

**CRITICAL ENCOUNTERS
WITH TEXTS:
FINDING A PLACE
TO STAND**

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May 5, 2010

[1] Reading, Researching, and Writing in a Transnational World

“Never before have individual histories (because of their necessary relations with space, image and consumption) been so deeply entangled with general history.”
Marc Augé, *non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity* (119)

Life on the Uptake

We believe that one of the most significant goals of higher education is the production of people who want to make a difference in the world and who have the skills to do so—to pay attention to what is going on, to make sense of those things, to learn more, to work with others, and to take action.

Within these ambitious goals are (somewhat) more modest but related ones. We want you to find reading and research pleasurable and purposeful. We want you to see writing as a meaningful social and intellectual activity. We want you to engage in analysis and argument with others, often across lines of difference, in serious, productive, and lively ways. And we want you to value yourself as an active maker of knowledge—as a researcher, as a thinker, and of course as a writer.

These goals are particularly urgent for all of us at an historical moment like this, one that French sociologist Marc Augé calls supermodern. We are entangled within a complex, highly interactive, and technologically mediated transnational world. Our economy is as influenced by world markets as by Wall Street, as the recent global crisis has demonstrated so painfully. We have nearly instant access to stories and images and events from around the globe, relayed by satellites or transmitted by digital technologies. We grow familiar with references to places and figures from Moscow to Mumbai to Miami, beamed daily into our living rooms or our iPhones, even if we don’t really know all that much about them. And we ourselves are often on the move—in transit, out of place—as students abroad, as tourists, as immigrants, as refugees and asylum seekers, as soldiers, as transnational business people, as global nomads or citizens of the world.

We live in a blizzard of information, bombarded with image and idea, all too often unmoored from traditional frames of reference and meaning, and required to make sense of complex events on our own. It is hard to know how to understand this world, how to make sense of it, how to find a place to stand, and how to act—as citizens, as individuals, as professionals, as activists.

Reading—texts, images, events, others, claims—has perhaps never been so critical, and so challenging, as at this historical moment.

Yet all too often we merely consume texts and images. We don’t take the time to read deeply and widely, to connect the proverbial dots, to analyze evidence and lines of argument, to locate a text in its complex rhetorical and historical context, to be affected and to understand how and why, to develop responses, and to talk back in some way.

In this book we call this kind of critical, engaged, analytical reading *uptake* (a term from speech act theory)—reading not just as comprehension, but as understanding, as securing and expanding a sense of self and world, as imagination unloosed.

Finding a Place to Stand

On May 2, 2010, in Syracuse, NY, Margaret opens up the daily paper, called *The Post-Standard*, and reads the front page. The lead story describes Syracuse Research Corp's invention of lightweight radars and electronic jammers that have saved countless lives in Iraq and Afghanistan (A-1). Authorities also warn residents, especially grandparents, about a scammer calling and pretending to be their grandchildren who are in trouble and need money immediately (A-1).

There is also a story about the May 1st rallies across the US protesting Arizona's new controversial immigrant law (A-4), and an update on the massive oil spill still spreading in the Gulf of Mexico, a spill that may eclipse the Exxon Valdez incident in 1989, and leaving enormous environmental and economic damage in its wake (A-6).

And there is international news about Arab League foreign ministers meeting in Cairo, Egypt (A-12), about efforts by Pope Benedict XVI to address the sexual abuse scandals that continue to come to light in the Catholic Church (A-13), and about the drug wars in Mexico (A-14).

This is the beginning of a typical reading day, as Margaret works to stay aware of local, national, and global events; to follow up on interests of her own; to gather the information she needs to analyze events and reach decisions about what she might want to do in response, if anything. She may seek more information online, or from other news sources, and she's likely to talk about these events with friends and colleagues in order to get their take on things. She will save a couple of articles electronically, take notes for future writing, possibly order a book referenced in the newspaper, and write more on a book project she has initiated. She toys again with the idea of starting a blog as a way to communicate early versions of her ideas and to get feedback from folks interested in similar topics and questions.

This is the contemporary scene of writing—transnational, interactive, complex, and mediated by information technologies and mass communication. And this book is designed to give you a jumpstart on these challenges and possibilities, for your success in college and in the world beyond.

Reading as Encounter

In this book we have borrowed the concept of *encounter* from theorist Sara Ahmed (see "Recognising Strangers") as a way to frame the processes and practices of writing, reading, and researching in a transnational world.

Think about encounter this way: you are meeting someone new for the first time. You make quick judgments about who they are, where they are from, whether you will like them or not, based on their clothes, their age, their (apparent) ethnicity or sexuality, their

way of speaking, their stance and gestures. Sometimes these decisions are conscious, and sometimes they are what cognitive psychologists call “fast and frugal” (cited in Gladwell 11)—that is, they happen in the blink of an eye. Sometimes those judgments prove accurate, and sometimes they reveal to you how wrong you are, how limited your knowledge and perspective can be. Sometimes you feel attracted to this new person, eager to get to know them better; sometimes you feel threatened or indifferent.

Meeting a text for the first time is often this kind of encounter with the familiar and the unfamiliar, the known and the unknown, the certain and the uncertain. Sometimes you know exactly what a writer means. At other times, you may not understand a word, or you may not follow the line of argument, or you may fail to recognize a reference, or you may just not be able to figure out the perspective of the authors. You may hit the limits of your knowledge and your experience. You find yourself a bit lost as you follow the links in a web page or hunt up sources referenced in a bibliography or try to map the history of an idea or claim.

Technology has transformed how you encounter texts too, because search engines have dramatically expanded your ability to read more and more and more. You have access to what often seems like unlimited information on endless topics. You can raid a nearly infinite number and variety of texts as you construct your own. It’s remarkably easy to import an image of the Afghanistan War, or pull up the exact date of Michael Jordan’s retirement from the Bulls, or locate a working definition of human cloning, or find out what editorials in Malaysia are saying about the US’s role in the global economy. You may choose to listen not only to CNN but also to NPR, to read editorials not only in the local paper but also in *The Independent* from Britain online, and to study not only traditional history books but also contemporary websites and blogs and databases.

This is part of your everyday life, and reading not only reaffirms what you already know but also opens up new horizons of possibility, horizons that may stir your imagination and produce new socialities (Appadurai 7).

In this book we start the reading, researching, and writing process from these moments of encounter—from moments that may unsettle you, that may bring you up against what you don’t know or don’t know well, that may challenge your sense of place in the world, but that also may motivate you to respond, to encounter others with generosity and humility, to learn more, and to have your say.

