Tips on Reading Assignments for ATOC1060

1 Contacts

Don’t hesitate to get help!

- **Professor:** Baylor Fox-Kemper, bfk@colorado.edu, 303-492-0532
- **Teaching Assistant:** Benjamin Blazey, benjamin.blazey@colorado.edu
- **Website:** [http://fox-kemper.com/1060](http://fox-kemper.com/1060), username: atoc1060, password: IC
- **Office Hours:** Prof. Fox-Kemper’s office hours are Mondays 1:30-3:30PM in Ekeley S250B or by appointment (bfk@colorado.edu). TA Ben Blazey’s office hours are Mondays 5-7PM in Duane E126 or by appointment (benjamin.blazey@colorado.edu). Students are encouraged to seek homework help at these times.

2 General Comments on Reading

Before you get worried about reading assignments with homework every week or so, let me explain the thought process behind the reading. 1) I want to be able to present the most interesting aspects of each topic in class, and will rely on you gaining some vocabulary and definitions through the reading. 2) If you don’t understand what I’m saying in class, I want you to know where to look. 3) When you do your homework assignments, you will know where to find things, and 4) you will have an organized study guide for the exams.

You may notice that the reading assignments follow what we will be talking about in class. Thus, I expect you to do a little skimming of the chapters *before the due date*, so that you can follow along in class.

3 Skim Reading

Some of you may have experience in reading scientific material, but it is always nice to revisit. Good scientific writing (like the kind in the readings I’ve assigned) is laid out in a very formulaic way, so you are able to quickly glean the content without a linear reading from beginning to end. One of the goals of this class is to learn how to read scientific materials quickly and thoroughly. For example, by the last week of class you’ll be well-read enough and well-practiced enough that we’ll be reading directly from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports [http://ipcc.ch](http://ipcc.ch).

Here’s how I read a scientific work:

1. Read the book title.
2. If I don’t understand the book title, read the preface or other introductory materials to figure it out.
3. Read the chapter titles.
4. If I don’t understand the chapter titles, read the first and last couple of paragraphs in each chapter to figure it out.
5. Read the section titles.
6. If I don’t understand the section titles, read the first and last couple of paragraphs in each section to figure it out.
7. Find the important figures, graphics, definitions, theorems, lemmas, or boxed sets of equations and read their captions.

8. If I don’t understand what the these indicate, find the point in the text where they are referenced and read those paragraphs.

9. Read the key concepts outline at the front and back of each chapter if there is one.

10. If I don’t understand a key concept listing, find the paragraphs where I can figure it out.

11. Find additional important language and terms being introduced.

12. In all of the above, there will be keywords offset in bold, or repeated technical terms that are unfamiliar. Skim backward and find the first instance they are used (where, if the writer is any good, they will be clearly defined).

13. Read the most important derivations or paragraphs from beginning to end.

14. Read the most important sections from beginning to end.

15. Read the whole chapter from beginning to end.

Only when I really need to understand the material do I make it to step 15.

4 My Expectations of Your Reading

- **Before you buy the book**: I usually have done step 4 before I even buy the book. With an online assignment, you don’t have this advantage, but you can at least open up the files in the assignment or sometimes the table of contents is available before you buy.

- **Before class on a topic**: I expect you to do up to step 10.

- **Before HW**: I expect you to have reached step 12 before you begin the homework assignment.

- **During HW**: I would expect you to get to step 14 while doing the homework.

- **If confused or intrigued**: I do not expect you to reach step 15 at all, unless of course you really find it interesting or are reviewing for the exam.

4.1 An Important Lesson

For those of you keeping track, you’ll note that this reading method has a lot to do with the way to write well. If you write like well, others will be able to read like this! So, when you compose your *grand œuvre* and make a million bucks, remember to give generously to the alumni fund!