**FSEM 100**

**Becoming an active reader** means slowing down, moving beyond reading to understand the content. When you are assigned readings or have to read a considerable amount in a given week, the tendency is to “skim” and just pick up the main points. This feeds comprehension, but at a lower level.

Once you practice active reading, you can learn as much about writing a particular type of essay or article as the content of the essay. In fact, each piece of writing can be used as a one on one lesson on writing from the author. This is true for everything from short articles to novels. Read with a pencil or pen in hand.

**Reading Critically**—consider:

* A thoughtful response requires an understanding of:
  + the original work’s main points (text)
  + relevant details not included in the essay or article that might change the value of what is presented (context)
  + anything not stated but implied by the writer or that we can infer (subtext).
* A brief investigation into the author’s purpose, any potential bias (funding agency or personal trauma), and evaluation of their sources can change your response.

**Reading as a Writer**—consider:

* How we say something can be as important as what we say. Look at:
  + how the article or essay is structured
  + whether or not the logic is sound
  + what appeals were used the most (logos/logic, ethos/character, or pathos/emotion)
* Pay attention to their sentence structures, paragraphs, and entire essay—perform a brief reverse outline in the margins (main points in the margin)
* Encourage your inner four year old—ask “why?” over and over. Why this phrase? Why this order? Why this logic? Why this source?

**Active Reader Exercise**

1. Skim the article for content first. Then read again, as an active reader.
2. Make notes on the text. Use pencil, pen, or different colored pencils.
3. Write the main point of each paragraph in the right margin. (NOTE: This can become a reverse outline—an outline made from a finished piece—or a summary of the entire article.)
4. Highlight or underline:
   1. particularly thoughtful or important sentences or sections as these can become very useful as quotes to support your own ideas or as a focus to write a response.
   2. Agree/Disagree/I have a question—find a sentence or two that you strongly agree with, a sentence or two that you strongly disagree with, and a section or about which you have a question or need more information. These can become an angle or potential direction for a critical or argumentative essay.
5. Write out any thoughts, questions, feelings, connections, ideas, etc., in the left margin.
6. Circle words you don’t know, and write their definitions in the bottom margin.
7. Have a piece of paper (or keep a Word doc open) to write down thoughts and overall impression, as you read or just after you finished. What is your response?
8. At the end of the essay or on the paper, brainstorm some possible reactions, directions, connections. Read for possibilities. Where can you go from this article?
   1. Find one or two things you agree with and why (support).
   2. Find one or two things you disagree with and why (support).
   3. Fine one or two things you either have a question about or would want to research more (you need to know more about it before you can agree/disagree) and why (support).