Using this Book

So we provide in this book a wide range of essays, poems, newspaper articles, scholarly articles, images, and visual essays as texts to encounter. Unlike other readers, where the texts have been organized for you under predetermined topics, we present these texts as starting points for your own and your class’s further reading and exploration—and of course for writing—based on the ways you put these texts to use. The book is loosely structured around a number of themes (see alternative table of contents): language and identity, gender and sexuality, the body, popular culture, publics and counterpublics, resistance and dissent, raced encounters, poverty and class difference, and nature and the environment, among others. The themes echo issues and debates that are urgent and contemporary, but also

grounded in history. The themes are fluid, and a number of texts can be slotted in multiple thematic categories.

Just like in the real world, your project—and your opportunity—is to jump in, perhaps do a little quick and dirty research about the author or the topic, read the texts closely and critically and inventively, make connections with other readings and with your own experience and expertise, and trace out a line of inquiry across the readings that leads to an interesting, perhaps even an important analysis and argument of your own.

This is what we mean by reading as uptake and by finding, even temporarily, a place to stand as a writer, reader, and researcher.

We hope that the readings toss you a curveball, and make you think, get angry, fret, wonder, and want to read further. You may need to do some background reading, you may need to pursue references in the bibliography, you may want to look at different perspectives in the library or online, you may want to interview someone on campus or test these ideas out on your housemates or friends, or you may want to do some research of your own by observing a site or constructing a classroom survey or asking your family about their history. Your teacher is likely to provide suggestions and insight and response to help you shape your project. Your classmates are likely to have other perspectives and responses.

We encourage you not to worry too much if you don't understand something or if the reference is outside of your experience in some way or you feel overwhelmed at times. That's all part of reading as encounter. One scholar, realizing she had neglected to include some important research in her first book, referred to her shame as "fruitful embarrassment" (Cohn and Enloe 1194). We agree. Think of those moments of surprise ("I *never* thought of trash that way before!") or suspicion ("I don't believe it's possible to live as an entirely separate gender.") or startling realization ("Who knew that art could be so subversive?!") as the chance to think twice about something, to learn from others, to reconsider a decision or claim or belief, even to re-examine ideas you have taken for granted all your life.

Sometimes the readings are challenging because they are academic, and you will encounter disciplinary knowledges and discourses that you, perhaps as a class, will have to take some time to understand. As a complex theoretical text, Sara Ahmed's "Recognising Strangers" requires and rewards more than one reading. Geraldine Pratt's "Abandoned Women and Spaces of the Exception" drops you into a disciplinary conversation in Geography that may make you feel like a party crasher who doesn't know what's going on or who's who, but who decides to stick around because it looks like fun.

Sometimes the readings are challenging because they present unconventional perspectives or uncommon topics, which may unsettle your assumptions about the body, about language, about sexuality and gender, about representation. Anna Deavere Smith finds beauty in the "Broken Sentences" of woman in prison. Gay Hawkins challenges our easy conversion of objects into waste—the short life of the plastic cup chucked on the way out of the football stadium—in "A Dumped Car." And Riki Wilchins demands that we see "unexpected genitalia" on a newborn as a variation in embodiment, not as a psycho-medical crisis that requires an all too quick fix.

Sometimes the readings are challenging because, at first, they don't seem interesting or relevant to you. If you are not intersexed, for example, you might question why you should have to read Riki Wlichins' essay from *Queer Theory/Gender Theory*. But we ask you to find points of entry by analyzing assumptions in the text: what does it say about being male or female or about a binary gender system supposedly grounded in the body? What does it claim about the role of doctors in our society, or the possibilities for medical-scientific interventions that might revolutionize the body? How might this topic relate to cosmetic surgery or designer babies?

We encourage you to compare and contrast readings, and to look for connections across them. Say you read Hawkins' "A Dumped Car," a chapter in which she advocates for a new way of looking at and imagining waste. In the course of the text she does a close reading of Agnes Varda's documentary *The Gleaners and I*, which is reviewed by Jake Wilson in "Trash and Treasure: *The Gleaners and I*" in this book. If you're really adventurous or curious, you might rent the movie and develop ideas and perspectives of your own about Varda's approach to the topic, or about waste and our relationship to it. You might work closely with the two articles, juxtaposing Hawkins' claims about Varda's film with Wilson's, and ask yourself, "Where do the two writers' ideas overlap?" You might also attend to the key words and concepts that characterize Hawkins' analysis of the film, and compare them with Wilson's. Lots of questions, lots of connections, lots of concepts that you can carry with you into new projects of your own.

We know that it is risky to draw attention to what you don't know, especially in an academic environment where passing the test, getting it right, knowing the answer become the markers of success. But if we don't allow for questioning and inquiring, if the answers are always worth more than the questions, then we quickly limit the range of ideas we can work with.

Think about it: the more you read, the more you come in contact with views, language, experiences, and claims that take you beyond what you already know and that compel you outside of yourself. Soon, the embarrassment of not knowing will be replaced by the confidence of having filled in gaps and understanding something in a new or more complex way. The willingness to address what you don't know can be a most generative and empowering trait, and it is bound to impact your ability to engage with topics in writing more confidently and more complexly.

Thus we present the readings in this book as encounters that are meant to provoke thought, to provide key concepts and ideas, and to initiate work. We do not expect you to master or memorize these readings, but to take them up, engage energetically with them, muck around in them, learn something new, take up concepts and lines of argument, and then put them to use them in your own writing projects.

We are leaving the work and the excitement of the journey—getting lost, finding new connections, making decisions about what it is important to know and to say—up to you and to your class, though we will provide guideposts along the way.

[2] Writing for the Academy: Analysis and Argument

Of all the types of writing you might be asked to produce in college, analysis and argument are likely two of the most common. For our purposes here we're going to talk about analysis and argument as *genre* and as *practice*. College teachers routinely assign analysis and argument essays in their courses—genres that have distinct characteristics and purposes, even as they share some qualities in common. Both analysis and argument, for example, are built upon claims and evidence, and they require writers to closely examine a subject or situation in order to develop a deeper understanding of it. The end results are texts that persuade readers. In the case of analysis, the text persuades a reader to *see* what the writer sees—an interesting connection, for example, or a meaningful trend, or a causal relationship; in the case of argument, the text attempts to persuade the reader to hold the same position as the writer, or to act in some manner, or to switch alliances.

