

READING ANNOTATIONS GUIDELINES

WHAT ARE THEY?

Reading annotations are to be a handwritten/typed summation of key points, ideas, and arguments contained within **each assigned reading**. ~~Each student is to read the assigned material(s) thoroughly and produce a minimum of **one full page** (single-spaced; or its equivalent) worth of notes in their class notebooks, which will be submitted in class on the day the respective reading is assigned. This means that **assigned materials should be read prior to coming to class on the day it will be discussed.**~~

~~Notes will not be judged based on content, but will count towards the student's overall reading annotations grade [calculated at the end of the quarter].~~ This will benefit each student by cultivating responsibility for one's intellectual labor and providing active engagement with the assigned readings, which will help students memorize the material as well as provide reminders when studying for quizzes and working on writing assignments. As such, **students will get as much out of these annotations as they put in.**

WHAT SHOULD BE IN THE NOTES?

In order to further assist students in their reading comprehension, there may, on occasion, be **accompanying reading questions** in the assigned material, whose answers should be incorporated into the larger set of annotations.

In addition to accompanying reading questions, **each set of annotations should, at minimum, include the following four components**, along with all other notes taken:

1. In your own words, what is your biggest take away from the reading?
2. Identify one contentious point [non-factual] made in the reading which you agree/disagree with and explain why. Include the page number.
3. Describe something in the reading you did not understand or found to be unclear (such as unfamiliar terminology or a strange inference). Include the page number.
4. What is one question you have about the reading? [to be shared with the class].

TIPS

Below are **pointers** to assist students in developing the skills to take efficient and useful notes on any argumentative material:

- **Do NOT write in complete sentences** – this will save you lots of time and energy.
 - No sentence should be longer than 35 words, and you should write as clearly as possible.
 - Hint: try to **rephrase** your annotation selections in your OWN words.

- This will come in handy when it is time to write out assignments.
 - You won't have to worry about plagiarizing the author when referencing your notes since you will have already gone through the trouble of summarizing their view in your own words (although credit need still be given for paraphrasing to avoid plagiarism).
- **Define all key terms** and/or terms new to you.
 - If a term is used but not defined by the author, look up its meaning or make a note of it for class discussion as prescribed in **point 3** above.
- **Abbreviate** lengthy names, terms/concepts used a lot in reading.
 - Ex: Confucianism [C], gender studies [GS], Siddhartha [S]
- **Organize** in sections, bullet points, or outline format.
 - Identify **doctrine/philosophical commitments** – main point being asserted or maintained by an individual or tradition.
 - Mark such commitments in your notes [D] or [C] as prescribed in **point 1** above.
 - Hint: this will usually be stated as parts of belief systems, claims about existence, ethical/legal commitments, or other normative judgments about how things ought to be.
 - Identify **supporting points/premises** – used to argue for or support doctrine and commitments
 - Mark premises in your notes [P1, P2, P3, etc.]
 - Hint: usually can find one main point per paragraph
 - Sometimes multiple paragraphs will be dedicated to explaining the same point.
 - Try to distinguish when transitions are made between points.
 - Identify any possible **objections/responses** to doctrine
 - This can be challenging since it may be a section where the author appears to be going back and forth on their own main point.
 - Note: these are NOT the same as their supporting points.
 - Hint: in philosophy papers, the author will always entertain possible objections to their own argument, since being prepared to address such objections strengthens one's own main point.
 - Mark objections in your notes [O1, O2, etc.] as well as the author's response to each objection [R1, R2, etc.]
 - *Note: not all readings in this course will be explicitly philosophical and so may not contain objections.*
- Make a note of any **comparisons** between various traditions/doctrines we have covered in the class so far.

- Mark similarities and/or differences in the position various traditions take on the same issue.
- Hint: if various authors are approaching a topic from different background assumptions and/or normative frameworks, they may come to different beliefs, or the same belief for different reasons.
- Make a note of any **questions/comments YOU may have** – this will help you practice actively engaging with the reading.
 - Mark questions [Q] so that you can easily find them to ask in class as prescribed in **points 3 & 4** above.
 - Hint: since quiz questions and writing assignments will ask you to think critically about these traditions, you will be able to look back at your notes to help you remember when something stuck out in your mind, or struck you as off/interesting.
 - Mark any of your own thoughts which critically engage with the positions taken in the reading.
 - If you are not sure about the claim/position [?]
 - If you agree with the claim/position for different reasons [~]
 - IF you disagree with the claim/position [X]
 - These can provide reference when attempting to figure out your own intuitions about the author's main thesis as prescribed in **point 2**.