The following is from Patrick Shea's syllabus for the graduate International Relations proseminar. The work is his, any errors in reformatting are mine.

`https://patrickshea.weebly.com/teaching.html`

Readings

I have outlined some thoughts on how to best approach the readings to optimize your time this semester:

- **Some of the readings are theoretical**, providing you with ways of thinking about the phenomena we are studying. Before approaching each theoretical reading think about the key questions for the week and how they relate to what you know from previous weeks. Then skim over the reading to get a sense of the themes it covers, and, before reading further, jot down what questions you hope the reading will be able to answer for you. Next, read the introduction and conclusion. This is normally enough to get a sense of the big picture. Ask yourself: Are the claims in the text surprising? Do you believe them? Can you think of examples of places that do not seem consistent with the logic of the argument? Is the reading answering the questions you hoped it would answer? If not, is it answering more or less interesting questions than you had thought of? Next ask yourself: What types of evidence or argumentswould you need to see in order to be convinced of the results? Now read through the whole text, checking as you go through how the arguments used support (or fail to support) the claims of the author.

- **Some of the readings will be empirical.** Be sure you can address the five following areas after you read:

    I) What's the question/puzzle? This is straightforward; what questions are the authors trying to answer? Think of this as the authors' answer for why you should spend some of your preciously limited time on this planet reading their research.

    II) What's the Key DependentVariable (DV)? What's the operationalization of the key concept? If you're studying democratization, and you put Polity score on theLHSof a regression, then your DV is the Polity score.

    III) What's the argument? Which independent variables (IV) matter? In empirical papers, this is usually about which IV influence the DV and the outcome for which it proxies. In theoretical papers this can be more subtle. It could be, for example, about what causal processes are consistent with both observed outcomes and some set of assumptions about how people make decisions.

    IV) What's the evidence? For empirical papers this should include both the nature of the data and claims from the analysis. For theoretical papers this is usually some set of linked logical claims, whether expressed mathematically or verbally.

    V) Do you buy it? If not, why not? If so, is it important?

Once you have answers to these five questions, feel free to put the paper down. This approach will expedite and enrich your reading experiences. This approach can also prove useful to theoretical or game theoretic papers, but not always.

- **Some of the readings have formal/game theoretic models.** I assume that most of you have no experience or training in game theory, which is fine. As a result, you may be tempted to skip over the math and head straight to the discussion or conclusion. Don't. Instead there are several things to highlight in the model that even a novice can identify:

    I) Who are the actors? Are there any specific/defining characteristics?

    II) What actions are available to the actors?

    III) What are the outcomes in the game? What are the payoffs for the associated outcome?

    IV) What is the information structure? For example, is there incomplete information (if so, is it one-sided or two sided?)?

    V) What are some of the main intuitions or empirical implications of the models?

- Finally, work in teams. Everyone should read every assigned reading and make their own notes, but you can split up the work load in terms of providing detailed notes. These more detailed notes will prove useful for the final, comprehensive exam, or general reference in the future.