

ANTH 3660
Anthropological Theory and Context
Fall 2018

Reading Smart

Because a master's project is a long project --with conceptual work that percolates along the way-- you need to think about the process of remembering knowledge. For example, studies suggest there is 75-80% memory retention of a "just read" article. Unless you anchor that knowledge, one day later you will experience only 15% memory retention of the article. These studies make it clear that it's possible to do intellectual work and forget. You need to "download" the file.

Our first impulse after learning or reading something is to take a note. However, memory is associational; you need to put a "charge" on it. When you take reading notes, don't just write what the article said. Form an opinion of it, contextualize it, interrogate it. If you do that, you are much more likely to remember the content of the article and judge whether or not it could be useful in the future.

One note-taking format that works well is to use a form. [e.g., the **"Article Analysis Form" posted on the Course Portfolio website**]. Fill out this form after you have read and highlighted and/or annotated the entire article. It will prolong your reading time, but it will be invaluable when you sit down later to write. If you file your form with the hard copy of the article, when you next need to refer to it you may not need to go back to the article at all but rather just the notes, particularly if you fully write out and note page #s on the most important (i.e., "money") quotes.

When you take notes this way, particularly in full sentences, what you have done is take notes that are closer to text, and that will be usable for writing later. This creates a link between research and writing. Another way to strengthen this link: enter the article into a bibliographic database after you take your notes.

Remember: knowledge doesn't reside as discrete chunks. Your thesis/research project involves a process. Being able to explain how you got to your proclamations is almost as important as those proclamations themselves. Having notes on your reading will remind you later.