STETSON UNIVERSITY
Writing Center

Purposeful Reading

- Reading for Class vs. reading for Leisure
  - Usually use **surface-level reading,** or getting the "gist" of the text when reading things like news articles or novels in our down time
  - Need **close reading** for class-assigned texts because ideas, themes, and context of readings relate to ideas of the class

- Close reading is characterized by:
  1. Looking for the author's purpose in writing the piece and the main intended audience of author
  2. Looking for the main ideas, organization, and style of the piece
  3. Understanding *why* the professor assigned the piece and *how* it connects to something learned in class
  4. Understanding the historical/cultural background of author and how it's different from your own perspective
  5. Objectively determining if there are debatable points in the piece

- Strategies for habitual close reading:
  1. **Annotating**
     - A way to "talk back" to the author as you read, is most effective if you have a system rather than just random underlines:
       1. Mark the thesis, main points, and important ideas of the piece
       2. Mark key terms and unfamiliar words—look them up!
       3. Write your questions and/or comments in the margins of the piece
       4. Write any personal experience related to the piece
       5. Mark confusing parts or sections that warrant a reread
       6. Underline the sources, if any, the author used

  2. **Summarizing**
     - A great strategy for keeping track of multiple readings or 1 very complex reading
     - Forces you to discern the most important ideas from the text

1. **Bibliographic entry style**: write citation of text and 1 paragraph of summarizing relevant points, best quotes
2. **Double entry notes style**: divide paper into "what it says" section and "what it does." In "what it says", summarize a section of the text, in "what it does" describe the functionality of the section in terms of the whole text.

3. **Drawing Graphic Organizers**
   ▪ Sometimes visuals representations of ideas are just easier to understand than written words, especially when grappling with complex articles
      1. **Timelines** for history texts and fictions with weird chronologies
      2. **Family trees** and **flowcharts** for mapping complex relationship and keeping track of characters
      3. **Bubble maps** for thesis-driven articles with multiple sections

4. **Rereading**
   ▪ Necessary for when you're answering reading-based analytical questions or writing a formal essay
   ▪ Will help you know a text inside-and-out, characterized by levels of writing:
      1. <u>First reading:</u> look up the background of the text and skim the surface for main ideas, introduction and conclusion
      2. <u>Second reading:</u> slow, meditative read. Have pen and sticky notes in hand to make annotations, ask questions
      3. <u>Third reading:</u> address questions made in second reading, look up unfamiliar concepts, tackle confusing passages.

Credit to the Colorado State University Writing Center Webpage:
https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=31