The practices of analysis and argument precede and often transcend the writing of academic essays, however. You analyze when you think carefully enough to recommend a course to a friend, or explore why a particular college sports team is so dominant, or decide who you will vote for in the Presidential election, or come to understand better the geopolitical situation produced by the US presence in Afghanistan. Argument involves analysis—and goes beyond pro/con debates on abortion or gun control and extends into situated social practices, such as when you are working together as a sorority to plan the next event, or persuading your parents that body piercing makes social statements, or taking a stand in an education class on the value of anti-racist pedagogy, or advocating for more funds for the local public schools. Evidence for your arguments comes from analysis, from discussion with others, from your personal experience, and eventually from research in the library and on the web.

Recognizing the features of analysis and argument is an important step in developing your own skills as a writer. The essays in this reader showcase a wide range of approaches to interpretation and argument, and also illustrate the necessary relationships between the two.

Analysis

Analysis often follows from an observation or a question; analysis is what we do when we attempt to make sense of something. Take, for example, Margaret Price's "Artificial Assimilation: Representational Politics of the Gayby Boom." Price was motivated to write her piece after noticing a trend in the visibility of gay parents and gay parenting—a shift from virtually no representation to an overabundance of representation. But, "be careful what you wish for," she writes. The super- or hyper-visibility of gay parenting on the web, in newspapers and magazines, in television programs and movies, and in advertisements results, claims Price, in a sanitizing of queer folk and their efforts to raise families. Gay parents are represented as "just like" straight parents, that is as "normal." And the end result, according to Price, is that the complexity of queer parenting—its specific challenges and struggles and compromises, its successes and failures—is glossed over and denied. Price builds her analysis through a close examination of a range of cultural artifacts, specifically cable television programs devoted to gay characters and gay parenting. She notices certain trends in the representations of gay parents and draws conclusions based on her new understanding of the trends. She also notices what is missing in the representations—no attention to transgender parents, for example—and makes claims about that as well.

So, analysis starts with a question or an observation, it moves into close attention to a subject or subjects and, at its most successful, it results in creative leaps, insights, and new awarenesses. The *practices* of asking good questions, noticing details and recognizing trends, making connections, and developing interpretive claims increase the potential for composing a persuasive analysis essay that satisfies the conventions of the *genre*: plausible interpretation, claims well supported by evidence, and an overarching point to it all—what might be called a thesis, or an umbrella claim, or even a statement of purpose.

Price's essay is a generative starting point for doing an analysis of your own. Let's go back to her concept of hypervisibility: *visibility* is a concept currently in vogue in theater, psychology, sociology, cultural studies, queer studies, political science and many other disciplines. The concept is especially interesting to scholars because of the sheer volume of images, texts and ideas people are exposed to each day through television, radio, advertising, newspapers, magazines, and other forms of communication.

And inextricably linked with visibility is the concept of *hypervisibility* (or surplus visibility)—that is, the images or identities or figures in heavy rotation in US culture. Certain images—e.g. the person in the wheelchair, the flamboyant gay man, the dying person with AIDS, the starving African child—stand in for larger, more diverse, more complex groups of people. An analysis of a hypervisible representation might start with questions: what do these images and representations achieve? who benefits? who—and what—gets sacrificed?

You might select a hypervisible representation of your own, and explore what the image is doing. An example: in Fall 2007 Lincoln Mercury ran an ad entitled "Hometown," depicting Harry Connick, Jr. driving through New Orleans in a Lincoln MKX, a luxury vehicle, as he oversees construction of new homes for displaced musicians in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The ad was widely circulated (it first aired on October 14th during a Sunday night broadcast of an NFL football game), and is hypervisible; that is, it becomes *the* face of the New Orleans "recovery." What the ad makes "visible" is a glamorous, cheerful, materially comfortable white celebrity as he drives through the city, reconnecting with musician friends, and helping them put on a crawfish bake. What the ad keeps invisible are FEMA trailers, destroyed neighborhoods, empty, abandoned schools, the thousands of people—particularly people of color—continuing to struggle because the city actually hasn't ever received adequate resources to rebuild.

But the purpose of analyzing the ad is not to judge the car manufacturer—or Harry Connick, for that matter. The purpose is to understand why the ad foregrounds a particular story about the New Orleans recovery, and to consider what happens to the other stories about the city and the people affected by the hurricane.

Analysis gets us to a place we hadn't been aware of in advance; it surprises us, gets our attention, and forces us to rethink our assumptions. As you engage in analysis, you learn to discipline yourself 'back into the text,' to slow down and let yourself notice and see what is there *before* deciding what you think about it. You work on seeing, noticing, and exploring an object of study.

Argument

Ideally, the practices of analysis impact your approach to argument, particularly your ability to suspend judgment and seek out rather than suppress tensions.

Whether talking in class or in the hallway, selecting books for a course, or publishing academic articles, those of us in the academy are always saying, ‘this is how I see the world and I’d like you to see it that way too.’ This is not the simple pro-con version of argument, where everyone yells and screams and calls each other names in order to win at all costs (well, typically the academy is not like that, and it’s certainly not supposed to be). Argument, instead, is a way of making claims about a topic of inquiry in the hopes of creating knowledge, testing the waters, persuading others, solving problems, and acting in the world. Academic argument, ideally, is not afraid of contradictory evidence—even when it threatens the whole structure of the argument—because it is those very tensions that make exploring a topic worthwhile.

Academic argument assumes multiple perspectives on truth, and starts from the premise that we have only partial knowledge. It also assumes that there are significant differences among us that need to be taken into account, that some ‘facts’ are more significant than others, that some ‘experts’ carry more weight than others, that some claims are more likely to be true or right or more feasible than others—and overall, that we want to reach fair and equitable decisions about how the world is and should be.

Academic argument also assumes we’ll make an initial claim, do more research and thinking and reading, and alter or reject that claim as part of the process of thinking and acting in the world. Argument that is most closely connected to analysis is argument to *inquire*—to learn more about the world, about others’ ideas, about our own ideas—and, ultimately, to construct writings that will persuade others to see those ideas the same way(s) we do.

Let’s look at a specific argument to inquire in the book—June Jordan’s “Nobody Mean More To Me Than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan.” The title itself is provocative, with its (absolutely intentional) ungrammatical pronouncement, and it suggests the stance Jordan intends to take on the issue of Black English. Jordan’s argumentative thesis is explicit and it arrives early in the essay: Black English is an “endangered species,” she writes, and if it disappears so will much of what constitutes Black culture and identity. What is most compelling about her opening paragraphs is the urgency of the argument: this issue *matters*; something enormous is at stake.

