



UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS

GUIDELINES FOR THE INDEPENDENT READING LIST

The Independent Reading List is an essential, meaningful component of the UNSC program. UNSC students read select works from Antiquity to Modernity closely and carefully in furtherance of the liberal arts education central to Baylor University and the University Scholars Program. All of the works on the reading list demand attention and thought; they are not light reads but assignments, and should be treated as such.

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE READING LIST

The point system

Texts approved for the reading list are assigned a point value (known as RUs or *reading units*). The combined point values of the chosen texts must total **at least 60**. Of these 60 points:

- **40 points** (or more) are texts the student has not read in a college-level course;
- **20 points** are drawn from texts read in the GTX2301/GTX2302 sequence. See the reading list template for the list.

Determining point values and approved texts

The UNSC office will provide a list of approved texts from which you may choose when formulating your reading list. Most texts are assigned a specific point value (ex. Sophocles, *Philoctetes*¹), while others have a range of available points (ex. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*¹⁻³). In the latter case a student may read selections of the work for a point value determined in consultation with an advisor. A text not on the approved list may be substituted with justification to an adviser, who decides whether to approve the text and assigns its point value. The written justification is then stapled to the updated, approved reading list in the student's file. Added texts shall not exceed 10% of the list or 6 points total.

Point distribution

Text for the reading list are divided chronologically into four groups: Ancient, Medieval, Early Modern, and Later Modern. The 60 points that compose your individual reading list are distributed according to the following schema:

- **20 points** Ancient texts
- **20 points** Medieval texts
- **10 points** Early Modern texts
- **10 points** Later Modern texts

NB: When selecting texts, you may only assign a maximum of 4 points to a single author. Requests outside these expectations may be made to an adviser who will record the decision.

Style and Formatting

Students should follow the standard template for the independent reading list. Lists must be signed and dated by both student and advisor, with clear titles/authors and points for each period totaled. When choosing selections from a text (e.g. some tales from *Canterbury Tales*), the portion that was read must be clearly indicated on the reading list. Updates of any kind must be submitted, signed, dated and in the student's file. **Final reading lists must be approved prior to**

the beginning of the student's exit interview (exam) semester. Students should bring their finalized reading list to their advising appointment in the Spring of their first year. During second year advising appointments, students will assess their lists and make changes, as necessary.

PRINCIPLES FOR CHOOSING TEXTS, AND STRATEGIES FOR READING

How to select your texts

The individual reading list is designed to expand your knowledge and appreciation of a variety of great cultural works.

- **Choose a variety of texts.** Choose works from an assortment of genres; do not give undue weight to a single type of text (i.e., plays, philosophical or political works, religion tracts, etc.). Excessively disproportionate reading lists will not be approved. For specific guidance on assessing your list for balance, consult with a UNSC adviser.

- **Craft a meaningful list.** There are many possible reasons for putting a text on your reading list. You may wish to read a work due to longstanding curiosity or for the novelty of the experience. Pursuing such interests is encouraged, though curiosity should be balanced with intentionality. Consider how some of the texts you choose might relate to one another and read them with careful attention to how a theme or idea develops or changes across the works.

- **Know what you are reading.** The number of approved texts is extensive, and you will likely be unfamiliar with many of them. Do not choose texts at random! Before adding unfamiliar works to your list, take a few minutes to learn generally what the work is about, whether it likely suits your interests, and how it might complement other texts you have chosen.

How to read for your exit interview

Ideally you will find your readings enjoyable, but they serve an academic purpose. Consider the following recommendations as you read.

- **Take notes.** You will be expected to recall characters, plot points, major themes, and other important aspects of the text. Judicious note-taking will help you prepare for the exit interview. Review your notes often, and continue to add to them as you read other texts that deepen or enrich your understanding. Consider how these new works may be in dialogue with previously read texts, sharing themes or ideas.

- **Know what you are getting into, at least in part.** Before you begin reading you should have some idea of what the text is about, especially the major themes explored in the work, so that you can take meaningful notes. This information can often be found in the introduction provided in most modern editions of a text.

- **Historical context is important.** You should know when and where the author wrote the work. The context of the time and the author's place in that time will help you determine if the text is critical or laudatory, positing new thinking or written in response to a major historical event (imagine reading the Declaration of Independence in complete ignorance of American Colonialism and the Revolutionary War).

- **Do not neglect GTX texts.** The approved GTX list will require proper attention in the context of your reading list. Plan to read these texts again in preparation for your exit interview. These are the shared texts of every interview, so give careful thought to how the text illuminates other works on your list; this may include pursuing points or themes that may not have been covered by your professor. Be sure to have your own understanding of the work; you must be able to explain and justify your views with examples from the text.