Class Annotation Guide and General Reading Tips

Annotate your readings

In this class, we’ll annotate texts to interact with an author’s ideas, a practice common among academic researchers. Most researchers mark words of the reading by circling, underlining or highlighting key terms and by writing questions and brief analytical comments alongside the margins of the reading. Others copy key quotes and comment upon them either by typing them or writing them in paper or electronic journals, noting the page numbers, the name of the author, and title of the work.

If the reading is in electronic form, you are welcome to copy and paste the content of the text into a word processing program (M. Word; Pages; Google Docs, etc.) and use the comments feature to add comments. You are also welcome to use comment tools in a PDF reader such as Adobe Acrobat or Apple Preview.

However you annotate, have a copy ready to reference in our class, and ready to show when I ask.

To annotate, alongside the margins of the actual text or otherwise, write/type a question or comment. Do so at minimum every five paragraphs, or if a poem, every other stanza. Possible means:

- Note what grabs your attention and explain why/how so.
- Note what concepts could be accentuated or extended.
- Note what claims or content you deem are missing, askew, or neglected.
- Note rhetoric—the methods, arguments, purpose, and writing style of the author.
- Use one of the following prompts and explain: “Repeated theme”; “Tension,” “Binary,” “Anomaly,” or “Gap.”
- Compare the text with other texts or knowledge [from this class or otherwise].
- Wonder about how the idea might be applied.

Extend at least one of your annotations into a full phrase.

Apply reading tips
[culled from research sources]

1. If a book, scan the table of contents.
2. Scan summary questions at the end of the chapter, if given; scan for keywords as cues to look for the content the authors or editors deem most important.
3. Read the introduction and conclusion sections first.
4. Scan subheadings first, and words put in bold or italicized font, second.
5. Read the body of the article, mindful that authors announce or summarize key points most often in the first and last sentence of each paragraph.
6. Mark key metaphors, similes, analogies, dates, names, and concepts.
7. Note key sources the author cites.