Reading A Textbook

Just like with taking notes, there is not one correct method to effectively reading a textbook. We have split the reading process into three different parts to help maximize time and retention of the material. One of the most important things to do when reading for class is to create time to sit down and read. Reading will make picking up concepts in lecture much easier.

Part One—Before Class

- **Be strategic.** Instead of reading word for word, read the entire introduction and then the first paragraph after each new heading. Do this for the entire chapter.

- **Pay attention.** Focus on words that are in bold or italics. Also make note of any figures that might accompany the text.

- **Take the time.** It’s easy to skip over the review section of a chapter, but often times it gives you just the information you need before heading to class.

- **Get acquainted.** This method might sound like an unusual way to begin reading, but it is important to get acquainted with the material. Think of it this way, if you are going on a road trip with a specific destination in mind you would want directions on how to get there. It is the same with reading, if you start from the beginning you have no idea where you are going and why the information leading up the end is important. Using this method helps your brain conceptualize information into the larger scheme of things.

Part Two—After Class

- **Return to the text.** After class you will want to go back and truly read the text. Be sure to create the time to actually go through and read the chapter.

- **Fill in gaps.** Use designated reading time to fill in any gaps in your notes or understanding.

- **Formulate questions.** As you read, continue to jot down questions. One of the best ways students learn is by creating questions and finding out the answers.

Part Three—Before a Test

- **Review.** Take the time to review the textbook. Don’t re-read the entire chapter. Instead skim and re-familiarize yourself with the material.

- **Questions.** This is your last chance to engage in the material and formulate questions that you can take to your instructor, TA or tutor.

- **Figures and examples.** On your last read through take special care to reference any and all figures and examples.