

PH201 Reading Introduction

This is an interesting and fun time to teach at any school or college. The internet has changed our society and the learning behavior of most students. Psychologists have shown that reading is a uniquely active process efficiently supporting peoples learning. Reading is much more efficient than watching TV, watching clips on the internet or other forms of information gathering. The disadvantage of reading is that it actually is an active process and we humans are by nature lazy – really! Therefore we prefer sitting on the couch in front of a screen versus turning pages. Unfortunately this natural human behavior slows down our learning process. Besides the comfort of the internet we enjoy, this is one of the struggles we deal with at colleges. How do we convince our students to read and how do we teach them to successfully read, when in practice you might have successfully maneuvered yourself through high school without picking up books regularly. Here is what the author of our textbook, Randy Knight, writes in his guidelines for our book.

“All active-learning teaching methods place a responsibility on the students to read the textbook. Even a conventional lecture cannot possibly tell students every important piece of information—and no one remembers everything heard in a lecture. Yet surveys find that only about one-quarter of students in a typical class actually read the textbook, in the sense of having the textbook be a primary source of information. Roughly half look at chapter summaries and a few worked examples, but rarely read explanatory material, and fully one-quarter never really use the textbook at all. Of those that do use the textbook, 75% don’t look at it until a homework assignment is due, usually one or more days after you, the instructor, have finished the chapter in class. It’s not that students find the textbook too difficult to read, but that acquiring knowledge through a careful reading of text material is not a learning skill they’ve acquired, and they see no reason to start now. Why change a study pattern that has worked all through high school and likely in other entry-level college courses? Because reading the textbook is essential for acquiring knowledge and learning techniques—not to mention an essential prerequisite for having students actively engaged during class time rather than passively listening—it is important to provide students with an incentive to read.”

Many instructors are using reading quizzes that are given the day a chapter is started in class. Reading quiz questions should ask for simple factual information that a student should pick up with even a cursory reading of the chapter but probably didn’t know before. This costs time in the classroom. We will therefore in this class put reading questions into the first HW due Monday night. These questions of the new chapter are to the difficulty that I expect all students to be able to answer them with the help of the textbook. If you want to be successful in class, do not try to find the solutions in any other way than using the textbook. Obviously, if you can answer the questions without using any other materials, you are well prepared for class!

If you are able to remember what you have read while doing an exercise in class, or your homework, you will have that much more information to draw from as you do the exercise. In any sport, mastering the correct technique is what enables you to progress further. The more information you have, the more you can improve your game while you actively put this knowledge into practice.