Guidelines: How to Read an Assigned Chapter

The most inefficient way of reading a chapter is to start with the first page and read it straight through. Instead careful reading should conform to the following sequence.

Begin by carefully reading Table of Contents (TOC) for the chapter’s headings and subheading. You should have a mental picture of the chapter’s organization.

Carefully read the preface, introduction and conclusion to the chapter. Why?
- To get an overview of what you will be studying, e.g. how the chapter is organized, what study aids are included, and the like.
- To give a purpose to your reading
- To find out how difficult the material is for you
- To estimate how much time you will need to read the assignment

Only after you have a reasonable feeling for the purpose, organization, argument, and logic of development of a chapter you begin reading the full text. By this time you will be prepared to evaluate the chapter against overall argument and conclusions. This saves an immense amount of time and rereading.

What to look for in reading a chapter:
- Exposition: What the author is saying?
- Application: What evidence is produced to support author’s argument?
Comparison and Contrast: How does the author’s work contrast and compares with that of others on this issue?
Criticisms: What are the strengths and weaknesses of this work?
Innovation: What if anything, is novel in this work?

If you follow this sequence diligently, you are more likely to do well in the Discussion Board commentaries and Journal entries. If you don’t follow this sequence carefully, you are less likely to do well in either assignment.