**LSE LIFE PODCASTS: Worksheet on making effective notes from your reading**

This worksheet can be used as a guide to making notes from your reading. Each item in this “template” is explained in more detail in the podcast. These are not definitive categories; different disciplines and types of readings may require different types of notes. Feel free to change this guide according to the work habits you develop as you gain more experience.

Author(s): Editors, city, publisher, volume, page numbers:

Year: Key words you used to find this, date consulted:

Journal / book title:

Author's/authors' theoretical orientation

Useful background or context

Author’s/authors’ thesis / argument

Conclusion

Reasoning and evidence to justify and support the argument

1

2

3

4

5

6

Strengths of the author's/authors' argument, reasoning, evidence.

§

Weaknesses or omissions in the author's/authors' argument, reasoning, evidence.

Author(s), editors, city, publisher, volume, page numbers, year, etc.

*…and anything else you need to cite the text, according the reference style you are using (e.g. page numbers of any direct quotes, URL, date consulted). The idea is that you needn’t go back to search for these details in case you decide to use this material in a paper. Also, if you do need to find the text again, you know exactly where to find it.*

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Author's/authors' theoretical orientation

*(e.g. post-modernist, structuralist, constructivist, etc.) Which “school of thought” might this author fit into? Thinking back to other readings, who would AGREE with this writer’s ideas? Who would DISAGREE? This is an important aspect in understanding how different authors’ ideas relate –or not– amongst all the various thinkers’ ideas you will discover.*

Useful background or context

*How did you find this text? Who recommended it? Which course or lecture is it supposedly linked to? Was this text a main reference in another text? This can be particularly helpful once you have several dozens of these pages of notes, at the end of Lent Term for example.*

Author’s/authors’ thesis / argument

*What is the main idea this author is trying to convince you of? If you and this author were on the phone and line was about to cut off… what ONE or TWO sentences would he or she want to convey to you? It is important to try to write this IN YOUR OWN WORDS.*

Conclusion

*Given the preceding thesis/argument, the bottom line is… This might be quite closely related with the preceding item. Perhaps there is a broader conclusion to be drawn from the argument, either theoretical or empirical.*

Reasoning and evidence to justify and support the argument

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*Think back to the author’s thesis/argument, the idea he wants to convince you of... What good reasons does he give to convince you of it? What evidence does he provide? Note that if you haven’t yet identified the author’s argument, it is probably premature to make notes on its justification. Try to avoid noting pieces of information for the sake of taking notes.*

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\* Strengths of the author's/authors' argument, reasoning, evidence.

*What is so convincing about the reasoning & evidence you listed above? How does it support the author’s main point? Notice here that what you write here is likely NOT to appear in the text you are reading. Rather, this is* ***your*** *assessment of the strengths of the argument, your own evaluation of the argument and evidence presented in the text.*

\* Weaknesses or omissions in the author's/authors' argument, reasoning, evidence.

*Is there any reason why you might NOT be so convinced… Again, the author might identify some limitations of her research, but the weaknesses or omissions you identify are ideally the product of your own evaluation of the text.*

**\* NOTE: These last two sections of your notes–your evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the author’s / authors’ theoretical approach, understanding of the issue, research design, interpretation or application of findings– are among the most important parts of your reading and note-making work. Prioritise understanding and evaluation over recording lots of minute details.**