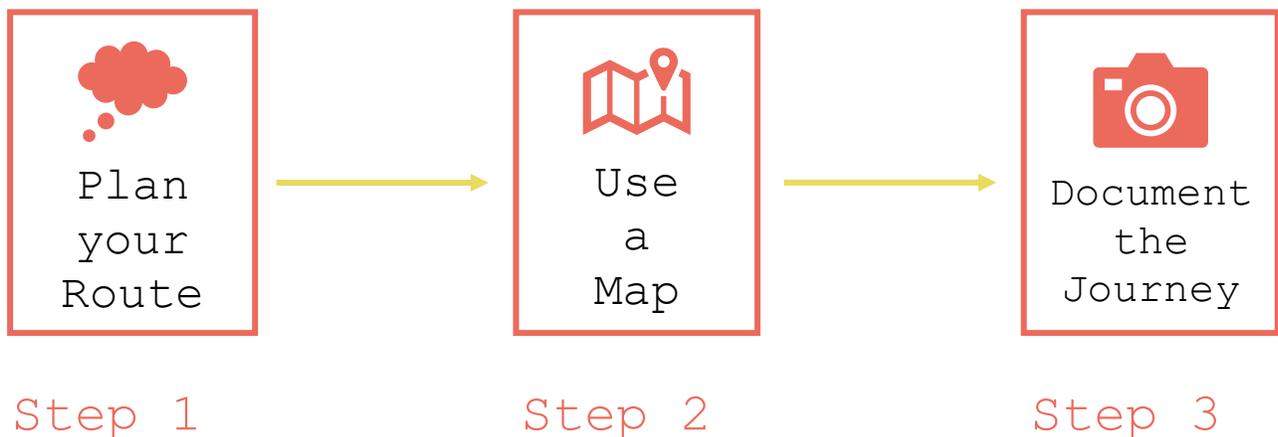


Academic Reading

Getting Started

Writing is the most common way scholars communicate and build knowledge in the field of Women's and Gender Studies. This course will prepare you to read scholarly material and apply those skills to other types of resources (such as podcasts and videos) as well as assignments.

Academic reading is similar to planning a trip. There are a few important steps for the trip to be successful:



Remember, these steps are not set in stone. While it's important to plan your route, use a map, and document the journey, it's equally important to be flexible and adaptable. Academic reading is recursive, meaning you may have to move through these steps several times to seek meaning and build knowledge from various resources in the course.

Step 1



Imagine you are travelling to a new destination. One of the first things you might do is plan the route. You will probably ask a few questions:

- Where am I going?
- How do I want to get there, and in what time?
- What will help me get there?
- Do I need to stop and take breaks?
- How will I know I'm on the right route?

Similar to a trip, preparing to read requires some planning. In this course, each week contains assigned readings and other resources. The purpose of using multiple resources is to critically analyze the topic from different, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives. It's important to have a sense of how these materials relate to each other before starting.

In Women's and Gender Studies, knowledge is constructed through critical analysis, argumentation, and ongoing discussion. This means that as you work through the assigned resources, you will need to critically analyze the arguments, compare them, weigh counterarguments, and consider how the conversations have evolved over time. Keep in mind, critical analysis takes time to develop. As you prepare for course materials, start with the following questions and strategies to guide your way:

Where Am I Going?

Ask Important Questions:

- What is the focus of this topic?
- What are the learning objectives?
- Are there common themes among the resources?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Find a quiet place to focus
- Scan the week's learning objectives
- Read the abstracts or descriptions of each resource



How Do I Want to Get There, and in What Time?

Ask Important Questions:

- When is the best time(s) to complete these materials?
- How much time will it take to complete the materials?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Think about when you like to study best
- Pencil time in your schedule to complete the materials



What Will Help Me Get There?

Ask Important Questions:

- What do you already know about the topic or author?
- What do you find interesting or confusing?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Think about the context in which the material was created
- Consider why the material is important for this particular topic



Do I Need to Stop and Take Breaks?

Ask Important Questions:

- How can you best spend your time?
- How much time do you have before your attention starts to drift?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Think about possible distractions and try to mitigate them beforehand
- Plan to read in manageable (short) chunks of time



How Will I Know I'm on the Right Route?

Ask Important Questions:

- How does the material connect with the course content?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Skim the course content before completing the required resources
- Reflect on the previous week's topic and consider its connection to this week



Reflection Question

What time of day will work for you to complete the course materials? Before beginning the materials, consider how you will get the most from the time you do have available.

