POLS 397  
Reading Tips

# Overview

short line

In a course with several assigned readings per week, it’s important to have a strategy when approaching articles, book chapters, and other written materials. Below are a few helpful strategies to keep in mind before sitting down to read.

## Don’t expect to read everything

Instead, aim to read enough to be able to summarize the author’s main points and any important examples. If you are pressed for time, try to at least open each reading and skim the contents, so you will know how the readings connect to the week’s topic.

## Be mindful of your time

While it would be nice to have a dedicated three hour reading session per day, that’s not always the case. Instead, carve out 30 minutes in your day to complete one reading.

## Start with an interest

While the readings are ordered logically (you will read first about *Topic 1* before reading how *Topic 1* is applied), it’s also important to have your attention captured when you first begin reading. Therefore, start with a text that you already have an interest in or may already be familiar with. Then, circle back to the materials you have less familiarity with.

## Skim first, then read

Rather than start a reading with the first word, skim the entire set of pages. Make sure to pay attention to headings, images, and graphs so you have a roadmap of where the author is taking you and an idea of what they are trying to explain.

## Annotate the text

Do not hesitate to take notes, highlight phrases, and jot down questions while you read. This will make the experience more productive, while also giving you something to refer back to when completing discussion questions, essays, and participating in class.