

Reading Lists

Study Skills – Conducting Research

Reading lists at university are very important. Your lecturer, for one reason or another, thinks that information in that list is important for learning about the topic. Our recommendation – always read the reading lists, and read with purpose.

Research Skills: Tackling the Reading List

Task 1: Look at the reading lists in your courses in English and answer the questions below:

- a) In what way are the texts ordered?
- b) Which readings stand out as more central to specific questions?
- c) Which order are you planning to read the material?
- d) Which might you skim/read the abstract before you decide what to do?
- e) What do you notice about types of text?
- f) What do you notice about the dates of publication? What do you need to consider when thinking about the date?
- g) Anything else you notice/find interesting about the reading list? Any advice you would like to give your classmates?

Finding your own sources

When you write an assignment, you create an argument for your point of view, giving evidence for that view. The evidence comes from the sources you have read. Hence, the quality of your argument will partly depend on the quality of your sources. Using the reading list is fundamental, but what if your tutor expects you to go further? Should you simply 'google' your topic and use whatever you find?

If you use a source that is not accurate or well-informed, your lecturers may suspect that you used the first sources you found, and will assume that you do not have a good understanding of ideas related to your topic. Choosing good sources means paying attention to who wrote the information, why and how they wrote it. To help you select the most credible sources, thereby improving the quality of your work, ask yourself the following questions when faced with print and electronic source materials.



Ask yourself these questions when evaluating print sources:

- Is the author reputable e.g. university based or from a research institution?
- Does the reference list or bibliography appear comprehensive in its coverage?
- Does the author present relevant background/context information?
- Is the research methodology carefully presented to the reader?
- Is the information presented still valid and applicable today?

Ask yourself these questions when evaluating electronic sources:

- Does your lecturer/tutor recommend the site?
- Who is responsible for the site? Is it associated with a respected organisation or institution?
- Is the organisation responsible for the site clearly identified (e.g. with an official logo) and are contact details provided? Is there obvious bias in the site?
- Does the source use correct grammar and spelling?
- Was the site recently updated?

As you read, think about where the ideas could be used in a future essay. Try to avoid reading without purpose.

Background
Evidence
Argument
Methodology