This handout may be useful if you want to learn how to find the main ideas in an article or book. Asking yourself some of these questions before reading can help you pick up on the main ideas as you go.

Questions About Your Purpose for Reading:
- Why did you pick this article? Or why did your professor choose this article?
- What are you going to use this text for? (lit review, understanding the field, researching a topic, etc.)
- What ideas might be useful to pay attention to for your purposes of reading this text?

Questions About the Author:
- Who is the author(s)?
- What do they study? Is the text related to a field in which the author has expertise?
- Where are they from? What universities/country/etc.?

Questions About the Content:
- What is the article about?
- What method(s) did the author(s) use?
- What is the overall conclusion?
- What evidence did the writer/author use to get to those conclusions?
- Which other scholars do they address? Are there prominent scholars and popular or unpopular ideas in the literature review?

Questions About the Article:
- Where was it published? What academic journal?
- When was it published?
  - Some disciplines are very specific about time frame. Check your assignment or ask your instructor if you are unsure whether there are stipulations that may apply to you.

Questions About the Audience:
- Who is going to read this article?
- Why are they going to read this article?
- What does the audience need to know in order to understand this article?

Questions About the Rhetorical Features:
- What appeal (ethos, pathos, and logos) did the authors use the most?
- What is the style of the article?
- What is the purpose of the article?

Once you have answered these questions, think critically about what the answers might mean. For instance, take a look at the author’s background. If the author wrote an article on neurology, but does not have a background in medicine or psychology, the source may not reputable. A second example might involve thinking about the reputation of the journal. Is it a publication that is relatively new? Or does it have a long print history and a well-known reputation? Both of these sources may be fine, but you will have to weigh credibility and reputation. In other words, don’t just answer these questions without thinking about their implications.