



Reading, Writing, and Discussing at the Graduate Level A Guidebook for International Students

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Book Review

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Reading, Writing, and Discussing at the Graduate Level A Guidebook for International Students by Rina Kim, Lillie R. Ablert, and Hang Gyun Sihh is a new resource for graduate international students and those who work with them in the academic setting. The three authors come from diverse personal and academic backgrounds and draw from their experiences as international students themselves and from working with international students in developing this text. They provide a guidebook for students who are proficient in English but struggle to understand the “academic culture and norms in the United States” (ix).

Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of graduate level work; academic reading, in-class discussions, writing assignments, preparing oral presentations, and developing relationships with classmates and professors. The authors do a good job of stating the limited scope of their effort. They recognize that the text is not going to provide a comprehensive primer on academic writing or research, but they point out common ways in which international students are derailed in their efforts because they misunderstand expectations. Throughout the text, the authors draw on informal conversations they have had with students to illustrate common perspectives or misunderstandings. The scenarios they highlight help to clarify issues and suggest ways of moving forward. These scenarios provide some of the most helpful insights in the book.

International students may find chapter two on “Engaging in Academic Discussions” and chapter five on “Developing Social and Academic Relationships” to be the most helpful because they discuss at length ways to build confidence and helpful hints for anticipating the

atmosphere of classroom interactions in the United States. The most effective aspects of each chapter are the ways in which the authors show how perspectives and expectations differ even in basic items such as how reading lists are arranged in a syllabus or clarifying the expectation to write in your own words. The subtle nuances of the academic culture of the United States are dealt with in a relaxed manner, encouraging students to ask questions or seek help when necessary.

The text does assume a high level of reading proficiency. This is stated clearly by the authors, but the writing might be too complex for the students who are seeking the type of assistance the book covers. Although the main audience is the international student, this book is probably more helpful for faculty members who are beginning to teach international students. The informal scenarios that are scattered throughout the book provide a helpful window into the mind of the international student. Faculty members or other mentors will find this text helpful as they shape assignments, engage international students in classroom discussions, and articulate expectations.

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