How to Use Perusall

Adapted from [www.perusall.com](http://www.perusall.com).

Course Access Code for Western Canon 1 Fall 2021: **SHEA-3XQBP**

# What is Perusall?

*Perusall* helps you master readings faster, understand the material better, and get more out of your classes. To achieve this goal, you will be collaboratively annotating the class readings with others in your class. The help you’ll get and provide your classmates (even if you don’t know anyone personally) will get you past confusions quickly and will make the process more fun. While you read, you’ll receive rapid answers to your questions, help others resolve their questions (which also helps you learn), and advise the instructor how to make class time most productive. You can start a new annotation thread in *Perusall* by highlighting text, asking a question, or posting a comment; you can also add a reply or comment to an existing thread. Each thread is like a chat with one or more members of your class, and it happens in real time. Your **goals** in annotating each reading assignment are *to stimulate discussion by posting good questions or comments* and *to help others by answering their questions*.

Research shows that by annotating thoughtfully, you’ll learn more and get better grades, so here’s what “annotating thoughtfully” means: Effective annotations *deeply engage points in the readings, stimulate discussion, offer informative questions or comments, and help others by addressing their questions or confusions*. To help you connect with classmates, you can “mention” a classmate in a comment or question to have them notified by email (they’ll also see a notification immediately if online), and you’ll also be notified when your classmates respond to your questions.

For each assignment, Perusall will evaluate the annotations you submit on time (see below). Based on the overall body of your annotations, you will receive a score for each assignment as follows

* 5 = demonstrates exceptionally thoughtful and thorough reading of the entire assignment
* 4 = demonstrates thoughtful and thorough reading of the entire assignment
* 3 or below = demonstrates superficial reading of the entire assignment OR thoughtful reading of only part of the assignment
* 0 = demonstrates superficial reading of only part of the assignment (or nothing handed in).

# How Do I Get Started?

Here’s what you do to get started:

1. login to Perusall, type [perusall.com](http://perusall.com/) into the address bar in your browser, and click **Login**.
2. Create an account using your email address and password, or log in with your Facebook, Twitter, or Google accounts.
3. The onboarding process will prompt you for a course code from your instructor. The access code to join this class is listed near the top of this sheet.

Starting a reading assignment

1. Once you log in, you will be directed to the course homepage, which shows you a list of all the reading assignments and deadlines that your instructor has assigned for the course.
2. To access the reading assignment, click on the link for that assignment.

Starting conversations with classmates

* When you open a document, you'll see highlights superimposed on the document that represent comments that you and other students have entered.
* **Yellow** highlights indicate comments or questions by you or other students; **blue** highlights indicate comments from your instructor.
* To start a conversation, highlight some text; once you finish highlighting, you will see a panel open on the right where you can type your comment. Press **Enter** or **Return** to submit the comment; your classmates will see it appear in real time.
* When someone responds to your question or comment, you will receive a notification by email and you can post a reply by signing on or merely replying to the email.
* To add to a conversation started by one of your classmates, simply click on the highlight in the text to open up the conversation panel, type your comment, and then press Enter.
* You can also highlight part of a figure rather than text by using the toolbar buttons at the top. When you have elected to highlight a figure, click and drag to draw a box around the area of interest, or simply click to drop a map pin.
* While reading the document, change which comments you see by clicking the filter dropdown at the top of the page (which says **All comments** by default).

Keeping track of your scores

* View your scores by clicking the **My scores** button on your course home page on perusal.com.
* The scoring is based on the quality and timeliness of your comments, questions, and responses, and may include other measurements of engagement as determined by your instructor. [See some examples of how quality is measured](https://perusall.com/downloads/scoring-examples.pdf)
* If you don't see a score for an assignment, it is because your instructor hasn't yet released the scores for that assignment yet.
* You may continue to ask questions, answer questions, and make comments outside of the context of a particular reading assignment. However, note that if you edit a comment that was counted towards an assignment whose deadline has passed, that comment may no longer count towards your score for that assignment.

# How many annotations do I need to enter?

As a rule of thumb, you should aim to write at least SEVEN high-quality annotations, spread throughout the document in order to receive full credit. Writing shorter or fewer annotations (or writing them all one page) will give less credit. You should also make sure to leave a few comments for your peers (and to “upvote” comments you like—this will give your classmates extra points!).

More generally, when we look at your annotations we want them to reflect the effort you put in your study of the text. It is unlikely that that effort will be reflected by just a few thoughtful annotations per assignment. So, if you only write 3 or 4 annotations, you definitely need to write more. On the other extreme, 30 per assignment is probably too many, unless a number of them are superficial or short comments or questions (which is fine, because it is OK to engage in chat with your peers). Somewhere in between these two extremes is about right and, thoughtful questions or comments that stimulate discussion or thoughtful and helpful answers to other students’ questions will earn you a higher score for the assignment. Note, also, that to lay the foundation for understanding the in-class activities, you must familiarize yourself with each assignment *in its entirety*. Failing to annotate the entire assignment will result in a lower score.

# What is a good annotation?

An annotation is simply a comment, question, idea that you write down in response to the text. Some things that you might do in your annotations (this list is NOT exhaustive):

1. Write down the definitions of key terms and concepts in your own words.
2. Write down summaries at the end of sections (again, in your own words).
3. Ask questions about things that confuse you.
4. Write down possible objections to things you disagree with.
5. Note possible connection (to other course material, to your life, to your other classes, etc.).

# What does “on time” mean?

**In this class, annotations are due at 11:59 PM on the due date.** However:

1. You can submit replies (to other student’s annotations) for up to 48 hours after the deadline for full credit.
2. You can submit your own original annotations for partial credit for up to 48 hours after the deadline. Credit declines linearly (so, annotations that are 1 hour late are penalized around 2%, while those that are 48 hours late are penalized over 95%).