ATS1345 - Efficient Reading & Note-Taking Strategies

Dr. Lynette Pretorius
PhD, BSc(Hons), GCAP
Learning Skills Adviser
Sir Louis Matheson Library

☎ (03) 9902 0375
✉ Lynette.Pretorius@monash.edu
Outline

- Critical thinking for reading & note-taking
- Reading strategies
  - Reading with a purpose
  - Strategies for reading at university level
- Note-taking strategies
  - Styles of note-taking
  - Writing an annotated bibliography
Critical Thinking

Evaluating Sources for Reliability
Interrogating Texts
Evaluating the reliability of sources

Online Interactive Tutorial

http://bit.ly/1lYpbAz
Evaluating the reliability of sources

- Is the article peer-reviewed/refereed?
- Who are the authors and what affiliations do they have?
- Do the authors have any biases or conflicts of interest?
- Does the evidence support the authors arguments?
- Is there a reference list with matching in-text references?
- The language of the article
- The publisher
- Does the text present original research or second-hand accounts?
Evaluating the reliability of sources

Scholarly sources checklist

1. Content of source:
   A. Are sources cited or references provided in the source? This means parenthetical in-text citations or footnotes are provided, indicating where information and ideas were taken from, and an extensive reference list is provided at the end of the source. If sources are not cited, stop! A source without references is not a scholarly source.
   
   B. Is the source an in-depth treatment of its subject (usually several pages long with a lot of detailed information and in-depth analysis)?
   
   C. Does the source have a thesis or argument or claim it’s trying to prove, or (if it’s a report of scientific research) a conclusion drawn from the research? Most scholarly sources have a claim they are trying to prove, or a conclusion drawn from the research.
   
   D. Does the source incorporate original research? Most scholarly sources are a combination of original research and analysis of earlier research, though in some cases they just review or summarize or analyze earlier research.

2. Information about the publisher of the source:
   A. Is the source published by a college or university, or by a scholarly professional organization (For example, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, or *American Quarterly*, published by the American Studies Association, an

Interrogating a text

- What is the thesis/argument made by the author?
  - Why is the argument significant?

- What is the nature of the evidence?
  - Is it based on empirical research, ethical consideration, common knowledge, anecdote?

- How convincing is the evidence?
  - Does the research design adequately address the question posed?
Interrogating texts – “The Critical Approach”

1. Analysing & reducing complex material to its simple elements & examining the relationship between them

2. Adopting a critical attitude towards those elements, questioning their meaning, evaluating the evidence for them and judging their value or importance

3. Finally, presenting those judgements in a persuasive and reasoned argument
For example:

“SOCIETY WOULD BE BETTER OFF USING ANDROID PHONES THAN APPLE PHONES. APPLE PHONES’ SCREENS ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO BREAK BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT PROTECTED BY GORILLA GLASS.”

BARBARA SMITH FROM WISCONSIN, USA
For example:
**SOME CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:**

- Who is Barbara Smith from Wisconsin?
- Does Barbara Smith work for a company that would profit from selling more Android phones?
- Does Barbara Smith work for Apple?
- How can she make the statement ‘Apple phone screens are much more likely to break’?
- What evidence does she have?
- Has she conducted a well-designed research project into this subject?
For example:
SOME CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:

- Who is Barbara Smith from Wisconsin?
- Does Barbara Smith work for a company that would profit from selling more Android phones?
- Does Barbara Smith work for Apple?
- How can she make the statement ‘Apple phone screens are much more likely to break’?
- What evidence does she have?
- Has she conducted a well-designed research project into this subject?
Identifying academic arguments

- **Facts** can be supported by evidence or strong likelihood or common sense,
  - The number of people with access to the Internet is increasing worldwide

- **Opinions** are usually not based on any research or statistics, and are often characterised by value judgements or emotive language
  - Women are better at raising children than men
  - This is a devious attempt by the government to cheat tax payers
### Considering Different Viewpoints in Arguments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Who argues for this?</th>
<th>Who argues against this?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How?</td>
<td>How?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example/evidence**

- Gorilla glass study on screen breakability
- Smith et al.’s confirmation study

**Implications**

- People won’t have to fix their phones often – cheaper long term
- If there is no difference in screen strength → iPhones are just as good as Android phones in screen strength
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Who argues for this? How?</th>
<th>Who argues against this? How?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Android phone screens break less easily | Makers of Gorilla glass  
Android phone owners | Apple |
| Example/evidence | Gorilla glass study on  
screen breakability  
Smith et al.’s confirmation study | Apple screen breakability  
testing report |
| Implications | People won’t have to  
fix their phones often – cheaper long term | If there is no difference in  
screen strength →  
iPhones are just as good as Android phones in screen strength |
How do I read critically?

