

## Reading Roles

**Discussion Leader.** Develop at least **three discussion questions** that can help everyone understand the main points of the assigned reading. Don't worry about the small details. Your task is to help people talk over the big ideas in the reading and to share reactions to the text. Be prepared with your own brief answers to your questions. You will also be responsible for facilitating the group discussion. You will need to turn in at least three discussion questions with your own brief answers. If there is more than one reading, you will need to include at least two discussion questions per reading.

**Investigator.** Gather **background information** pertaining to the article/topic (e.g., the authors' previous research into the topic, professional information about the authors, research from citations used in the article, controversial issues surrounding the article, blog posts/comments about the article/topic). The background information is meant to provide more context for the reading. You will need to submit at least two sources of background information with a description of why that background information is helpful in better understanding the context of the reading/research.

**Creative Connector.** Help everyone **make connections to other important ideas**, both to ideas from this class and also to other cultural, social, political, and economic ideas. You may make connections to other reading assignments, lectures, TV shows, movies, or other experiences. You will need to turn in at least two connections, including a summary of the connections and discussion questions to help others make the connections themselves.

**Devil's Advocate.** Challenge the ideas in the article by developing a list of critical, **thoughtful questions and arguments that might be raised by critics** of the authors or by those with different points of view. You will need to turn in at least two challenging questions or arguments, including a brief explanation of why you are making this critique. You should have at least one challenging question per reading.

**Reporter.** The reporter is the only role that will be prepared during and after class. Your job is twofold. First, during the discussion, you will **take notes on the discussion and will summarize its main points**. Be certain to also participate in the discussion! You are not tasked with acting as a scribe who tries to furiously write down what everyone says. Rather, you will act as a meta-discussion observer, looking for any areas of confusion or disagreement, which you can bring up for discussion. Second, after the discussion you will need to write a **brief summary of the group discussion**. Address such questions as: What did you discuss? What did you agree/disagree on? What readings or ideas did the class find most interesting or controversial? In general, how did the discussion go? Was it beneficial? You will need to turn in your report of the group discussion (described above). This will be due at the following class meeting.

### Submitting your work

With the exception of the Reporter, all "role work" must be submitted by the start of class on the day of the reading role discussions. Reporters will submit their written work by the start of the following class period.

## Implementation

- 1) Assign groups prior to the Reading Role assignment (5-6 students per group). To facilitate a stronger group dynamic I assign groups at the beginning of the semester and students remain in those same groups throughout the semester and rotate roles.
- 2) Approximately 2 class periods before the Reading Role assignment, assign specific roles to individual students. In my smaller class of 35, I allow students to select the roles they want with the caveat that they must rotate the roles and complete each role at least once by the end of the semester. In larger classes, it might make more sense to assign roles to students based on an alphabetical system.
- 3) Students submit their written work for their roles via Sakai BEFORE class on the day of the Reading Role discussion.
- 4) Allot 20-30 minutes for groups to engage in discussion. Ideally, the discussion leader is responsible for facilitating the discussion. Furthermore, the discussion should integrate the interesting concepts/critical analyses from the different roles as opposed to simply being a recitation of what each group member submitted for the assignment. The written work will hopefully serve as a starting point for an in-depth discussion of the topic.
- 5) In smaller classes, the groups can all discuss simultaneously. In larger classes, a subset of groups can be assigned the Reading Role and are then the groups responsible for leading the discussion with the entire class (or the class can be divided into thirds and one group is responsible for facilitating the discussion with 1/3 of the class).
- 6) After the allotted time (or after the room starts getting quiet), the reporters from each group orally highlight an interesting topic from his or her group's discussion. The purpose of this recap is to allow the groups to share information but also for me to summarize the important concepts from the paper as different topics are mentioned. These goals are already achieved if one group is leading the discussion for the entire class.

## Suggestions for (FAST) Grading

- 1) Randomly select a few Reading Role assignments to grade throughout the semester. I typically grade the written work as follows: No credit – did not submit any written work; Half-credit – written work was submitted but the quality does not demonstrate critical thinking or thoughtful exploration/consideration of the article; Full credit – written work demonstrates a critical review of the article with thoughtful questions/discussion points
- 2) Randomly select one group to “lead” the discussion for the entire class – you can grade only that randomly selected group's work.
- 3) Sit in on one group's discussion and grade on-the-spot for preparation (written work and ability to expand on others' comments) and thoughtful contribution during the discussion.
- 4) Portfolio – Students submit a portfolio at the end of the semester documenting all of their Reading Roles and a short reflection for how that role improved their understanding of the material.

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**Session Resources**

- Session slides available at [cfe.unc.edu/showcase2015](http://cfe.unc.edu/showcase2015)
- Prezi presentation available at [bit.ly/readingroles](http://bit.ly/readingroles)

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