Journal clubs can play a valuable part of your time in graduate school. They promote understanding of key controversies in the field, methods and their application to specific scientific areas, and critical thinking skills. These seminars also provide forums to practice journal review skills, which are an essential for the Comprehensive Exams (Part B) in the spring and a career in epidemiology or clinical research.

Three steps to a dynamic and productive journal club discussion:

1. **Select an article:** Ask the journal club course coordinator for the pre-approved list of articles at least two weeks prior to your presentation date. She/he will be able to assist you in selecting an article from the list, or identify an appropriate article that may not be on the list. Consider articles on general topics of interest to you that will generate discussion with the group. Also consider topics discussed at the Journal Club meetings earlier in the year…variety is good. Finally, you should also be aware of how much information the first year students will have covered in the Epi series by the time of your Journal Club presentation. Articles with more straightforward methods are better earlier in the year.

2. **Read the article:** Based on what you are currently learning and what you already know, read the article with a critical eye. Consider the hypothesis, study design, potential sources of bias, choice of methods used, and the presentation of the results. How can readers make sense of the numbers in the tables? Are the results reproducible? Does the discussion accurately interpret results, specifically in the context of existing knowledge? Are the results novel? How do they extend or alter our current understanding? What are some of the limitations and strengths of the study? Are there additional limitations of the study not discussed in the manuscript? What are the implications of this particular study? Were there letters written to the editor of the journal in response to this publication? Was there media coverage?

3. **Present the article:**
   - Briefly introduce yourself to the group and explain why you chose this article.
   - Describe the article in a few sentences before you go more in-depth, and place it in the context of the current state of the literature in this area.
   - Prepare focused discussion questions in case there is a lull in group participation
   - DO NOT READ sections directly from the article; instead, paraphrase the article in your own words, and direct the group to the relevant section in the article. Assume everyone in the room has already read the paper.
• Especially DO NOT READ the methods section word-for-word. It is fine to briefly summarize the methods but consider instead describing the methods that were used to generate the data by leading a discussion of the tables and figures.
• Bring handouts, if appropriate, such as a copy of supplemental material, an editorial, or a questionnaire that was used in the study.

Remember: The group has a range of backgrounds and abilities, from Epi 751 to a lifetime of experience in epidemiology. The best discussions focus on general methods and study design issues that may have broad implications for future research.