

## HOW MANY AND HOW MUCH?

While readings are a core part of all Critical Studies classes, there is no optimal number of pages to assign for courses in our area.

As a general guide, an average student taking a 3-credit Critical Studies class should expect to spend 5-6 hours doing coursework outside of class each week.

Questions you might consider:

- **How long** do you want students to spend on their reading each week?
- **What other tasks or assignments** will they be working on in any given week?
- **What do you want them to do** with their reading knowledge? If a reading just introduces an idea or topic, students might be able to skim it more quickly than if you want them to read closely for nuance or write a reading response about the text.
- Can you offer readings of **different lengths and styles** to engage students at different levels of reading proficiency?

Just a reminder that **different types of reading tasks require vastly different amounts of time**, so it's a good idea to check in with students periodically about their reading and how much time it is taking them.

## OTHER RESOURCES FOR ESL/ELL STUDENTS

Some students, particularly those who have done much of their education in a language other than English may need additional reading supports.

Writing Centre tutors can support students in their academic reading, but there are some good resources available online:

- [www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell/](http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell/)
- [writingcenter.unc.edu/esl/resources/academic-reading-strategies/](http://writingcenter.unc.edu/esl/resources/academic-reading-strategies/)

## AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT COPYRIGHT

Canadian copyright law limits the amount of material you can extract or reproduce from a source text for the purposes of education. Please visit [guides.ecuad.ca/copyright](http://guides.ecuad.ca/copyright) for the most up-to-date information.

## MAKING READINGS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

You can make readings available in multiple ways:

- Post copyright-compliant PDFs or links on your **Moodle** course site
- Create a course reading pack through Emily Carr University's Digital Output Centre (DOC) for class distribution. The **Course Pack Request form** and Course Pack Report spreadsheet can be accessed under the "forms" tab on your Faculty MyEC page
- Printing short readings or handouts to distribute to students in class
- Putting materials on reserve at the library: [ecuad.ca/library/faculty/reserves](http://ecuad.ca/library/faculty/reserves)
- Contact a Librarian ([library@ecuad.ca](mailto:library@ecuad.ca)) to create a Library Guide for your course.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[blogs.eciad.ca/cacfacultyhandbook](http://blogs.eciad.ca/cacfacultyhandbook)  
[blogs.eciad.ca/wc](http://blogs.eciad.ca/wc)

# TEACHING *with* READINGS in Critical Studies



Critical Studies courses cover a range of disciplines, each with its own body of scholarship and literature. For this reason, course readings are a primary learning tool in most, if not all, Critical Studies classes.

## TEACHING READING

Reading is often assigned in university classes but seldom taught. Many students don't have the skills they need to read effectively at university, not because they are poor readers, but because they have not had much practice reading the kinds of texts they are expected to read at this level.

Promoting meaningful engagement with readings is not an intuitive task. Students may mistakenly assume that all texts can or should be read the same way or that the strategies they use to read their favourite graphic novel will work when reading an excerpt of French philosophy. In fact, expert readers use a range of reading strategies that vary depending on **what** and **why** they're reading.

Helping students understand that **different texts require different reading strategies** is one way that you can help students develop their reading skills.

Most faculty find it helpful to assign tasks or activities that require students to engage with readings actively, transforming them from passive receivers of information to active creators of knowledge.

Below is a list of activities you can use to promote deeper reading techniques.

### Previewing Readings & Situating Texts

Previewing activities might include:

- Asking students to freewrite what they know about the topic of a reading
- Presenting background information to frame a reading
- Providing a list of keywords or ideas that will be important to look for in the text as students read
- Asking students to speculate about the intended audience and purpose of a text based on a visual analysis of it
- Offering students a question or problem that you expect the text to answer for them

### Reading Responses

Many instructors require some form of reading response to class readings, possibly in the form of an informal online forum discussion, a reading journal, or a formal writing assignment.

These responses can be:

- graded or ungraded (many instructors connect informal writing to participation grades)
- written in response to particular questions or be entirely freeform
- be reflective in nature or critical

Knowing that they will have to write about a text requires students to read with a different purpose: they read looking to make connections, ask questions, find gaps or disagreements; they read to understand or to note where they don't understand. In online forums, they can also learn from their peers' responses to a text.

### Dialogic Reading Responses

Sometimes called double-entry notebooks (Bean 2011), the dialogic reading response encourages students to interrogate and "talk back" to their first impressions of a text. After a student has written a reading response, they then review, rethink and write back to what they have written. They might challenge or question their original response; they might extend or further develop it; they might connect it to other texts and ideas. Typically a span of time—from one day to several weeks—generates the best learning between responses.

### Collaborative Reading Exercises

Sometimes called jigsaw activities, collaborative reading is an in-class activity that makes the process of reading visible, promotes deep reading, and models how different readers will understand a text differently.

For this type of activity, you will need a long or difficult text that you can divide into 3-5 sections. Divide students into groups that correspond to the number of sections of text. Assign each group member a section of text, and have them read it with the purpose of "teaching" their fellow group members the important information from their section.

Groups then work together to construct an understanding of the text as a whole, taking notes that can be shared with the class. At the end, a whole class discussion can compare how each group understood the text.

### Difficulty Papers

Difficulty papers are one way that students can engage and communicate with difficult readings. When students get frustrated by a text, instead of giving up, they will instead articulate in writing—either directed to you or to the author—why they are having difficulty with the text.

Naming and sharing difficulties is an excellent first step for students to understand how their reading practices are conditioning their learning. Sharing those difficulties through class discussion can further demystify the reading process and position reading development as a task that all readers engage in.

### Write a Letter to the Author(s) / Imagine an Interview with the Author

One particularly effective way for students to engage with the meaning of a text is to imagine responding directly to the author of that text, whether in the form of a letter or an imagined dialogue. In both, the student needs to understand not only the author's text, but also their place in the field of study. And by articulating a specific audience (the author) for the questions students are asking, this assignment gives students a different purpose for their reading.

### Rhetorical Analysis / Genre Analysis

Like a formal analysis in art criticism, a rhetorical analysis is more concerned with HOW a text makes meaning, not what it means. In a rhetorical analysis, students may be looking at how a text is organized, how an author develops an argument, how she supports that argument with evidence, what kind of language he uses, etc. The goal here is to examine how a text has been constructed and what a student can learn from that for their own writing.

### Reverse Outlines

A reverse outline is an outline you create of a completed text. The basic premise of a reverse outline is identifying "what it says / what it does." After reading each paragraph, students make a note in the left margin summarizing what the paragraph says; in the right margin they note what the paragraph does in developing the author's argument. They can then use this information to create a table or map that shows not just what a text says but how it works.