

Purpose of the reading assignments

A textbook is an important part of any course. It can reinforce lecture material, as well as providing charts, diagrams, summaries, illustrations, and practice problems. It can also be a valuable resource for understanding difficult concepts. In addition, it helps to ensure that students at different colleges and universities learn the same basic material in a given course. Unfortunately, many students fail to take advantage of this resource, even though they have usually paid a lot of money for it.

Reasons why students fail to read the textbook, or don't get much from the experience, are cause for concern among the faculty of Dixie State College. Tests have shown that although most students improve in math and writing skills while here at the college, reading skills don't improve much. Reading is a critical skill in any work environment, especially the kind that college graduates are usually seeking. As a faculty we would like to help you improve your critical reading skills, and therefore you are likely to find reading requirements in many of your classes.

Organic chemistry doesn't allow time for me to teach reading comprehension during class, or to give quizzes or ask questions that specifically test whether or not you understand what you are reading in the textbook. In place of this, I have chosen to require you to take notes on self-selected portions of each chapter. I hope that doing this as you go will force you to process what you are reading and put the concepts into your own words. I will also ask you to write a short paragraph about your reading experience so that you can reflect analytically about it and put your thinking into words.

Each chapter will have a reading assignment. On the course web site you will find a reading assignment for each chapter which gives a list of sections in the book which contain topics we have discussed in that chapter. You may choose any combination of these sections such that you read a total of five pages. If a section begins near the top or bottom of a page, round up, but if it uses less than half of a page, you must combine it with another. You may, of course, read more than five pages of the textbook, but you are only required to take notes on and discuss five. Remember, the goal of a mature student isn't to get away with as little work as possible, but to use the course requirements as an opportunity for learning.

If you have chosen not to purchase the textbook, you can obtain a copy at the reserve desk in the library. You can only check it out for two hours at a time, and it may not leave the library. Please do NOT make any marks in these textbooks! If you have found that underlining, making notes in the margin, etc are helpful for you, please make copies of the pages you want to read and mark on them instead of in the original text. If you find the textbook useful enough to warrant purchasing your own copy, the bookstore can order you one, or you can buy one from one of the used textbook vendors on-line (often at a better price).

In addition to the textbook, there are some other books in the library which may be helpful to you – please see the list below. You may substitute 5 pages from the textbook for 5 pages from any of these books for any chapter. Some students have found these particularly helpful; however, you must use the table of contents or index to find appropriate pages. I encourage you to do this at least once or twice during the semester.

Your notes and response paragraphs are due on the day that the homework is due. Try not to leave this assignment until the last day, or you'll have more than you can do that night. Doing the reading as you go is more also likely to be helpful to your learning than cramming it all at the end.