Read and write critically

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So how do we read critically?

- Ask *questions* as you read
  - Start conversations with the authors you read:
    - Why is that?
    - How can that be?
    - What would happen if you had done ....?
    - Are you serious???
    - I don’t think so!.......

- Look for *strengths and weaknesses as you read*
- Identify *links* between authors
- Develop an *opinion* about the texts you have read

Stop thinking about reading as a time to collect facts. Rather focus on your response to the facts.
This will change how you write

• You will:
  • Go beyond facts, summaries and paraphrases
  • Develop arguments or a response to the essay question
  • Develop a “voice” as a writer
  • Become more confident as a writer
6 steps for critical reading and writing

- Read for facts
- Read for themes
- Link theory and practice
- Analyse the text
- Evaluate it
- Create your response
1. Read for facts:

- Human civilization as we understand it -- cities, government, religion, writing -- originated about 6,000 years ago. By the year A.D. 1939 this civilization, especially its Western branch, had developed great scientific and technological accomplishments, art and literature, philosophies and religions. That fateful year also marked the beginning of the Jewish-Slavic Holocaust, the attempt to extirpate millions of human beings because they belonged to communities deemed to be inferior or harmful. The Holocaust largely succeeded because its implementers were able to employ the latest technological developments in weapons, transportation, communications, medical technology, and the active or passive cooperation of governments and organized religion. As a survivor and student of this manifestation of human behavior, I believe I have the credentials to explore its causes and potential consequences.
Struggling for survival in 1944 at Auschwitz, as Prisoner A-9867, I and my fellow victims had scant time to puzzle over the reason for our plight. Everything seemed incomprehensible -- in fact, a living nightmare. Between 1941 and 1944 I was part of a Jewish community in a small town in Hungary. Rumors of persecutions and massacres by Nazi Germany came to our attention. But they were simply unbelievable. The nation renowned for its culture and civilization, which produced some of the world's greatest philosophers, scientists and artists simply could not do such horrible things! Our illusion was shattered, when suddenly in 1944 the German army occupied Hungary. The entire Jewish community was rounded up and transported to the extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The plumes of smoke emanating from the crematoria and the odor of burning bodies testified to the murder of the hundreds of thousands of innocent victims of genocide. Those able to work were consigned to slow starvation at forced labor. Only about one in twenty survived this culmination of Western "civilization." I still recall the title of the lead article in the newspaper published by the survivors after our liberation: "Why?" The Holocaust appeared so mysterious after our ordeal that the article's author could only supply vague references to historical Jewish martyrdom and our need to endure.

(Zuckerman, 1996)
Explain how the holocaust happened. Develop your own theory.

What was the mainstream church response to the Nazi regime?

- Smith (2011, p.5) pockets of outcry, but large scale ignorance
- Brown (1999, p.46) low level response, but not from hierarchy

How aware was the populace about what was happening?

- Brown (1999, p. 33) at first genuine ignorance, but later fear overruled attempts at action
- Blanch (2006) ..... 

How much opposition was there in society in general?

Smith (2011) ..... 
- Blanch (2006)....
2. Read for main ideas or themes

- Look at the article:
  - What is it about at a broad level?
  - Why was it written?
  - What are the strongest overall ideas that are evident in it?
  - What is the main argument?
  - What has *not* been discussed?
3. Read for *applications of ideas*

- How can these ideas be applied in a real life setting?
- How can they be used for your assignment or project?
- What *implications* might there be in a professional situation?
- Are they likely to be useful in some settings and not others?
Content, theme, applications example:

• Jones (1999) argues that managers need to consider three major issues. These issues include health and safety, recognition and accountability.

• This argument seems to suggest that an important aspect of management is to consider the individual needs of employees.
Thus managers could make knowledge of their staff’s individual needs a priority in their work practice.
4. Analyse the argument or research:

• What are the key ideas in the argument?

• *Analyse* how the article fits together or how it has been structured.

