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[This is a handout used in workshops on Reading Skills. "Case Studies" refer to specific examples used in these workshops.]

How to Read and Research in Graduate School

I. Your identity as a Graduate Student: Studying for Yourself/Studying for the Professor

II. Different Kinds of Reading and Different Kinds of Texts

A. Prayerful Reading, Sifting, Analytical Reading, Leisure Reading

-- Case Study: Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

B. Primary Texts vs. Secondary Texts

C. Text Books vs. Monographs (and other thesis-driven books)

D. Journals vs. Magazines

E. Websites

II. Theological Degrees as Interdisciplinary

A. Learning to Identify the Different Disciplines, including: Theology, History, Scriptural Studies, Ethics, Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology

B. Identifying the Disciplinary Approach(es) of a class, book, article, or any other research material
--respect each discipline as legitimate area of study and accept the particular nature of each discipline (eg. Don't write a theological reflection paper for a History Research Assignment; Don't expect theological reflection to be found within a Sociological Study of a particular religious group.)

C. Adapting your analysis to each disciplinary approach:

-- Case Study: Angela of Foligno

III. Required Reading and Preparing for Exams

1. Read the syllabus carefully:

a. How will you be evaluated/examined?

b. What is required?

c. What disciplines are involved in the course?

2. Reading Required Books

a. Highlighting Texts: Active vs. Passive Reading

b. Writing notes in books

-- Summary Cues

-- Rebuttals

-- Questions

-- Creating your own Personal Index to the Book

-- Stick-on notes

c. Taking Notes (see template for note-taking on my webpage)

-- Use all available information on cover, title page, Acknowledgements and Introduction, table of contents, bibliography to orient you to the book's purpose, goals, etc.

-- Four levels of Note-Taking

1. Reading/Noting for Information

2. Determine Discipline, Methodology, Sources Used

3. Determine Author's Interpretation of Sources

--An author's thesis is usually stated several times: in preface, introduction, and conclusion.

--Determine who your author is in scholarly conversation with; who s/he argues against and who s/he agrees with (cf. A.S. Huff Writing for Scholarly Publication, [précis found on my webpage](#) .

4. Your critique/evaluation of the Author's Interpretation and Identifying the difference from your personal opinion/reaction to an author)

-- At the end of each reading session with a particular author, write a summary of what you have read before you get up and leave the book/article. If you are unable to summarize the piece, you did not process the material and will have to read it again.

--SUGGESTION: Create a small study group and take turns summarizing the readings and checking each other's summaries for accuracy. Keep the discussion of this group focused; do not start by asking "What did you think of that book?" Use the "Template for Taking Notes" as your guide to discussion.

-- Develop a system that works for you so you keep each aspect of analysis clearly defined. Be consistent in using the system.

IV. Reading for Research Projects

A. Know the Standard and Essential Research Tools for your discipline.

Resources for learning these include: [GTU Library Webpage](#) ; GTU Library Handouts; [UC Bancroft Library](#) , GTU Library Research Assistant Program, "PATH," your professors, your peers

B. Read Encyclopendia/Specialized Dictionary Entries for Basic Information

-- These may or may not be signed articles; if signed, note the name and search what else that author has written

-- These articles may include brief bibliographies; note these works and look at them. Are they still relevant or are they outdated?

C. A successfully narrowed topic is the first step in streamlining your reading load for any research project you conduct (see forthcoming handout and session on How to Narrow your Research Topic)

D. Identify the top 5 scholars participating in the scholarly discussion you want to explore/do research in; collect their published works and identify their respective theses/methodological approaches/conclusions.

-- These 5 authors will probably not be the first 5 names that come up on [GRACE](#) , the GTU library Catalogue!

-- Learn the literary formulae used for the written presentation of ideas. These formulae may differ between disciplines.

-- Case Study: Pryds, The King Embodies the Word: Robert d'Anjou and the Politics of Preaching

-- Selected "Spiral Reading" on your topic: finding materials through library catalogue; looking through these books, gleaning theses/methods from each; extracting further references from footnotes and bibliographies; and so forth.

E. Read Book Reviews of the book-length works of the 5 scholars above in "D"

-- Identify the Journals in your discipline that carry scholarly reviews of books. (see GTU library

handouts; ask professors in your field)

-- How have their scholarly peers assessed/evaluated their works? What strengths and weaknesses do they point out in the reviews? Use these as guides (but not as necessarily infallible) to begin learning the standards of scholarly research and writing in your discipline. (Be aware that a particularly nasty tone to any review often reveals a personal vendetta or personal issue you may be unaware of. If you believe the tone of writing is especially vindictive, make a note of this in your notes so you are alerted to any hostile debates going on in the field.)

F. Based on the reading you've done, select the most important and relevant works to read more carefully and more thoroughly. Use the note-taking method suggested above so that you are able:

- to distinguish carefully between generally accepted "fact" and the author's interpretation (which may or may not be generally accepted)
- to understand the contribution this author has made to the state research in this given area
- to identify what research needs to be done in the future on this or related topics.