The evidence for her argument arises mostly from personal experience and anecdote—stories about her efforts to design a course on Black English, about her students’ collective response to a fellow student’s tragedy. Throughout the essay Jordan carefully, even painstakingly examines her evidence—the raw data that informs her argument—and carefully interprets it. Her purpose in the essay is clear—to change readers’ perceptions of the legitimacy of Black English—but it’s equally important that readers *see* what she and her students have come to see and appreciate about the beauty and complexity and sophistication of Black English. Ultimately Jordan’s argument is all the more powerful because of the recursive relationship between argument and analysis.

Topics of Inquiry

The essays in this reader encourage you to read, research, and write arguments through exploring a topic of inquiry together from multiple points of view. Doing some shared reading and discussing in order to complicate easy answers or cultural commonplaces creates a rich intellectual context in the classroom, and generates new questions that the readings don't address or answer or don't answer well. For example, Diana George's essay on representing poverty provides an historical framework for analyzing the role of pity in paintings of the poor over time, even as she challenges us to explore the limits of pity both then and in contemporary fund raising efforts by organizations like Habitat for Humanity. What, we might ask ourselves, do contemporary representations of poverty and calls for action look like—representations that might challenge George's analysis and argument. Ultimately each essay in the reader is a starting point for inquiry and discussion, not the final word on any issue.

It's important that you take up the readings not as answers or content per se, but as prompts to further questions. You want to develop the ability to read as writers with a critical eye toward the moves that writers make within texts, so that you can broaden your own writerly choices. And it is also very important that you find a way (as June Jordan does, for example) to intersect with your topic from your own perspectives and experiences, so you can claim ownership of your claims, projects, and final papers.

Use these readings to generate a rich discussion and debate—and to analyze and assess the argument stances, practices, and skills the authors are using. Don't get bogged down in the readings, but use them to get things stirred up, so that you feel motivated and knowledgeable enough to develop your individual argument within this topic of inquiry.

[3] Researched Essays: Invention and Desire

Research is woven into our daily lives—from locating the time for the college basketball team's next game, to grabbing an initial definition of stem cell research from Wikipedia, to checking in with a knowledgeable friend on email about the best movie to see or best candidate to vote for or best professor to take next semester. We look in on how our friends are doing on Facebook. We catch up on celebrity gossip on Perez Hilton and on international news on the online version of the *New York Times*. And at times we do more extended research, like when we need to understand the causes and symptoms of diabetes or when we want to know everything we can about forensic anthropology as a possible career choice—or when, of course, we have to do assigned researched essays for college classes.

We want to deploy here a term from classical rhetoric – *invention*, or the discovery of resources for making a persuasive argument. In ancient Greece that meant speaking before the assembled citizens to make the case for going to war, or to honor a fallen leader, and engage in other such public deliberations. The speaker would not only have to gather facts, but also make the case in terms of the values, beliefs, desires, and commonplaces of the audience being addressed. The speaker would have to make decisions about style, length, focus, and he (always 'he' in this case) would have to anticipate the possible responses from

the audience, both positive and negative. A good speaker was able to *invent*—to discover the resources—for any speaking occasion on the spot.

But we are not in ancient Greece, where the audience was known, the values and beliefs shared, and the commonplaces . . . well, commonplace. We are in the supermodern and transnational world Augé and others have described, full of multiple perspectives, a bombardment of information and image, an explosion of knowledge, and a compression of time/space. We probably have a harder job, as we figure out what we want to speak and write about, as we seek out sources available to us online and in the library, and as we anticipate how various audiences might respond to what we finally have to say and write.

This kind of research deepens what we know and often takes us out of our comfort zone and into new territory, compelling us beyond ourselves and our worlds into new selves and new worlds—all with a click of the mouse. How do we get started?

Conversing with Other: the space between

It would seem commonplace to assume that the best place for you to start is with what you already know and care about and want to write about. And that's often true. But we emphasize in this book another approach too—starting from what you don't know because this is often the situation writers find themselves in both in college and in their careers. What does it mean to write from the limits of your knowledge? How does that further your reading, researching, and writing skills? How is this kind of “mobilization of passions . . . a task for rhetoric”? (Crowley 22).

For Margaret, mobilizing desire—getting students to think and write outside of their box with passion—has often been accomplished by putting students' experiences into conversation with scholarly texts. In a course focused on the intersection of place and identity, for example, Margaret asked students first to read a number of scholarly articles from a number of disciplines, to find their own point of entry into the claims and concepts raised in these articles, and to write a researched essay based on the intersection of their experience and the articles.

Assignment: Report on Scholarship on Place and Identity



“The End of Public Space? People’s Park, the Public, and the Right to the City” from *The Right to the City* by Don Mitchell

“History With a Small ‘H’: A Conversation with Glenn Ligon” from *GLQ* 12:3 by Rachel Middleman

“Abandoned Women and the Spaces of the Exception” from *Antipode* by Geraldine Pratt
excerpt from “Introduction” to *Geographies of Exclusion* by David Sibley

Margaret asked students to re-read (or at last skim) the four texts they had read as a class, identifying each scholar’s project, main point/thesis, and a couple of quotations that grabbed their attention—and to think about why. Then she asked them to identify one argument that was common to all the texts—and to think about why. To see differences, she asked them to identify one argument that only one or maybe two or perhaps three of the texts made that the others do not—and to think about why. She encouraged them to do this a couple of times.

Having immersed themselves in these articles, students were to decide on a place or an experience of a place that they knew well from their own lives, and to use the four scholarly articles as concepts, as evidence, as counter-claim, as inspiration and provocation, as points of agreement and disagreement in writing their own six to eight page essay focused on that place. They worked from an emerging thesis that went something like this: “Many scholars make the following claim about the relationship of place and identity, but scholar X and scholar Y (and perhaps scholar Z) challenge that claim by arguing that . . .” This was a seed sentence—a heuristic—a way to begin to create a framework for their essay.