Step 2



Use a
Map

Journeying to a new destination is not always easy. At various points, you may have to retrace your steps, reorient yourself, and make sense of conflicting instructions.

Critical analysis of reading materials is a similar kind of experience. For example, you may have to re-read passages, use a resource's glossary and

index to look up unfamiliar words, analyze diagrams, find supplemental resources (such as videos), or use other strategies to make sense of an assigned resource.

Although each of us is working with a similar map (the same learning objectives and course material), our journeys will be different. We will each engage with the course material in personal ways that help extend our thinking. Whichever strategies we choose, it is important to continuously reflect on their effectiveness and take active steps to engage with the materials.

Below are helpful strategies to consider if you want to get the most out of the assigned materials. Consider using them as a map to read academic material but remember to be flexible:

Ever “blanked” on a test? It could have been because of fluency illusion (thinking you know something simply because you’ve read or seen it). Avoid this illusion by actively engaging with resources and recalling the main points regularly throughout the term.

Strategy 1: Enter the Conversation

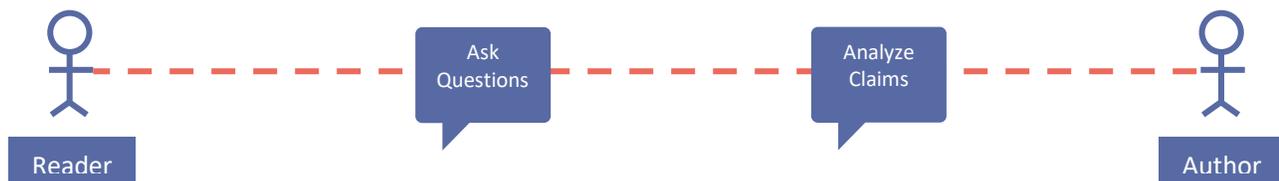
As a reader, you have an important voice. When you read, imagine you are in conversation with the author. Ask questions and seek to understand their perspective so you can enter the broader conversation as an informed participant. Taking these active steps will help you understand the author’s argument and what you think about it.

Ask Important Questions:

- Who is the author?
- What is the author trying to say?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Consider what you would ask the author in real life
- Don’t be afraid to question the author’s claims



Strategy 2: Use a Reading Method such as SQ4R

The SQ4R Method stands for Survey, Question, Read, Respond, Record, and Review. Scan the steps below or view the [Effective Reading with SQ4R](#) video and then consider how you might use aspects of this strategy to complete the course readings and study at the same time:

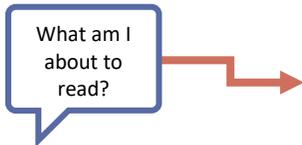
Survey the reading to understand the “big picture.”

Ask Important Questions:

- What is the organizational structure?
- What are the important sections of this reading?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Skim the table of contents, introduction or abstract, headings, images, glossary, and index.



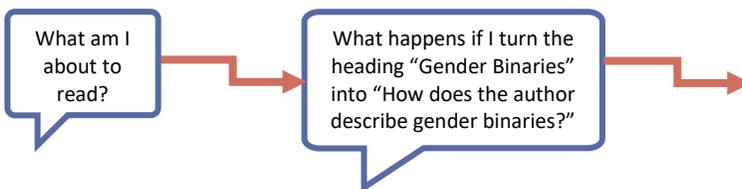
Then turn the headings into a **Question** as you read each section. This strategy helps you focus and check for understanding later on.

Ask Important Questions:

- What is significant in this section under the heading?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Write your question(s) next to the heading



Read each section and try to find the answer to the heading question. Actively engage with the words in each section to understand the author’s central claims.

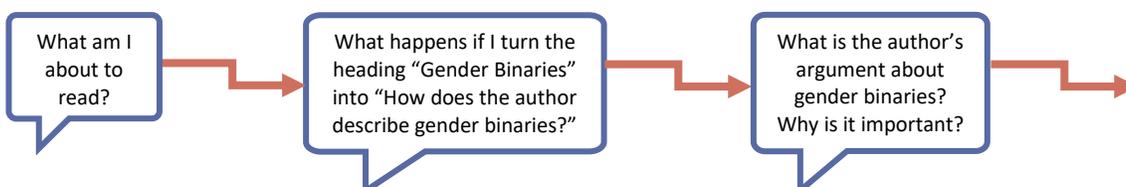
Answer these questions by the end of a reading:

- Who is the audience?
- What is the author’s central argument?
- What claims is the author making to convince me they are right?
- Which claims are the least/most convincing?
- Does the author introduce and/or define new terms?