- Start by:
  - Determining the central claims or purpose of the text
  - Assessing how these claims are developed or argued

- Make judgements about the context of the text:
  - What audience is the text written for?
  - Are there any other scholars with differing viewpoints?
  - Does the author have a conflict of interest?
    - Is he/she biased?
How do I read critically?

- Examine the evidence the text employs:
  - Does the evidence support the central claim of the text?
  - Are appropriate statistics used?

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the argument:
  - Could the argument be better supported?
  - Are there gaps, leaps or inconsistencies?
  - Could the evidence be interpreted differently?
Thinking critically – the process

Describe
- What?
- When?
- Where?
- Who?

Analyze
- What if?
- Why?
- How?

Evaluate
- So what?
- What next?

Topic/issue
- What?
- When?
- Where?
Effective Reading

Previewing
Skimming
Scanning
Close Reading
Revision Reading
Active reading

- Doing more than just seeing what is on the page or dragging a highlighter across some words
- Reading for understanding
  - How do things fit together?
    - Engage with the material
    - Make connections between new and known information
    - Identify the author’s argument
    - Evaluate evidence presented
    - Create meaning from your understanding
Strategies for active reading

✓ Have a purpose or goal in mind
✓ Review any questions related to the reading first
✓ Imagine the reading as a conversation between you and the writer
✓ Turn headings and sub-headings into questions
✓ Identify the argument being made
✓ Make notes, ask questions, make connections
✓ Make sure you understand what you are reading
Managing your reading

- It is not possible to read & remember every word
  - You need **strategies to manage your reading**
  - There are **different purposes for reading**
  - Each purpose determines the strategy used
Strategies for reading

Decide what you need to know

- General overview?
- Main themes?
- A specific piece of information?
- Detailed information?
- Confirm knowledge?

Use appropriate reading strategy

- Previewing
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Critical or Close Reading
- Revision Reading
Previewing

- Gives you an idea of what the text contains without reading word for word
  - decide if the text suits your purpose
  - get an overview of the whole text
Skimming

- Enables you to identify the main ideas in a text without reading every word
  - get a general idea of themes and ideas in the text
  - identify the shape of an argument or progression of ideas in a text
- Read abstract, title, introduction, conclusion, topic sentences
Scanning

- Allows you to **locate specific information** in a text
  - Can help you **determine which sections of text to read in detail**

**Things to scan:**

- Table of contents
- Headings or sub-headings
- Index
Critical or Close reading

- Aim is to understand and evaluate a text
- Requires close reading for meaning
- Involves identifying and questioning main ideas and evidence in each paragraph, as well as author’s perspective, purpose and bias
- Often implies making a judgement
Critical or Close reading involves:

- Identifying the line of reasoning in the text
- Critically evaluating this line of reasoning
  - Questioning surface appearances and checking for hidden assumptions or agendas
- Identifying evidence in the text
  - Evaluating this evidence using valid criteria
- Identifying the writer’s conclusions
  - Deciding whether the evidence given supports these conclusions
Revision reading

- Involves *rapid reading through familiar material*
  - Confirms existing knowledge
Some final words on reading …

- Divide your work into **manageable chunks**
  - Read in chunks - avoid the temptation to read every word

- **Ask yourself questions** about what you've just read after you've finished
  - Test & improve your understanding
Effective Note-Taking

- Different Note-Taking Styles
- Writing an Annotated Bibliography
Developing a note taking system

- Have a **good filing system**
  - Folders / Colour code / Labels
- Record **full bibliographic information** (with page numbers!)
- Differentiate quotations, paraphrases, & own comments
- Use **abbreviations & symbols** to compress notes
- Constantly **revise & update your notes**
Template for taking notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full citation</th>
<th>Type of source</th>
<th>Target audience</th>
<th>Peer reviewed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary journal article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meta-analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systematic review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thesis/dissertation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business/technical report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government report</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conference abstract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main research question(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other research questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guide to note-taking styles

- Linear – start at the top left of the page and keep writing until you hit the bottom right (using dot points, arrows, dashes or some similar system)

- Cornell – make two columns on your page, then write your notes in the wider right side and write keywords, subheadings, questions and comments in the left column

- Mind map – start in the centre of the page and work your way out using arrows to connect ideas
This is an example of linear notes...

- You’d probably write the first point here
- Then the next point here
  - You could write a sub-point here
- And so on, all the way down the page...

- Go back later and highlight the important bits
This is an example of linear notes…

- You’d probably write the first point here
- Then the next point here
  - You could write a sub-point here
- And so on, all the way down the page…

- And add **headings** and **subheadings**
This is an example of Cornell notes

- Ask questions or reflect in this column
- Make notes in this column
- You can even add an extra column to write a summary of the lecture
Mindmaps

Visually representing and organising information associated with a central concept.