Alongside and through these four scholarly articles, one student wrote about the practices of masculinity in his home community on a Native American reservation, another about the new identity produced in high school when she was diagnosed with learning disorders and spent time each day in a resource room, a third about the Ghanaian immigrant community at the corner of Jane and Finch Streets in Toronto, a fourth about the problematic location of the LGBT Resource Center on the edge of campus, and a fifth about the economic and social forces hidden behind the exotic glitter of Chinatown in NYC. Students explored ‘home’ through concepts of abstract space, contested space, and imaginary space. It wasn’t always easy:

“Combining my ideas with the scholarly texts was very difficult. For much of the thinking process, I just could not relate any of my ideas to any of the texts. Starting with my own experiences and writing them down on paper helped me understand the texts a little better. At that point I still didn’t think it possible to relate my ideas and the texts. I think the breakthrough for me came when I looked at the images of the abandoned women in Pratt [“Abandoned Women and Spaces of Exception”]. It helped me realize that my experiences were almost the same, though my life and their lives were completely different. The research assignment brought up terms I had never heard before I started looking.”

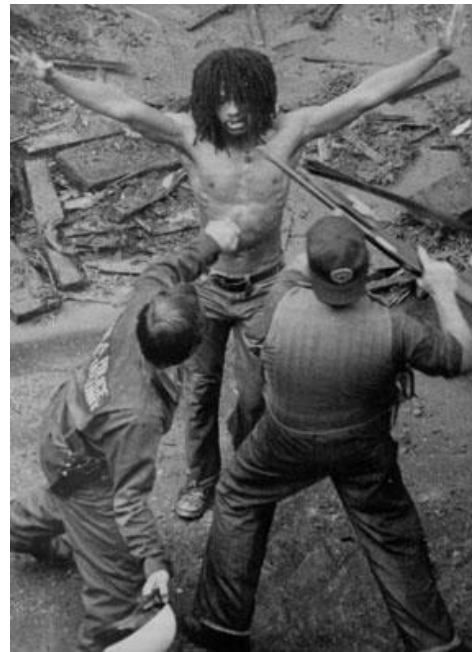
This is the process of invention—working back and forth between the concepts and claims of the scholarly articles and a topic that matters to you. Each student added his or her voice to the larger discussions about place and identity through these encounters with scholarly texts.

Compelled Outside of Yourself

Anne mobilizes desire by creating *exigency* for students—that is, putting them into writing situations that require them to look outside of themselves for answers and perspectives. She tests the limits of students’ desires by imposing topics on them and watching what happens.

In her research writing course Anne put five topics on slips of paper into a hat—each one an historical event in 20th century America when encounters with others or conflicts over space turned confrontational and/or violent. Her students formed small groups, and each group picked one of the topics and embarked upon quick and dirty research to situate themselves. None of the topics were already familiar; no one recognized any of the references; and the preliminary research, though helpful in contextualizing the event, did not bring with it a jolt of recognition. So how could her students possibly write about their assigned topics? What would it take for them to find a place to stand?

Let’s see how the project unfolded, looking closely at one of the events—the firebombing of MOVE in Philadelphia in 1985. The students who picked that topic went right to Google and immediately found a host of artifacts from a variety of media, including newspaper articles (current and historical), radio clips, YouTube videos, interviews with MOVE members, legal documents, photographs, and websites galore. The students quickly discovered that MOVE was a radical (mostly) black group that formed in the early 1970s and was led by a white man who took the name John Africa and who encouraged all members to adopt the surname Africa. They also learned that MOVE is not an acronym, but a shortened version of a core belief of the group that life is all about “movement.” And finally, they began to understand that MOVE members had a history of conflict both with Philadelphia law enforcement as well as with residents of their neighborhood in the western edge of the city that reached a crisis point in May of 1985 when police officers arrived at the MOVE residence with arrest warrants for four members.



Philadelphia Daily News August 1978

The first burst of web research got the group’s attention: within minutes they were surrounded by documents and images and narratives and arguments that rendered MOVE and the attack on MOVE twenty-three years ago urgent and compelling and worth further investigation, even though they had no previous knowledge to draw on, and no personal experience with which to relate to the event.



By George Widman, AP

Anne’s students were certainly motivated by curiosity. They had a ton of questions: How did MOVE originate? Why were MOVE members so combative? What beliefs motivated the organization? How did MOVE’s neighbors feel about them? What has happened in Philadelphia in the years since the firebombing? How come no one in class had ever heard about the event?

In the course of satisfying their initial curiosities, Anne’s students also became attuned to the voices and experiences of others whose marginal position in culture and history, whose provocative philosophies and life choices, made it easy to dismiss or ignore or respond violently toward them. And they were shocked by what they discovered—that, for example, the Philadelphia police set fire to an entire residential neighborhood in the process of arresting MOVE members. That MOVE members intentionally provoked their neighbors by, among other things, lecturing them night and day through electric bullhorns. That five children died in the fire.

But the goal of the project wasn’t just to find and report random facts about MOVE, or to offer a cohesive narrative of the events that led up to the firebombing, or to talk about what a “weird” organization MOVE was. Anne’s students ultimately had to analyze *why* the event occurred, specifically addressing what issues of space and power and difference contributed to tensions. They needed to develop a sophisticated enough understanding of the event to make claims about it, and persuade their audience of a specific interpretation.

The project didn’t necessarily require the students to master the subject, but it did put pressure on them, for example, to sift through conflicting reports, to evaluate their sources of information, and to contextualize and historicize the event—that is, to learn more about what was happening in the US in 1985. The students also had to apply to the event the arguments of two theorists in this reader, Sara Ahmed and David Sibley, who write about space, power, exclusion, and otherness.

In their final projects—an I-movie as well as a lengthy collaborative essay—Anne’s students juxtaposed cultural artifacts specific to 1985, like the Billy Joel anthem “We Didn’t Start the Fire” and the Michael Jackson-inspired famine relief fundraising ballad “We Are the World,” with actual news coverage and analysis of the MOVE fire bombing. They also worked closely with Ahmed and Sibley, selecting quotes that helped illuminate the tensions surrounding public space and the ways that space defines who does and doesn’t belong.

The topic ultimately mattered to them, not because it reinforced their assumptions about history or difference or violence or conflict, or because they connected with it personally, but because it positioned them to explore something *new*—to ask questions, to make connections, to experience the pleasure of being surprised by what they discovered. It produced new desires—as well as linked to old ones. It also allowed them the pleasure of sharing new knowledge with their audience, of imagining all the possibilities for making the event meaningful to their readers and viewers as well.

[4] Getting to Work

In this introduction, we have explained the framework for this book—the ideas about writing, reading, and researching that we have learned over our many years of teaching undergraduate writing courses. In the appendices that follow, we provide resources for you and your classmates and your teacher to use as you work with the essays in this book for your own writing projects.

Appendix A presents, with lots of examples, five important reading practices that will help you encounter the texts in this book thoughtfully and imaginatively.

