Reading Tips for Graduate Students

Graduate programs require a large quantity of reading each week (upwards to 250-300 pages!). Learn how to get the most out of your reading while also maximizing your time.

Get acquainted with your reading.
- Read the introduction of a book in order to understand the framework of material. Authors will often discuss what will be covered throughout the book, including main objectives and the conclusion.
- Review the table of contents to understand the progression of material.
- Skim headings to understand what material will be covered.

Read strategically, not linearly.
- Instead of covering every part of a chapter, find what you need to glean or information you may not be familiar with and move on to the next reading for class.

Learn how to skim while retaining information.
- Write short 4-word phrases in the margins to capture the main points. When writing papers that critically evaluate readings, these 4-word phrases can help with finding information.

Be purposeful.
- Ask yourself critical questions while reading text:
  - What is motivating the author to explore this topic?
  - How does this material contribute to research?
  - What are the main arguments?
  - What are the values underlying this work?

Write down global points.
- Develop questions to bring to class and key points you found to be controversial. These ideas can help with memory recall, while helping you stand out as a stellar student!

Create diagrams, tables, or flowcharts.
- Synthesize the information you are reading into diagrams, tables, or flowcharts in order to critically evaluate concepts you are learning. This can help formulate sound and balanced arguments for papers.

Discuss readings with classmates.
- Review what you have gleaned from readings and understand your classmates' perspectives. This may help give a more holistic picture of the meaning of the text.