HOW TO READ PHILOSOPHY

> Learning to read philosophy is a skill that takes time and practice to develop.
> Be patient as you develop this skill and remember, practice makes better.

1) <u>Take your time</u>

Philosophy texts are often dense; they take longer to read and understand than other things. Give yourself *at least* an hour uninterrupted to read an assignment. But don't worry it does get easier over time.

2) <u>Find the main point</u>

Before diving in, try to figure out the reading is about. Look for an initial summary or in the introduction or conclusion. You can also often find brief summaries online. If you understand where the author is going, you'll follow along much more easily.

3) <u>It's an argument</u>

Philosophy texts don't tell a story or give you facts memorize; they're making an argument, usually a complex one. Reading philosophy is joining an argument. You don't have to agree. Your job is to understand and evaluate the argument.

4) <u>Take notes</u>

How does the author make the argument? Look for and note/underline/highlight key sentences or passages used to state the main thesis, introduce key or new concepts, or support the argument. Also note any parts you disagree with or don't understand.

5) <u>Look up words you don't know</u>

Philosophy often uses technical terms or outdated language (since some of it was written a long time ago). Look up terms you don't know. The internet is amazing!

6) <u>Question and Criticize</u>

As you read, ask yourself if the argument makes sense and if you agree with it. Look for strengths or weaknesses as you go.

7) <u>Re-read</u>

Read it again, especially after class. It will be easier, faster, and make more sense.

8) <u>Talk with others</u>

Philosophy is dialectic: it happens in talking with others. The author gave you her or his side of the argument. What did views do others have? What did they take to be the main point of the reading or the structure of the argument?

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