Appendix B provides a set of strategies for producing researched essays.

Appendix C is a thematic table of contents for the book, one of many possible ways of clustering the readings, and of thinking about the larger conversations individual readings respond to.

We hope that the framework and the readings give you a chance to encounter new ideas, new histories, new perspectives and that you meet them with a desire to know more about others, to be vulnerable at times, to struggle with frustrations and even dislikes, to find pleasure in getting to know more about the world.

You are on your way to becoming more and more a participant in the big conversations of life in a complex and exciting transnational world. We hope that these critical encounters with texts—and with your teacher and classmates—produce a sense of “fellow feeling” that results in a more expansive sense of your self as a writer, a reader, a researcher, and of course a person.

We are, at the end of the day, all in this together.

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APPENDIX A: Five Reading Practices

[1] Close Reading

Sometimes you have to read *closely* in order to understand, perhaps even memorize the content, as when preparing for the CPA exam or mastering the intricacies of stem cell biology.

For example, an essay early in the reader is a chapter entitled “Recognising Strangers” from *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* by Sara Ahmed—and it is definitely challenging. A close reading of the first paragraph will get you off to a strong start:

“How do you recognise a stranger? To ask such a question, is to challenge the assumption that the stranger is the one we simply fail to recognise, that the stranger is simply *any-body* whom we do not know. It is to suggest that the stranger is *some-body* whom we have *already recognised* in the very moment in which they are ‘seen’ or ‘faced’ as a stranger. The figure of the stranger is far from simply being strange; it is a figure that is painfully familiar in that very strange/r/ness. The stranger has already come too close; the stranger is ‘in my face.’ The stranger then is not simply the one whom we have not yet encountered, but the one whom we have already encountered, or already faced. The stranger comes to be faced as a form of recognition: we recognise somebody *as a stranger*, rather than simply failing to recognise them.”

What a strange text, you might reasonably assert! Ahmed starts with a question that seems almost silly, because it challenges our commonsensical idea that the world is divided into people we know and people we do not know, or ‘strangers.’ And then she writes a number of variations on this question. She is developing a theoretical or conceptual argument around the key phrase ‘strange encounters.’ Here are some close reading strategies you might use to trace out this argument:

- Look up key words in the dictionary.

For example, “recognize” (the U.S. spelling) means “1. To know to be something that has been perceived before: *recognize a face*. 2. To know or identify from past experience or knowledge: *recognize hostility*.”

That helps. If I ‘recognize’ you as a friend, or a stranger, or an enemy, or an ally, it is because I already know something about friends and strangers and enemies and allies, and I can put you in one of those categories. We recognize by dress, skin color, body posture that which is not of ‘us’—but which is still known as ‘strange.’ So instead of hitting the limits of my knowledge in this encounter, I’m actually using the knowledge I already have.

- Invent an example.

For example, I might hear a knock at my door, open the door, and worry because the person is a stranger. If I open the door and begin to worry, it might be because the person is not only unknown to me individually, but seems somehow out of place. A woman in an apron who could be a new neighbor is less likely to be recognized as a stranger, perhaps, than a woman poorly dressed and carrying lots of old grocery bags. One seems to belong; one seems to threaten, to be out place, to not belong. Why? Because I have a sense of who belongs in my neighborhood and who doesn't, based on class, maybe, or race, or nationality.

- Look at words in italics or otherwise emphasized.

Ahmed marks a distinction between ‘*any-body*’ and ‘*some-body*.’ Ask yourself why she has hyphenated the two words? What does that accomplish? She takes two ordinary, everyday pronouns and alters their meaning by separating ‘any’ and ‘some’ from ‘body.’ Hmm, ‘body’—this kind of body versus that kind of body. ‘Anybody’ as undifferentiated—It could be ‘anybody.’ ‘Somebody’ becomes differentiated from all those anybodies. That seems important because it takes us back to the idea of recognizing, of seeing patterns or hierarchies in masses.

- Analyze the structure of the paragraph.

In this case, Ahmed starts with a question and provides an answer in the last sentence.

- Paraphrase.

Select a sentence or a phrase and try to put it in your own words. For example, “The stranger then is not simply the one whom we have not yet encountered, but the one whom we have already encountered, or already faced” might be paraphrased as “We only label someone a stranger if we already know who strangers are likely to be.”

- Summarize.

Here’s one way to summarize this paragraph: Ahmed takes a commonsense understanding of who becomes figured as ‘the stranger’ and asks questions about it in several ways. In this way she comes to argue that ‘strangers’ are people for whom we already have a recognizable category system. The figure of the stranger does not take us to the end of our knowledge, but rather makes visible how our knowledge works.

[2] *Critical Reading*

Sometimes we have to read *critically* in order to evaluate a methodology or argument, as when we are analyzing the effects of a national tax cut on the poor or arguing for or against Spike Lee as a talented filmmaker.

For example, in the essay “Changing the Face of Poverty: Nonprofits and the Problem of Representation,” Diana George begins with a description of the types of images—most often of people in despair—nonprofit organizations use to persuade

Americans to contribute money to those in need. George goes on to argue why such images and appeals are problematic, and then offers suggestions for alternative and ultimately more effective ways of representing poverty. Here are some critical reading strategies you might use to trace out and evaluate the claims:

- Map out the essay.

Notice that the essay is divided into four sections (with a space separating each section). The essay opens in section one with George contextualizing what she sees as a “problem” of representation and then outlining her project for the rest of the essay. In the second section George provides historical background for representations of the poor as well as advocacy efforts. In the third section George refines and focuses her argument through a close analysis of one nonprofit organization. And in the concluding section George points to efforts of nonprofits to break away from the stereotyped representations of the needy in order to depict a broader, more complex picture of poverty.

- Ask questions.

Mark places in the essay that raise questions for you—for example, what *are* the causes of poverty and homelessness in the US? What are the goals of nonprofits in addressing people’s needs? What exactly constitutes “poverty” or the poverty line in the US? In what other ways might poverty be represented?

- Raise challenges.

Mark places in the essay that you think are or might be wrong. Is George’s claim that representations of the poor that elicit sympathy are ultimately ineffective valid and adequately supported? Does the historical background strengthen her argument? Does George paint a broad or full enough picture of poverty and representation in the US? And in what ways is her argument, now over ten years old, still timely—or not?

- Draw examples or counter-examples.

Think back to images of poverty or actual impoverishment you have witnessed or heard about—and test the theories and claims in George’s essay against your own experiences and knowledges.

