What has been your experience of reading during your course?

Laura: Be prepared for the amount of reading you’re about to be snowed under.

Nicole: The reading is quite intensive, especially in the beginning, but I think you get used to it really quickly and I think you find your own methods.

Deepa: You do need specific skills about reading things effectively here.

Anya: What I tried to do, if it is a whole book assigned, I tried to read the introduction and realise what it is about, or at least the author’s general stance, then I try to read all the introductions, or just like introductory pages of chapters, and realise who is thinking about what, and then depending on the question I had for my seminar is understand whether I needed to continue with this or that reading, like what will help me answer which question, which was quite helpful.

Deepa: I used the support system, you have a lot of supplementary support system here, especially provided by the Language Centre, you do have workshops on how to read effectively. And, I joined one of those programmes and it was really helpful, because the tutor gave you enough time to focus on how you were reading.

Laura: You learn to read a lot quicker. So at first I was reading, I was really meticulous in reading, trying to understand every sentence that this professor from UC Berkeley, or something, was, you know, was writing, but you soon discover that that’s not viable, so you would read straight from beginning to the end, get the gist of the argument, and then just go to the main points, and try to develop, maybe not, if there are six main points in the argument, in the whole essay, then you would choose a couple to focus on, make sure you’ve got really strong ideas about it that you can talk about during the seminars, because they do mark you on that, for Music anyway, so you get marked on participation, which – the marks don’t actually make it to your final grade but it does reflect how you’ve progressed from the beginning of your time in Cambridge to the end of Michaelmas term at least.

Deepa: We have student reading groups here, and that’s really helpful because you’re relaxed and you don’t have to worry about a teacher being around, and you can ask about anything you want to your friends, and it’s very friendly, and your friends who would have done something else than you would be in a different position to you might be able to help you with quick tips, and how they went about it, or a simpler version of the very hard academic paper that you want to read, and so on.