How to Read a Scholarly Article

Journal and Author

- Is the journal refereed or peer-reviewed? Use Ulrichs Web (gvsu.edu/library > Databases > U > Ulrichs Web) to find out whether the journal is refereed, how often it is published, who publishes it, etc.

- What are the authors’ credentials? Are they affiliated with a university? A research organization? A government agency?

Skim

- Read these first:
  - Abstract
  - Introduction
  - Discussion/Conclusions

- Based on that first skim, answer these two questions:
  - What is the article about?
  - What point are the authors trying to make? What is their argument?

Take Notes

- After skimming, read through the whole article.

- In the margin, summarize each paragraph using only a couple of words or a short phrase.

- Question what you read. Ask yourself, does this seem right? Who did the researchers study? How did they analyze it? Did they learn anything meaningful? Sometimes your answers to your internal questions will be positive, yet other times you will come across articles that seem very weak. Make a note of that.

- Number three or four of the most important points in the article; this will help you find those main points later and will help you organize your own thoughts.

- **Circle** jargon, unusual phrases, technical terms, etc. You can look for definitions/examples or you can use them as keywords to search for more articles later.

- **Highlight** only quotations that you just can’t word better (or paraphrase) yourself. Those will be the cited quotations you use in your own paper. Be very selective about what you highlight.

- **Underline** references (in the bibliography or reference section) that relate to your project; you can look those up later.

- At the top of each article, jot down two points: What is useful or important about this article? And what are the article’s biases, limitations, weaknesses, or omissions?