- Talk with others.

Ask your roommate or your friends or your parents or your classmates what they think about poverty in the US. Tell them about George’s essay and listen to their responses. Figure out what that teaches you.

- Reread the essay.

Come back to the essay with greater awareness, more knowledge, fuller context, and some questions and ideas of your own.

- Take a stand.

Imagine that you have been asked to write a review of this essay: How would you summarize it? How would you assess it? What is strong? What is weak or missing? What is your final evaluation of the essay and its argument?

[3] *Inventive Reading*

Sometimes you have to read *inventively*, looking for the larger frameworks or debates or conversations that a text is embedded in and responding to. An article in the newspaper about the cholera epidemic in Zimbabwe in the southern part of the continent of Africa, for example, may raise questions for you about this country's history as a British colony, its role in African nationalism and struggles for independence, the contested leadership of Robert Mugabe, and current humanitarian crises. What, you might reasonably ask, has been the role of the US and the United Kingdom? What are the political debates? What is our government doing and saying—and why? You need to put that newspaper article into its historical and political context – and it's about time you learned more about Zimbabwe and Africa anyway.

Here's another example. The middle chapter from Josh Neufeld's graphic nonfiction book, *A.D. New Orleans After the Deluge*, is entitled "Something in the Water." Neufeld has written and illustrated real stories about real people who survived the hurricane and endured the inadequate government response to their suffering. How can you approach the text? Don't let the cartoon style fool you into thinking this is going to be easy. Here are some inventive reading strategies you might use to understand Neufeld's text and the political, social, and economic tensions that surrounded (and continue to surround) the devastation of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Inventory.

Jot down quickly all that you know about Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans – from watching the news, seeing images, people you have talked with. This is your starting point – what you know, what you don't know, why you have a particular way of knowing and not knowing.

- A Quick Internet Search.

Go to a search engine or another source of information, and type in *Katrina* and read around in the first couple of websites that turn up.

- Re-reading.

Since this is a short chapter, read and reread it several times. Write out the questions it poses for you, such as, how many people were stranded in the New Orleans Civic Center, and for how long? What sorts of efforts did the state and federal governments

put forth to attend to the hurricane victims? What sorts of tensions are alluded to when figures in the chapter reference “looters” and “thugs”? And who is the “they” figures refer to when they ask, “Don’t they care?” or when they cry out, “They won’t let us go! We trapped here!”

- Authorial Purpose.

Based on this close reading and perhaps discussion with others, explain as best you can (and you can’t ever fully know this) what you think Neufeld is trying to accomplish by writing about Katrina as a cartoon.

- Intended Audience(s).

Based on the text itself, who do you think is his intended audiences? Why? What assumptions might he be trying to unsettle or challenge or confirm? What in the text suggests that to you?

- Develop a project.

Decide what you’d like to know about and how you are going to find information so that you can write a ‘good enough’ essay on this graphic autobiography and on this topic.

- Draft.

Begin to put your ideas into words or, in this case, drawings.

[4] *Reading Researched Texts*

As you read in your courses, you have probably noticed that often writers draw on the ideas, arguments, and words of other writers. They quote, use statistics or anecdotes, and apply the theories developed by other writers. This happens all the time in the university: one writer builds on the work of other writers in responsible and respectful ways. It’s not easy to follow and comprehend this kind of sourced writing, and you have to deploy a particular set of reading strategies to attend to it well.

A number of the readings in this collection are sourced – some quite extensively, and some minimally. Nedra Reynolds’ chapter “Maps of the Everyday: Habitual Pathways and Contested Spaces” from her book *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference* arises out of her teaching and scholarly interests in rhetoric, identity, and space. Reynolds opens the chapter discussing both the richness and potential of maps, and the debates over and contested notions of maps. Reynolds also explores the different approaches to and functions of “mapping”—complicating our everyday notions of what it means to produce or imagine mapped spaces. In the second half of the chapter Reynolds reports on an ethnographic study she conducted with university students in Leeds, a city in the UK, and what she discovered about space, difference and exclusion. The chapter rewards close attention to the way Reynolds negotiates a range of sources, from interviews with students, to observational research, to the ideas, arguments, and theories of scholars in

a range of fields from cultural geography, to education, to composition and rhetorical studies, to anthropology, and so on. Here are some reading strategies you might deploy to gain a better appreciation for Reynolds' analysis, and to re-imagine your own relationship to sources.

- Signals

Look carefully at the ways Reynolds signals that she is working with the voices and ideas of other writers.

- Where and how she uses quotation marks and italics.
- The brief summaries she provides of another writer's background as well as that writer's general argument, when introducing a theorist or scholar for the first time.
- How she varies how much she uses her sources: for example, in the first half of the chapter Reynolds quotes, paraphrases, and summarizes quite an extensive number of secondary sources. There are a series of block quotes and many paragraphs are loaded with parenthetical citations. And yet, her voice and ideas are still visible. Take a minute to look at a representative paragraph and quantify how much writing is from sources and how much writing is Reynolds. In the second half of the chapter which begins with the section entitled "A Study: Mental Maps and Living in Leeds," Reynolds relies heavily on primary research; sometimes an entire page is turned over to a transcription of an interview. Take a minute, however, to note what follows a transcription: what does Reynolds do with the data? Is there any sort of balance between the primary data, the secondary sources, and Reynold's own argument?

- Chapter Notes

Make the effort to move back and forth between the chapter and the accompanying notes, and think about how your reading experience changes as a result.

- What did Reynolds deepen, complicate, explicate in the notes?
- What did the notes help you understand about a particular scholar or idea?
- Why is the material in the notes not woven into the main text?

- Evidence

Analyze how and where Reynolds' ideas arise.

- From direct observation of a pattern or trend?
- From a connection to another scholar's claim/argument?
- From application of a particular concept or key term?
- From an intuitive leap?

- Evaluation

Rank Reynolds' ideas on a plausibility scale: which ones seem the most persuasive, or interesting, or substantial, and why? What sorts of evidence accompanies the most plausible claims? Think critically about whose voices are represented in the article.

- Who is granted expertise, and what sort of expertise is evident?
- Who is writing and speaking about this subject?
- What urgencies and agendas do the cited voices bring to the wider conversation?

[5] *Reading Visual Images*

Images, in isolation or surrounded by text, are mobilized to persuade viewers to think and to act differently—to be shocked, or moved, or encouraged to buy, or informed, or rethink their sense of the world. Examples include political cartoons, advertisements, posters, propaganda, photojournalism, and websites. Even the clothes you wear promote a particular brand and all that that brand means, even if you decide to refuse those fashion statements and meanings. We live in an iconographic world that influences not only what we see but also how we see.

