

Designing Reading Assignments and Activities

A reading assignment is any activity or assignment that requires your students to read and assimilate written information before completing the activity in question. It may be an essay assignment, a discussion that requires your students to read an article or a website, or it may simply be the required activity of reading various journal articles, the textbook or your teaching points.

- Ensure that readings are relevant to the course topics and written at an accessible level for your students. For example,
 - Keep your reading list manageable (applying a “less is more” strategy).
 - Outline which readings are required and which are optional.
 - Provide guiding questions on the required readings to help students focus their attention as they read.
 - Provide short summaries or reviewing the main concepts of the readings in your teaching points or course notes especially if the readings are more complex (i.e., aimed at specialists in the field).
- Create accountability by attaching the readings to an assignment or activity. For example ask students to
 - Complete and/or discuss a critical review of a reading in the course.
 - Complete an assignment comparing/contrasting the views contained in two or more different readings.
 - Complete a summary demonstrating comprehension of the most important points and arguments presented in the readings and how they relate to the course topic(s).
- Make the readings clearly applicable to
 - Course goals
 - Unit learning objectives
 - Assignments and activities
 - Their own lives and work situations

Material on this page adapted from “Reading Assignments”, Dr. John Immerwahr, Teach Philosophy 101, Villanova University, retrieved on August 30, 2010 from <http://www.teachphilosophy101.org/Default.aspx?tabid=122>, and from “Getting Students to Read”, Center for Teaching and Learning, Point Loma Nazarene University, retrieved on August 30, 2010 from http://www.pointloma.edu/TeachingandLearning/Teaching_Tips/Getting_Students_to_Read.htm