**How to read an academic book**

1. Think about the title.

2. Study the back cover or flaps to get an idea of what the author thinks the book's subject, argument, and impact should be.

3. Study the table of contents in search of an idea of the arc of the argument.

4. Take a chapter at a time, starting with the introduction.  Go quickly through the footnotes to see what the author is building the book out of and with what literature she is interacting.  Then read through the introduction fairly carefully, to see what her plan is, what kind of materials the books is to be made out of, and where she thinks she is going.

5. Read the conclusion the same way, to see where she thinks she has got to and what are her claims for the book.

6. Then take each of the body chapters, and read them somewhat differently.  Start with a scan of the footnotes, to see what she is building her narrative from.  Then read the first few paragraphs to see what she is trying to do in that chapter.  Then read the last few paragraphs, to see where she thinks she has got to in that chapter.  Then, if you want to know still more, read the first sentence of each paragraph in turn, to see how she constructs her argument, what her evidence is, and what is the arc of her interpretation.

By doing this, you end up with a structural understanding of how the book was constructed, and the material stays with you much better than if you read the pages sequentially.