Critical Reading 1

Pre-reading exercises
Why Pre-Reading?

- Improves comprehension
- Allows you to read more quickly
- Allows you to read more efficiently
  ✓ It's like having a road map before you start driving around a strange city!
Pre-reading Exercises

• Previewing a book
• Developing a function statement
• Determining the structure of the book
Preview the entire book

• Read the front and back covers, flaps, and inside covers
• Read everything before chapter 1 (preface, introduction, etc.)
• For non-fiction books, read the conclusion (epilogue, author’s notes, postscript, etc.)
• Read chapter 1 if it looks introductory or you need more information
While you preview the book, ask yourself questions about the:

- Author
- Subject
- Purpose of the Book

Your answers to these questions should be as specific as possible.
Author

- What is the author’s background?
- What is his/her education?
- What are his/her qualifications?
- What are his/her biases?
Subject

• What is the book about?
• Why is this book different than other books on the same subject?
Function

Why did the author write this book?

• To explain something?
• To impel readers to action?
• To provide information?
• To convert to the author’s viewpoint?

Remember to be as specific as possible.
Develop a Function Statement

• Look over the information you have gained about the Author, Subject and Purpose of the book

• Try to condense this information into a couple of short sentences that summarize the book’s message

• Important: Write down your Function Statement in your own words!
Now that you have developed a Function Statement, you have a good idea of where the book is going.

You already know the main ideas of the book, and you can simply fill in the details as you progress.
Assess YOUR Function

- Why am I reading this book?
- What information do I want to get out of this book?
Assess YOUR Function

Knowing these things can help you decide:

• Whether you should read the whole book or only certain sections
• Whether you can skim the material quickly or whether you should read slowly and thoroughly
Determining the Structure

- Understanding the structure of a book will allow you to read more efficiently.

- You will have a deeper comprehension of the material, since you will understand how the ideas of the book are organized and why the ideas are organized in a particular way.
Determining the Structure

• To determine the book’s structure, look over your preview
• The structure of a book is determined by its function, so it will be helpful to review your function statement as well
Determining the Structure

- Method 1: Define, Group and Label
- Method 2: Building the Structure as You Read
Method 1: Define, Group and Label

- Use this method when the author is very clear about the structure of their work.
- Specific information may be given in the preface, introduction, table of contents, etc.
Define, Group and Label

Create a diagram (in pencil!) of the structure of the book. You should indicate the purpose of each chapter or section, as well as indicate the relations between the various parts of the book.
Define, Group and Label

- **Define** the content and function of each chapter or section
- **Group** the chapters or sections according to similarity of function
- **Label** each group, using one or two word labels which will alert you to the function of each group
Method 2: Building the Structure as You Go

- Some authors are not very clear about the structure of their work
- There may be no introduction, no table of contents, etc.
- Often the introduction offers no clues about the book’s structure
Building the Structure as You Go

• Begin reading with your function statement in hand
• As you progress through the chapters, you will often see a pattern emerge
• Define each chapter or section as you read, grouping and labeling as you go
Why determine the structure before I read?

• You know what you’re looking for and where to find it
• You know how much detail to look for in each section
• You can confidently choose not to read some material at all
• You can make choices about how closely/quickly to read each chapter or section
Critical Reading II: Reading Techniques

• Next time, we’ll talk about actually reading the book!