

Tutorial: Effective Reading

SOC265—GENDER & SOCIETY

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Outline

1. Tips on Reading
2. Reading walkthrough
 1. TA will model an example of analytic reading
 2. Students practice reading

Reading

Know the type of text

- Novels—fictional!
- Social Scientific Texts:
 - Textbooks, written by one or more authors, summarize the field of study for students
 - Edited anthologies include collections of articles and chapters from books by different authors
 - Articles in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals
 - *Gender & Society*

Reading

Observe the structure of the text

- Introduction and Conclusion
- Headings and sub-headings

Read carefully, paying attention to the **main argument** and **main findings**

- Look for topic sentences
- Pay attention to bolded or italicized words/terms
- Look up words you don't know
- What is the author's point? What evidence/facts does the author use to make that point?

Reading

Look for 'signposts' to guide your reading

- "The point is..."
- "In summary..."
- "As the previous section showed..."

Main points and sub-points.

- What is the difference?
 - Main points come together to build an argument (across the text).
 - Sub-points support main points, and can include evidence.

Look for connections to other course texts AND to broader course themes/argument

- References to other scholars' arguments and/or research findings

Reading

Engage with the text.

- Highlight main points and key passages.
- Take notes, including questions and comments.

Make use of the **discussion questions** on the syllabus. This is an important indication of what you should know.

- Read these before the texts, but another time when you're done as well.

Attend lecture, where Prof. Fox will often talk about the readings and what they contribute

Brief Reading Walkthrough

Fine, Cordelia. 2017. “Why Can’t a Woman Be More Like a Man?” in *Testosterone Rex: Myths of Sex, Science, and Society*. Norton.

Two exercises:

1. TA walkthrough of intro paragraphs to model analytic reading
2. Students practice pulling out one of the main parts of Fine’s argument.
 - We do not have time to go over the entire argument, so understand that we’re talking about one part of the overall argument. You need to pull out the main points yourself with the skills we are discussing today.

Analytic Reading: Introduction

Fine's first paragraph sets up a position to be refuted, that biology inevitably makes men and women essentially different.

- She uses sarcasm: “This, apparently, is the only sensible conclusion to reach” (2017, p. 84).
- She refers to this position as the “assumption that, of necessity, these two biological agents of sex create...” male bodies and behaviour (p. 84).

Analytic Reading: Signposting and Main Points

Immediately following the position to be refuted, she tells us that she will remind us of the main point in her previous chapter. She signposts:

- “But as the previous section showed...”

Now that she has the reader’s attention, she clarifies the main point of the previous section:

- “even in nonhuman animals biological sex doesn’t necessarily determine sexual nature, and especially not in ourselves” (p. 84).

The following sentence provides an example to support this main point:

- “The biological realities of reproduction are never irrelevant, but even for dung beetles and hedge sparrows, other factors can have radical effects even on behavior [*sic*] directly related to mating and reproductive success” (p. 84).

Finally, she reiterates the main point of the previous section:

- “These examples point to the surprising conclusion that [SIGNPOST] *biological sex may not be the fixed, polarizing force we often assume it to be* [MAIN POINT]

Walkthrough

That's just the beginning of her argument. Open your text to p. 93.

After Fine makes the important point that there is no clear distinction between the 'male brain' and 'female brain' (p. 89, 91), what is the point of the paragraph on p. 93 starting with "To be very clear..."

- Topic sentence?
 - In this case, the main point is NOT the topic sentence, BUT the topic sentence prepares the reader for the main point
- Signposts?
 - "As several neuroscientists have argued..." (p. 93)
- Sub-points?
 - "...since genetic and hormonal differences between the sexes..." (p. 93)
 - In other words, sex differences in the brain may matter for some things ("certain pathologies of brain or mind"), but not behaviour
- Main Point: "The point is rather that [SIGNPOST], potentially, even quite marked sex differences in the brain may have little consequence for behavior [MAIN POINT]" (p. 93).

Walkthrough

Know what's important.

- On p. 93, there is discussion of biological processes
 - Know what is sociologically relevant. The specifics of the science are not as important as her point that sex differences have little consequence for behaviour.
- There are quotes from different scientists. Why does she include these?
 - They provide supporting **evidence** that neuroscience does not show a clear link between sex differences in the brain and behaviour.

Reading the Argument

Don't stop there! Once you've located the main points that build the argument, take notes that summarize the purpose of Fine's chapter.