helps you develop critical thinking and interpretation skills, expands your vocabulary, and helps you cultivate deeper reading comprehension skills.

Below is a list of close reading strategies that you should use and experiment with whenever you read and annotate materials for this class.

1. Reading Environment

Do you concentrate better with total silence, or do you need things going on around you to be able to focus? Experiment and know what works best for you.

2. Preview the Text

Survey the material and ask some questions before you start reading. What's the topic? What do you already know? What can you learn from the table of contents, glossary, section titles, subtitles, or introduction?

Look for **'signpost phrases'** that help you understand the text - phrases like 'most importantly', 'in contrast', 'on the other hand'.

Turn subtitles and section headers into questions that you try to answer as you're reading the text.

Also **look for summaries and conclusions** that could restate the material in a way you find understandable. You don't always have to read a text linearly, from front to back. It's ok to jump around to get the lay of the land.

3. Chunks and Breaks

If a text seems long, break it into bite-sized sections.

Pace yourself and take breaks between sections.

Periodically ask yourself if you understand what is being communicated in the section. If not, you may need to go back and reread a paragraph or section before moving on.

4. Write Questions as You Read

Asking questions can greatly help your comprehension. Ask questions in your notes and hypothes.is annotation—who, what, when, where, how—and then look for answers as you continue reading.

5. Highlight and Annotate the Text

Mark important terms, definitions, facts, and key phrases. However, don't get carried away with the highlighting! Add a note to the passages you've highlighted to remember why you thought it was important or ask a question. Make notes that connect the passage to the real world or something else you have read or learned. You can use Hypothes.is, write notes in the margins, or use Canvas annotations to do this.

Look for and mark the main idea or thesis.

If the text contains specific themes **create a key** and write in the margin, e.g. P for politics or G for gender. You can **create #tags in Hypothes.is** to mark specific themes.

6. Look Up Words and Terms You Don't Know

It can be hard to recover if you miss the main point because of new words or terms.

You can highlight a word or term you don't know, then right click, and select "look up" to easily get the definition. Add the definition to your notes/annotations.

7. Make Connections

Look for links and connections between the text and your own experiences, thoughts, ideas, and other texts. Look online to see if the article or book has been reviewed by other people. Or look for overview books on the same subject - they might summarize the author's point of view. Once you can understand the basics, go back and look at the details.

Don't assume the external content you find is always correct. Best to consult a few sources to check for consistency.

You can also draw sketches or diagrams as a way of understanding.

8. Review and Summarize

After you finish reading, try to summarize the text in your own words. This will help you understand main ideas and take better notes next time. If you don't understand what you've read, reread carefully.

9. Discuss What You've Read

Describe what you have learned to someone else. Talk to your professor or another classmate. Join discussion groups. This will move the information you are learning from short-term to long-term memory.