Decoding Scholarly Texts
(Books, Edited Books and Articles)

This is a guide to figure out if a scholarly text will be of interest to you and your research. This is the first step of any research project: gathering sources. When you gather those, you usually cast a wide net into the unknown. So then, what do you do with all the references (journal articles, books, edited books) you found?

This guide will, hopefully, help you decode these texts quickly to know whether you need to include them into your research project or not.

Also see this wonderful resource by the NCSU Graduate Writing Center for a list of questions you should ask yourself when reading scholarship.

Disclaimer:
So wait, does it mean you should never read a scholarly text in its entirety? You actually really **SHOULD** scholarly text in their entirety! You will learn a lot about argument development,

narrative arch, balancing claims with examples etc… This is again just a guide to **narrow** your sources after you cast this wide net into your research.

Technique 1 : Focused - Skim - Focused
This technique is usually really good when it comes to reading a book or an article. Here's what you can do:
- Focused Reading : Read the abstract and/or introduction meticulously.
- Skim: Chapters unrelated to your intended topic or the different sections of the article.
- Focused Reading: Chapter(s) in relation to your intended topic and/or the conclusion
- Skim/Focused: Bibliography. If the book or edited book was of particular interest definitely look at the bibliography! It is a wealth of information that can serve you well!

Technique 2: Skim - Focused - Skim
This technique is good for an edited book.
- Skim: Intro of the edited book. Focus in particular on the chapter description for each piece.
- Focused Reading: Chapter(s) of interest. Really focus on the argument, the examples and the claims. Don't forget to take notes!
- Skim/Focused: References, Notes and Bibliography.

Hope this helped, and as usual use what serves you and leave what does not serve you!