

Strategies for Teaching Critical Reading

1. Preview the assigned reading

- Summarize it in the previous class
- Ask interesting questions that will be answered in the reading assignment
- Take a poll on some of the issues addressed in the reading assignment
- Emphasize the interest, usefulness, and fit in the course sequence of the reading

2. Do not repeat the reading in a lecture

Do not make listening to your lecture become the student's reading strategy.

It is tempting when students do not or can not read the textbook chapters to make sure the course content is "covered" by telling the students what they should have learned by reading the textbook. Among the reasons for not lecturing on assigned reading are

- Your students will not learn to read for comprehension--a valuable skill in your discipline.
- Your students will not learn to read critically--also a valuable skill in your discipline.
- Your passive learners will not learn how to **apply** the course information if the time they spend on task is spent on the tasks of listening and taking notes.
- Enough class time will not be spent on higher order thinking tasks, such as applying, conceptualizing, analyzing, synthesizing, classifying, comparing, evaluating.

3. Have students write something in response to the text

Demonstrate how to do it; provide a model.

Write your daily instructions in the daily course syllabus. Some examples are

- Outline or concept map
- Summary
- Ask/answer questions
- Read it twice, annotating then text as a believer and then as a doubter
- Write double-entry notes:
one page (or column) for summaries of the text, and an adjacent page (or column) for comments
- Personal response

4. Design a focused, informal writing-to-learn task based on the reading

For example:

- Connect the reading to a past lecture or to prior knowledge
- Compare/contrast with another reading
- Critique/evaluate
- Apply the reading content to a scenario or case

For some suggestions for designing informal writing tasks that promote thinking, see the workshop on [designing writing assignments that promote thinking](#), especially sections 7 and 8.

5. Monitor compliance

Develop ways to ensure that students do their homework without burdening yourself with daily feedback or recordkeeping.

See [A Strategy for Getting Students to Arrive in Class Prepared to Think](#)

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