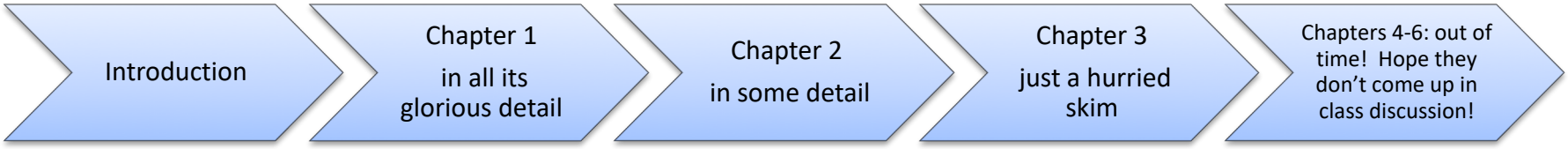
How to Read like a Historian

Chris Endy, Cal State LA, History Department

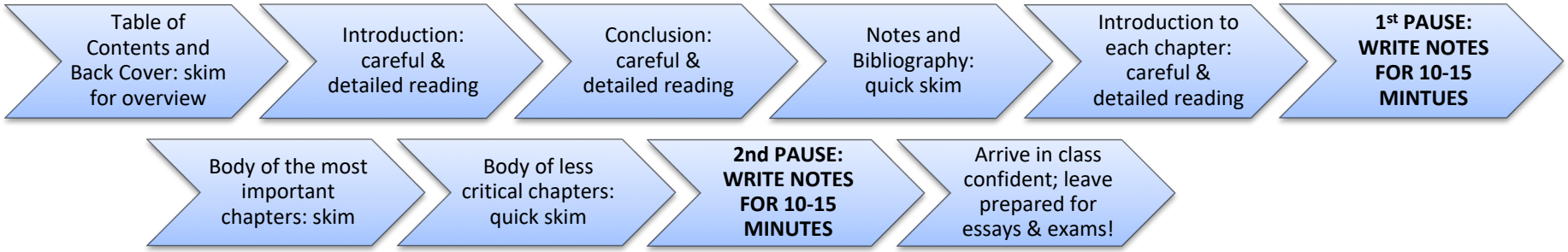
Inspired by Professors Peter Filene and Keith Wailoo at UNC Chapel Hill

For more tips: http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/christopher-endy

The linear method – FLAWED



The "bookends" method – MORE EFFECTIVE



Questions for Notes Writing During the 1st Pause:

-What is the author's research question, and what is the author's thesis (i.e. the answer to that question)?
-Is the author's thesis or method surprising to you? Why or why not?
-How does this argument and method relate to other readings?
-What evidence do you think the author will need to provide to prove the thesis?
-Which chapters are going to be the most important ones?

Questions for Notes Writing During the 2nd Pause:

-Did you accurately record the thesis during the 1st pause?
-Did the author support the thesis? If so, which chapters and which sources were the most effective or crucial? If not, what evidence or assumptions by the author were weak?
-How does this book relate to other works you've read? Does it confirm other readings? Does it contradict other readings?
-What avenues for new research does this book suggest?