

Psychology 1750
Comprehension Strategies for College Reading
Spring 2009

Instructor: Wendy Beck

Phone: 797-1123

E-mail: wendy.beck@usu.edu

Office: University Inn 103

Office Hours: M, W, 10:00-11:00

or by appointment

**Note: This class meets from Jan. 6th to Feb. 26th.

Course Description:

Psychology 1750, Comprehension Strategies for College Reading, is a one-credit course designed for students who want to improve their college reading skills. Many college students possess adequate reading skills but have not learned to adapt them to the demands of different academic areas. This class will help students understand and adapt reading strategies to best fit their learning needs. The philosophy of the class is that students will discover new strategies and test them by practicing and applying them to college reading material. An emphasis will also be placed on reading a variety of texts—college texts, fiction, research articles, etc. The goals of this course are:

1. Students will ask relevant questions about personal reading problems and seek information to answer those questions.
2. Students will access information about reading that they can apply to textbook reading problems.
3. Students will become aware of their own comprehension process. They will analyze a reading task, select appropriate reading strategies, and monitor the success of those strategies.
4. Students will be able to read critically, analyzing arguments and facts for accuracy.
5. Students will use writing as a means of organizing information, focusing ideas, recognizing relationships, or generating new ideas.

Class Format:

Successful students recognize what is most important to know in a class. While knowing facts may be useful on an examination, understanding concepts and being able to apply them to new situations is much more important in the long run. Because the traditional lecture approach to teaching does not facilitate real understanding, this class will combine a problem-based, group-centered introduction to concepts with whole class discussions and mini-lectures.

Required Text:

You will be required to buy one book to be read during the semester for your own personal enjoyment and to be used for a book presentation in class. You will also look for information about reading in books, journal articles, and on the Internet.

Participation:

To do well in this class you must attend. There is a high correlation between class attendance and high grades. Much of your learning will occur as a result of your active participation in class. Sharing your ideas with the class and bringing required materials are essential to active participation. Participation points will be earned through in-class exercises, short homework assignments, and attendance checks.

Grading:

A = 94-100

B = 83-86

C = 73-76

F = below 60

A- = 90-93

B- = 80-82

C- = 70-72

B+ = 87-89

C+ = 77-79

D = 60-69

Journal entries:

Your journal entries will be a record of the process of researching and finding answers to the problems posed in class. They will include both in-class activities and reflections. Consider the following questions as you complete each journal entry:

What did I already know about this topic?

What did I want or need to learn about this topic?

What did I actually learn?

How am I using the information?

Book Presentation:**Due: Feb 24, Feb 26**

Each student will present a book to the class that he or she has chosen to read during the semester. The only rule is that it must be a book read strictly for enjoyment. Now's your big chance to read that bodice-ripper or Stephen King novel or self-help book you've always wanted to! The purpose of your presentation is to try to motivate your fellow students to read and enjoy the book you have chosen—in effect, you will be doing a little infomercial about your book. Your book presentation should take approximately 5 minutes and include:

–An attention-getting introduction

–A brief synopsis that is exciting but doesn't necessarily give away the whole story

–An oral reading of a short portion of the book that is well-integrated into your presentation

–A conclusion that leaves your audience motivated to read

–The use of some sort of visual aid in your presentation

This assignment does not require a written reflection to be turned in with it.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT:

Not every assignment will fit your needs exactly. If you find that any particular assignment does not meet your needs, it is your responsibility to come up with an alternative assignment that meets your needs and still fulfills our class objectives. After discussing the new assignment with me, I will ask you to type up a description of the new assignment and give me a copy. **It is your right and responsibility to make the assignments in this class fit your needs.**

SCHEDULE

(Subject to change depending on class needs)

Date Topic

Jan 6 Introduction

Assignment: During the next week, choose and purchase a book to be read for enjoyment. This assignment is designed to get you looking for something good to read. That will mean something different for each person—the important thing is to choose a book to read that you are excited about! Talk to people you know to get ideas, pay attention to book reviews in the newspaper or in magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek*, go to a bookstore and brows (there are several here in town), or check the Internet. Get any book you want, buy it, and start reading! In **one typed page**, write about the process you went through to find your book. Questions to get you thinking are: Where did your search take you? Was this a fun process? Uncomfortable? What books did you find yourself drawn to? Why do you think they appealed to you? What book did you choose? How did you make your decision? Attach the receipt for your new book to this assignment.

Due Date: Jan 22

Jan 8 What is Reading?

In-class journal: Write a **one-page paper** that discusses your understanding of the question, “What is reading?” Use your notes from class to answer the question.

Due Date: Jan 8

Jan 13 Reading Behaviors

Assignment: In a **journal entry**, reflect on what you have learned about reading in general and about your own reading behaviors from filling out the reading behaviors inventory. Choose at least three new reading behaviors to change and practice for two weeks.

Due Date: Jan 15

Jan 15 Pre-reading

Assignment: Decide on at least two additional pre-reading behaviors to experiment with on four reading assignments (previewing, reading summaries, looking at headings, making a note taking guide using major headings, etc.). In a **reaction paper** summarize the five techniques you tried and evaluate your experience. What went well? What didn't? Did these new behaviors make a difference in your reading comprehension or concentration? Did they drive you crazy? What will you do next? Etc.

Due Date: Jan 29

Jan 20 Identifying Main Ideas

Jan 22 Handling Difficult Reading

Jan 27 Analyzing Information

Jan 29 Defining a Personal Reading Challenge to Research

Assignment: Find at least **three sources of information** to help you answer your research question. Come to the next class prepared to summarize your findings and share them with the class.

Your **summary** of research will be turned in.

Due Date: Feb 3

Feb 3 Sharing Research

Assignment: Write a **journal entry** about where you are in the process of solving your problem. What did you learn today? What do you still need to know?

Due Date: Feb 5

Feb 5 Sharing Research and Integrating Ideas

Assignment: Conduct research to find a reading strategy that may address your problem. Bring a **copy of the source article** to the next class.

Due Date: Feb 10

Feb 10 Creating Models

Assignment: Using the information you found in your research, create your own **personalized reading strategy**. Write a **reaction paper** describing the process of creating your strategy. Outline the steps in your strategy, including pre-reading, during reading, and after reading activities, and discuss why you included the things you included. You will create an overhead transparency and present a summary of your strategy to everyone during the next class.

Due Date: Feb 12

Feb 12 Generating Ideas

Assignment: Try out your strategy on at least four of your college reading assignments. Record the results on the matrix, and then use your matrix to write a reaction paper. In your **reaction paper**, summarize your experiences with using your strategy for reading and evaluate your experiences. What would you do differently? What helped? What didn't? How would you adapt this to better meet your needs or the needs of a particular reading assignment? Make any needed adjustments.

Due Date: Feb 19

Feb 19 Testing It Out

Assignment: Do a final try-out of your strategy using one of your college reading assignments. Read part of the assignment using your strategy and part in your accustomed way. Determine if your strategy makes a difference. Then write your **reading autobiography**. Reflect on past reading experiences as well as your experiences this semester in PSY 1750. In this paper you will summarize and reflect on everything you have done this semester in PSY 1750.

Due Date: Feb 28

Feb 24 Book Presentations

Feb 26 Evaluating and Sharing