- How is the author’s argument linked to this week’s topic and other materials?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Seek the answers to these questions as you read
- Circle or highlight new words and define them; build your vocabulary
- Take brief notes in the margins or on a scrap piece of paper



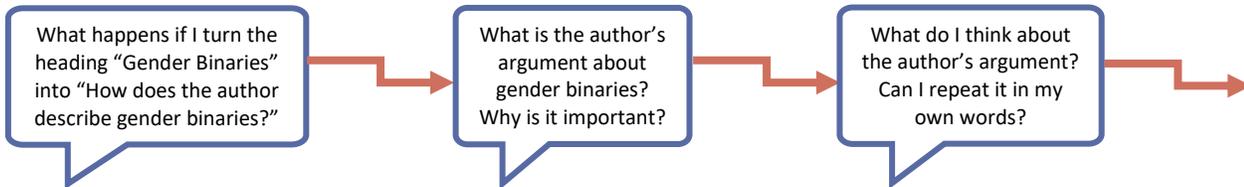
Respond to the questions from the step above by intermittently closing the reading and answering the questions in your own words. Answer relevant questions at that point in time.

Ask Important Questions:

- What is the main point of this section?
- Do you understand what you are reading?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Avoid looking at the original text while answering the questions
- Double check your answers



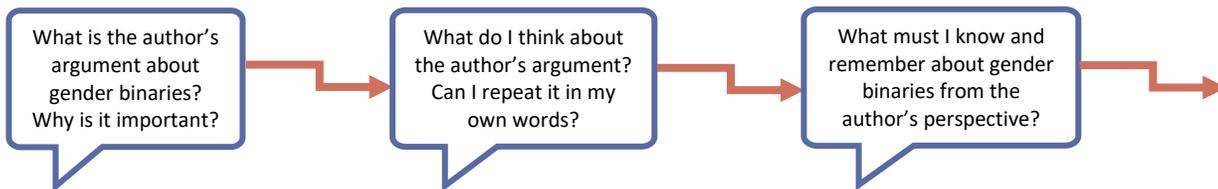
Record your notes after you understand the key ideas. Your notes are the answers to the questions above and from the guided reading questions.

Ask Important Questions:

- What is important enough to write down?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Take notes in your own words; paraphrase the author's claims by annotating on the page



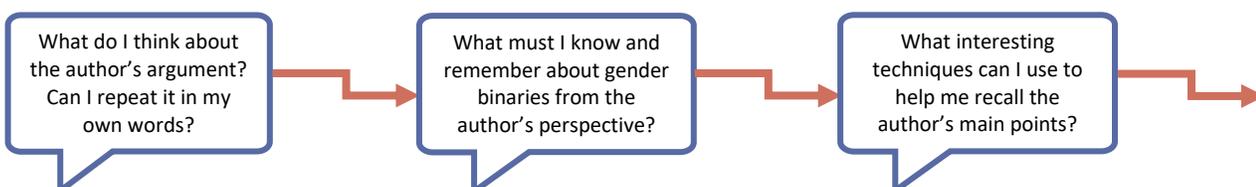
Review your notes on a regular basis.

Ask Important Questions:

- How can I build on what I learned to past and upcoming assigned resources?

Use Simple Strategies:

- Compare what you are learning to previous course topics
- Find active ways to review your notes, such as teaching the material, creating a practice quiz, or telling a story about the content





Reflection Question

In what ways do you already critically analyze articles and media in your personal time? Try incorporating one or two strategies you learned from above. When the time comes to critically analyze course materials, you will be well prepared!

Step 3



Document the Journey

Did the trip really happen if it wasn't documented by social media?

All joking aside, it's important to document what you read in the course. The act of taking notes helps you keep track of what you are learning and build on your ideas from previous topics.

The SQ4R Method outlined the importance of recording notes, but not actual note-taking strategies. One of the most effective ways to build knowledge and process ideas is to annotate (or markup) a resource with your own thoughts and ideas on the topic. In this way, you join the conversation as an active participant.

In this course, you can practice your annotation skills with paper and pencil, or an online tool called [Hypothes.is](https://web.hypothes.is). Using this tool, you can contribute your thoughts and ideas to a resource and return to those ideas at any point in time to review or revise them.

Sign up for Hypothes.is and learn how to use the tool here: <https://web.hypothes.is/quick-start-guide-for-students/>.



Reflection Question

How can you apply the strategies from planning your route, using a map, and documenting the journey to reading materials and other types of resources? For example, if you are planning to watch a video, you might consider its connection to the learning objectives and ask questions throughout the video to build understanding.