Tips for Challenging Readings

1. REPETITION: Difficult material is often easier to comprehend the second time through. If you find that you have read an assignment and are completely lost, put it away for a while. Get some sleep, or go to a movie. Your mind will process the information while you relax. Then, when you re-read the assignment, look at it with a fresh approach.

2. REVIEW THE MATERIAL: After each paragraph, stop and explain the material to yourself, in your own words—or write a short summary in the margin.

3. ASK THE INSTRUCTOR: Make an appointment or see the instructor during office hours. Try to be specific with your questions, pointing out the particular paragraphs that are giving you problems.

4. USE ANOTHER TEXT: Find another textbook on the subject—the library is always a good place to search. If the material is explained in a slightly different way, you may find it easier to understand.

5. READ OUT LOUD: Be an active reader. Read the passage aloud, putting expression into your voice, emphasizing certain words. Sometimes hearing the words makes them more understandable. Be creative--imagine you are giving a lecture.

6. SEE A TUTOR: Check out the tutoring offerings in the Student Success Center. Tutors can give you a fresh perspective on the material. If you cannot locate a tutor in this subject, try starting a study group with other class members.

7. KEY WORDS: If you are stuck on a paragraph, try reading the sentences without the adjectives and adverbs—look at important words, nouns and verbs.

8. CHANGE POSITION: The more actively involved you are in reading, the more focused you will be. Try standing when you read, especially when you get mired down by a really difficult passage and decide to read out loud. Sometimes, standing or pacing can help with concentration.

9. SET A PURPOSE: Before you start reading a book or scholarly article, think about a goal you want to accomplish. Having a purpose or goal while you read can lead to more effective, efficient reading