• How does one idea lead to the next?

• What is the nature of relationships between the ideas?
Try to trace the argument

• Premise 1 (the basic idea?)

• Therefore........(what ideas flow from this premise?)

• How are these ideas connected to each other?

• What is the conclusion?
5. Evaluate the readings

• Look for strengths weaknesses and questions
List of questions to help you evaluate research articles:

• How big was the study?
• Were the subjects randomly selected?
• Can the results be generalized to similar populations?
• Is the research objective or is there any evidence of bias?
• Has the study been replicated?
• Did the research show that effects last in the long term?
• Is there any chance that other factors could have influenced the results other than the ones the researchers identified?
• Are there any problems with the numbers (e.g., raw numbers and percentages)?
• Are these findings useful in the ‘real’ world and if so, how?
Example of generalizability

- Students responded well to the teaching strategy, and measures of performance and motivation showed significant improvements. These improvements may in part be the result of small class size in the study and may not necessarily occur in larger mixed ability classes.
Example of recruitment

- Bramston’s (2005) research found that the majority of managers in her study did not give attention to employees as individuals. This study showed that most managers focused on productivity issues rather than intra and interpersonal issues. This research was done primarily on managers in large organisations such as government departments. Thus further research is needed to determine whether these same characteristics apply to managers in smaller organisations in the private sector. Another related issue that could be explored is the question as to why managers behave in this way and whether education programs for managers would change manager behaviour.
Example of bias

- These findings suggest that property developers are primarily concerned with land use issues, however, this may be more a reflection of the questions participants in the survey were asked than it was a reflection of their primary concerns, since no open ended questions were asked.
Example of problems with numbers

• The fact that 80% of students were satisfied with this mode of teaching is significant, however, it is important to note that only 20 of the 150 students in the class completed the questionnaire.
Example of lack of replication of the findings

• The use of band aids as an effective treatment for leg ulcers has the advantage of being cost efficient, however, since this finding has not been replicated in other studies, practitioners may need to be cautious about applying this treatment until there is more evidence to support the finding.
Example of lack of long term effects

Clients showed improvements in self esteem after treatment, however no long term follow up measures were taken.
Example of rival causes

- Patients who received laser surgery recovered more quickly than patients treated with traditional surgery. This recovery rate could be related to the fact that patients undergoing laser treatment require less anaesthetic than those undergoing traditional surgery. A study by Joyball (2007) showed that patients who required large doses of anaesthesia took longer to recover from surgery. Thus it is possible that it was the amount of anaesthetic that affected recovery rate, rather than the type of surgery itself.
A list of questions to help evaluate theoretical articles:

• Do other writers agree? How much? What are the differences?
• Whose point of view is put forward here? Why?
• What sources have been used?
  Are they varied?
  Are there both primary and secondary sources?
• How widely can these ideas be applied?
• Are there other reasons why events might have occurred other than those given by the author?
• Is there any evidence of bias?
• What are the gaps in the argument? Where are they? Why are there gaps?
• What assumptions does the writer make?
• What theoretical stance is the writer using?
• What aspects of the topic are not discussed (silences)?
Looking at all articles you have read, you should:

• **Compare** the articles
  • What are the similarities?

• **Contrast** the articles
  • What are the points of disagreement between authors?

• **Note** the language, definitions and terminology
  • Are they talking about similar ideas using different language?

• **Consider** how you can discuss the articles *together* rather than as isolated ‘bits’?

