I was taught that sophisticated reading was the product of a two level interpretive method. Below are the questions I was taught to put to each text that I read. This is the method that I continue to use in my own work.

**Level I: Exegesis (Basic and what I expect of an A undergraduate student and any competent 1st semester graduate student)**

1) What is the argument of the text?
2) What claims are made by each chapter and how do these claims develop or support the text’s argument?
3) What evidence does the author provide as support for their claims and for the text’s overall argument?
4) Is this evidence compelling?
5) What assumptions are presupposed by an author and what is the intellectual, political, moral, and aesthetic status of these assumptions?

**Level II (Interpretive/Evaluative and what I expect of my graduate students)**

1) Historical- what is the historical context of the work and how does the text reflect this context?
2) Normative- what conceptions of nature, morality, beauty, order inform the text and what is the intellectual status of these conceptions?
3) Existential- what conception of the human informs a work, i.e. how does a work conceptualize what it means to be a human being?
4) Political- How does a work engage the politics of its time? How does it engage ours?