

### 17.588f13 Hints on the Readings

1. Keep a written abstract of the readings for each week, even if you are not writing a paper. Your learning curve in graduate school will be steep, and the knowledge you accumulate during your first two years will fall out of even the youngest and largest of brains if you don't capture it in writing.
2. For each work, read until you feel you understand the main argument. Then stop and write down that argument in a sentence. This task will be relatively straightforward for articles in peer-reviewed journals, for which there is normally an abstract at the front of the article; it may be harder for book, especially older books, which may have several sub-arguments. Sometimes, it is helpful to try to summarize the argument as a boxes-and-arrows diagram (in which A leads to B leads to C).
3. Think about the argument that you have just written down. Does it make logical sense? If not, can you state it in a way that does make sense? Write down your reflections in a few bullet points.
4. Think about what sorts of evidence might support or contradict this argument. Jot down a few "observable implications" of the argument.
5. As you read the rest of the article, keep track of whether the author presents evidence for her argument. Jot down, in bullet point form, the evidence that is presented.
6. Stop and reflect on the evidence presented. Is this evidence compelling? Write your assessment in a couple of bullet points.
7. Leave space at the end of your abstract for ideas that occurred to you as you were reading, any clever quotes you may want to use in your own work, etc.
8. Feel free to form study groups to go over the material and share the burden of writing up summaries of the readings. Whether you do so and how you do it is entirely up to you (and outside my purview). However, even if you do divide up writing notes, I would still recommend going through the exercise sketched out above on your own.

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