6 Steps to Reading a Political Science Article/Book
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Goal: Read actively and read critically. Don't get bogged down in dense passages or historical details. Wade through until you are able to answer the following questions about each reading assignment. If you can, you will be very well prepared for the exams.

1. What is the question the author is trying to answer?
    -- Think about this both narrowly, in terms of his/her specific case(s), and broadly, in terms of politics generally.

2. Why is it important to answer this question?
    -- Why was this reading assigned? [Hint: it isn't "to be cruel"]
    -- What are the implications of this question to other cases or historical periods?
        -- Think of at least one other example of this issue – one the author does not discuss directly -- where you think the answer to this question would be relevant

3. Most importantly: What is the author's answer to the question?
    -- Can you summarize this argument in 2 or 3 sentences?

4. How does the author justify this answer?
    -- For example, what types of evidence or data does the author use? What are the sources of this evidence or data?

5. What are the main alternative answers that the author is *arguing against*?
    -- How does the author go about establishing that these alternative arguments are wrong?
    -- **Do any of the other readings from Gov 20 make one of these alternative arguments? If so, which one(s)?**

6. Are you convinced or persuaded by the author's argument? Why or why not?
    -- If no, is there another reading in the course with a better answer to this question? Why do you prefer the other reading? What evidence in the other reading is more convincing and why?