• **Identify the gaps**. What has *not* been examined or discussed?
Example of a gap across articles:

- Brownlee and Whitely (2005) and Longley (2004) showed that economic buoyancy is related to debt free spending, however neither of these studies considered the impact of employment rates on economic buoyancy. It seems likely that employment rates could significantly affect this aspect of the economy.
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<thead>
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<th>Article</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Themes or arguments</th>
<th>Issues and applications/practice</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• Compared types of tours</td>
<td>• More expensive, higher expectations</td>
<td>• Manage expectations</td>
<td>• Compared large samples</td>
<td>• No middle group of tourists used</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>• Satisfaction with destination</td>
<td>• More sacrifice more satisfaction</td>
<td>• How to price tourism: if cost too high, potential customers will not travel</td>
<td>• Longitudinal study • Anecdotal</td>
<td>• Not generalizable, because of small sample size</td>
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6. Show *synthesis* in your writing

- *Create* something new
  - Present your response to the question in the thesis statement:
    - What is the relationship between ideas?
    - What is the most important issue?
  - Make strong links between the sections, paragraphs and even sentences in the essay.
    - Use words that sign post links for the reader so that your argument is easy to follow
  - Show your reader how *you* understand the material fits together – this gives you a ‘voice’
    - Use tentative language
    - Don’t use “I think, I believe” and personal pronouns
    - Keep your language third person (objective)
Example: What motivates tourism? Is it the desire to visit particular sites or is it the experience of ‘difference’ that is the prime motivation for travel?

Background
- The question as to whether tourists visit new places in order to visit particular sites, or to experience difference, is one that has concerned the tourist industry for some time. While there is much research about people’s motivation for travelling and their experiences of travel, there appears to be little research that addresses this question directly. This essay will examine the research dealing with the experiential and ‘iconic’ nature of travel and will argue that while age and socio-economic status significantly affect motivation for travel, tourist surveys suggest that both destination and experience are important, and, regardless of the prime motivation, the experience of difference becomes the most important aspect of travel for most travellers. The topic will be addressed by discussing theories related to motivation for travel, followed by an examination of specific target groups and their motivation for travel as outlined by current research in the field.

There appear to be three major theoretical views with regard to why people travel. On the one hand there are those theorists, such as King (2006) and James (2004) who argue that the prime motive for travel is different for different socio economic groups .......... The second major motivation for travel according to authors like..... is......Finally, there are those authors who claim that ........
While King (2006) and James (2004) agree that socio economic factors influence motivation for travel, their theoretical orientations differ. For example, King’s work is based on gratification theory, whereas James emphasises ideas which are related to Maslowe’s hierarchy of needs. For example, King argues that people with higher disposable incomes travel primarily to “see” certain sights, thus gratifying their need to experience more of life. James’ argument centres around the view that once basic needs are adequately met, people can then consider satisfying higher order needs such as travel. Research, for example, the work of Stott (2003), supports the view that income is related to motivation to travel. Part of this study was to examine the influence of a number of dimensions of travel on tourists in higher socio economic groups. Of the 197 tourists surveyed, 100 (50%) claimed that seeing certain sights was a significant motivator to travel. Unfortunately, this study did not include the importance of the experience as one of the surveyed dimensions. However, another study by Broadbent (2003) showed that the experience of difference was the most enduring effect of travel after travellers returned home. Thus it may be the case, that tourists of high socio economic status may set out to travel to “see” certain sights, yet their most enduring memories may centre around the experience rather than the actual destination. Thus tourist operators may need to focus on marketing strategies that take account of both the destination (or site) and the experience of difference. In light of this it may be advisable for advertising (designed to draw people to travel) to be aimed at seeing the sights, while tourist operators may need to pay particular attention to ensuring the experience is memorable.

King (2006) argues that people with high disposable incomes travel to gratify the need to “see” and experience new places. Broadbent (2003) supports this view when she says that people travel to experience difference. James holds a contrasting view, namely that people travel only when their basic needs are met because the need to travel (according to Maslowe’s hierarchy of needs) is a higher order need. Stott’s (2003) research revealed some interesting results, namely that 50% of the subjects in his study were motivated to travel by the desire to see certain sights.
To conclude:

• Read for facts (content or information you will use)

• Read for themes (main ideas, arguments and overarching concepts)

• Link theory and practice

• Analyse the structure of the text

• Evaluate its strengths and weaknesses

• Create your response (thoughts and argument about the topic)