- iPhone
  - “Cooler”
  - More secure
  - No customization possible
  - Screen breaks easily

- Android
  - Cheaper
  - Screen breaks less easily
  - Less secure
  - More compatible
  - Customization possible
Keeping notes using an annotated bibliography
Annotated bibliography

- A list of research sources
- Provides a **concise** summary of each source
- You need to **analyse, summarise, critique, reflect** and **evaluate** the source
- Includes some assessment of its **value or relevance**
What is the difference between an abstract and an Annotated Bibliography?

- Abstracts are purely descriptive summaries often found at the beginning of scholarly journal articles.
- Annotated Bibliographies are descriptive and critical.
  - They expose the author's point of view, clarity and appropriateness of expression, and authority.
What is the purpose of an Annotated Bibliography?
Why Write an Annotated Bibliography?

1. To **develop an argument**
   - Annotated bibliographies help you
     - gain perspective on the topic
     - discover the issues/arguments
     - develop your point of view
Why Write an Annotated Bibliography?

2. To **review the literature**
   – preparing for a research project
   – annotations demand that you:
     • read critically
     • make decisions about what goes in your essay
     • fit your research into the existing research in the field
Why Write an Annotated Bibliography?

3. To **support research**
   - extensive and scholarly annotated bibliographies are sometimes published
   - you might want to look for one that has been published about your topic
What elements should be included in an Annotated Bibliography?
Writing an annotated bibliography

- **Record** full bibliographic details

- **Write** the annotation
  - short summary/descriptive analysis of contents (~50%)
  - Brief critique/analysis/reflection (~50%)
Contents of an Annotated Bibliography

An annotation may contain all or part of the following elements:

- Full bibliographic citation
- Background of the author(s)
- Content or scope of the text
- Main argument
- Intended audience
- Research methods used (if applicable)
- Conclusions made by the author/s
Contents of an Annotated Bibliography

An annotation may contain all or part of the following elements (continued)…

- Reliability of the text
- Themes or concepts that relate to your topic
- Special features that were unique or helpful
- The relevance or usefulness of the text for your research
- Strengths and limitations of the text
- Your view or reaction to the text
Writing an annotated bibliography

Writing the summary
You need to read for the main ideas and write them clearly and concisely in your own words.

Writing the critique / evaluation / reflection
You need to draw on your extended reading of the topic by asking yourself questions like:

- What does it contribute to my understanding?
- What does it add to the existing field of knowledge?
- How does this item relate to and compare with other works?
- Strengths and limitations of the text
- Would I use it to support my writing? Why? Why not?
Performers must grasp their audience if they are to engage them emotionally in a performance. In this short review, Frazetto examines the results of a variety of studies that have mapped brain activity in people to see how performances exert their psychological effects on an audience. In particular they highlight a study where the authors were able to show that brain cells work in the same way when a person performs an action and when that person observes someone else performing it. These findings are important for performers, as they influence the three key features central to performance – intentionality, imitation, and action understanding. While this article is a useful summary of the various studies, it lacks detail. It would be beneficial to examine in more detail the original articles to gain a better understanding of how professionals can exploit this feature of the brain in their performance.
Performers must grasp their audience if they are to engage them emotionally in a performance. In this short review, Frazetto examines the results of a variety of studies that have mapped brain activity in people to see how performances exert their psychological effects on an audience. In particular they highlight a study where the authors were able to show that brain cells work in the same way when a person performs an action as when that person observes someone else performing it. These findings are important for performers, as they influence the three key features central to performance – intentionality, imitation, and action understanding. While this article is a useful summary of the various studies, it lacks detail. It would be beneficial to examine in more detail the original articles to gain a better understanding of how professionals can exploit this feature of the brain in their performance.
Structure of an annotated bibliography

Improving Performance by Exploiting Neuroscience

Citation 1.
Summary
Evaluation
Reflection


Summary
Evaluation
Reflection

Citation 3.
Summary
Evaluation
Reflection
Need Help?

Come to see a Learning Skills Adviser at the Research & Learning Point

Monday – Friday 12-3pm
@ Sir Louis Matheson Library
Where can I find these slides?

- All slides are available on Moodle → simply self-enrol into “Arts Research and Learning Skills – Clayton Campus”

- Go to [http://moodle.vle.monash.edu/course/view.php?id=13785](http://moodle.vle.monash.edu/course/view.php?id=13785), or follow the QR code →

- Click on “Enrol Me” (no enrolment key required)

- Select the “Music, Theatre & Performance” folder