

Reading Exercises

HMXP102

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Our readings are the most important part of our course. In general, the written word is humanity's most precious commodity, as it enables the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. Your capacity to read is likewise among your most important skills. More specifically, our readings contain the information embodying our course's material. Our course is about humanity, and specifically about the theories of humanity set down in our texts.

In order to do well in this course – that is, in order to profit from the course – it is therefore essential that you get the most out of the course readings. To this end, you are required to read each of the course readings carefully and to answer a number of questions about them, in writing, prior to class. These exercises will prepare you for discussion of the readings and will help to strengthen your reading skills.

You should be prepared to spend a significant amount of time in reading and digesting the course readings. Some if not all of the readings will challenge your reading skills. You should plan ahead, so that you have the time that you need to complete the reading properly – i.e., having fully considered it and answered the questions in the study guides. Having done so, you will be ready for class.

Here are some suggestions for developing your reading skills:

- Make use of such information about the reading as is available to you. Each reading in the HMXP reader is preceded by a summary. Read this so that you have a sense of the overall gist of the reading. (Realize, however, that as with all information, these summaries may be incomplete or of limited value: you should approach all information critically.) Also, read the study guide questions, prior to reading the assigned reading; these, too, will give you an idea of what to expect and what to look for. You might also consider consulting an encyclopedia to learn about the given reading. (Beware, again, of unreliable resources; I recommend our library's Credo Reference resource, located here: <http://www2.winthrop.edu/dacus/resources/infopedia.htm>.)
- Read the reading straight through, at a single sitting. Make note of sections that you do not understand or of questions that arise, if any. (E.g., put a question mark in the margin.) Look for and mark (underline, highlight, etc.) main claims, central arguments, key illustrations, etc., but don't stop; your goal is to complete the reading and gain a general impression of it. Next, at another sitting, read the reading a second time, more slowly and carefully, taking notes as you proceed. Your notes may be made in the margins of the text or elsewhere, and should annotate the text – i.e., summarize its main points, arguments, etc. Once these tasks are complete, you may proceed to answer the questions in the study guide.

- Another useful technique: read the first and last paragraphs of the reading, to gain an overall sense of the reading. Work your way towards the middle, alternating between earlier and later paragraphs.
- Another: read the first sentence of each paragraph, or the first and last sentences of each paragraph, to gain a sense of the overall flow and structure of the reading.

Officially:

- For each assigned course reading, your completed answers to the study guide questions are due in class on the day that the reading is assigned.
- You will find the study guide for each reading on the course webpage: a link to the course webpage is located at <http://www.faculty.edu/oakesm>. I recommend downloading the file for the given study guide and inserting your answers to the questions directly into the file, and then printing it out. If you prefer to write by hand, either re-copy the question by hand, or make space between them in which to write your response.
- In general, these and all exercises are to be completed in grammatical English. Use full sentences, proper punctuation, etc. All exercises must be typed or carefully hand-written – no strike-outs allowed.
- Late papers will be accepted only in the case of an excused absence.
- Over the course of the semester, we will have between 25 and 30 reading exercises. You are allowed two “misses” over the semester. Thus, if we wind up with 28 readings, I will expect you to have completed this exercise for 26 of them.
- Extra credit will be awarded for students completing one or both of the two “misses” (but, again, only if completed on time).
- The exercises will be graded as follows:
 - o Each exercise will be worth 15 points and will accrue to your Preparation and Participation grade.
 - o Each question must be provided a complete and thoughtful answer.
 - o Answers that are clearly incorrect or that reflect little attempt to respond will be marked down.
 - o To some extent, quantity does matter, here, as well as quality. Overly brief responses to study questions will be marked down.
 - o If you are unable to answer a question, say so, and do your best to say what you can in response.
 - o In general, I will grade the exercises based upon both how thoughtfully you respond to the questions and upon how accurate are your answers. This means that reading comprehension will be important, as will as giving it your best effort.
 - o As above, your writing must be grammatical; I will mark down for numerous grammatical errors.

Please note: properly reading and preparing for class will be a significant amount of work. Part of the goal, here, is to train you to a high standard of academic achievement. Your hard work will be rewarded with a valuable learning experience.