Take the image from the cover:



It's a brightly colored VW bug, with the rather jarring title of "Fagbug" painted on it. Intriguing, perhaps, maybe even a bit shocking to see a slur like that painted on the side of a car. Your understanding of the photo will strengthen and deepen if you practice some critical reading strategies specific to visual images:

- *Observations:* jot down all the initial things you notice from this photograph—from the rainbow colors, to the possible location on a campus, to the small URL under the title.

- *Audience:* consider what the photographer is trying to capture here and who the photographer imagines as the potential audience. What does the photographer want the audience to feel or do?
- *Narrative:* what story does this photograph seem to be telling? Where is this photograph likely to have been taken—and at what point in history?
- *Research:* how might you go about finding out more about this photograph? A quick trip to www.fagbug.com tells us some important things: “On the 11th Annual National Day of Silence, Erin Davies was victim to a hate crime in Albany, New York. Because of sporting a rainbow sticker on her VW Beetle, Erin's car was vandalized, left with the words "fag" and "u r gay" placed on the driver's side window and hood of her car. Despite initial shock and embarrassment, Erin decided to embrace what happened by leaving the graffiti on her car. She took her car, now known worldwide as the "fagbug," on a 58-day trip around the United States and Canada. Along the way, Erin discovered other, more serious hate crimes, had people attempt to remove the graffiti, and experimented with having a male drive her car. After driving the fagbug for one year, Erin decided to give her car a makeover.”
- *Context:* What do we make of this act of activism? How does it compare to gay pride parades or Rainbow bridges? Is it surprising that such an act of vandalism would occur at this point in history? Why or why not?
- *Claim:* how do you assess the purpose and the effect of this photograph? Of the fagbug itself? Of the documentary that Erin Davies produced?

Even though these five reading practices may appear discrete, they actually overlap, and all are what writing teachers call *recursive*. Readers often read closely, critically, inventively, and with an eye on sourcing at the same time. That is, they note details, as they assess rhetorical effect. They evaluate writers and their arguments, as they make connections to the larger issues. They move ahead in the text, drawing their own conclusions, and then circle back to see how a second, third or fourth reading might affect that conclusion. They pay attention to the visual aspects of the text—what they add, or what they obscure.

Reading recursively does not necessarily happen automatically, though. It requires practice, training, and sometimes even permission. If you have been asked to read mostly for content through most your schooling, then it will take guidance and reinforcement for you to engage the different kinds of critical encounters with texts we are promoting in this book.

APPENDIX B: Strategies for Writing Researched Essays

The trajectory from knowing nothing about a topic like place and identity or MOVE to producing I-movies and essays that speak with authority and that provoke interest and response from readers and viewers includes a lot of strategies for inventing, arranging, and delivering texts. We have developed a list of strategies that you might turn to in order to generate ideas, to explore connections, to move from an emerging claim to a final thesis, and to craft the most effective written and visual text that you can. You don't have to use these strategies each time, nor do you have to go through them linearly. They offer backup—for when you have no place to start, for when you don't know how to locate sources, for when you struggle with organization, for when you put the polished text together.

Let's imagine that you have decided you want to know about poverty within the US and transnationally. You have been watching the economic news, as people have been losing their homes and as retail sales have been disappointingly low. You have also watched the PSAs asking viewers to send money to the Rescue Mission and the local food bank. You yourself are worried about meeting next semester's tuition increases and about what kind of career will give you a chance at a good income for the rest of your life. These are immediate and urgent questions, and they may emerge too out of course assignments about representations of poverty or about global economic trends or about public schooling in economically depressed cities. Poverty claims your attention.

STRATEGY #1: Starting from Your Own Experience, Knowledge, Claims

- Free writes: Take ten minutes and write as quickly as possible whatever comes to mind on the topic of poverty. If you blank, write 'nothing comes to mind' until something else does.
- Questions: Take ten minutes and write as quickly as possible every thing you ever wanted to know about poverty but were afraid to ask. Don't judge your questions; just get them down on paper.
- Memory Lane: Think back to your first experience with the topic poverty, and recreate it as fully as possible. Where were you? Who else was there? What were you doing and thinking? What surprises you in retrospect?
- Warrants: List all the basic assumptions or beliefs or values or hopes you have about the topic—who are 'the poor'? when does someone count as 'poor'? how do the poor get represented on TV or in the press or in political campaigns? why?
- Historicize: Delve into where you think these basic assumptions or beliefs or values or hopes come from in terms of your family, community, culture.
- Texts: List movies or books or songs or plays that represent the topic of poverty to you. Then annotate the list: what did each text mean to you and why?
- Counter-argue: what ideas or arguments do you really, really disagree with—and why? What phrases or images make you furious?

STRATEGY #2: Doing Initial Quick and Dirty Research (online and library)

- Google: Type in poverty and study the first ten entries that come up. What is the Institute for Research on Poverty (<http://www.irp.wisc.edu/>)? What does it mean that Global Issues (<http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>) claims that almost half the world—over three billion people—live on less than \$2.50 a day? What are Barack Obama and Joe Biden proposing to do about poverty in both rural and urban areas (<http://www.barackobama.com/issues/poverty/>) --and why?
- Library Databases: Type in a keyword or phrases and study the first ten entries that come up. You could pursue research on poverty and children, on poverty and education, on poverty and political systems, and poverty and the risk of armed conflict. You can read in anthropology, sociology, economics, social work, education, and public health, just for a start.
- Questions to critically assess sites and sources:
 - What is the perspective of the website or text?
 - What is the date?
 - What kind of journal is the article in?
 - What disciplines emerge as important?
 - What questions are being asked?
 - What answers are being proposed?
 - What seems most important to you?
 - What seems right? Wrong? Why?

STRATEGY #3: Selecting the Right Articles

- Go the library home page and click on databases. Next click on W and find Wilson Full Text. This is a good place to start because it's easier to work with a full text database. Type in *poverty*, and note all the entries that come up. Select one, notice the discipline and type of text, read the abstract, determine if the full text is available online or through the library, and note the list of keywords for further searching and for further organizing of your research and argument.
- Ask yourself: What do I make of this article? What new ideas does it suggest for me? Why might this be a good place to start my scholarly research?

Example:

Sample Wilson Full Text article:

Title: Will the Poor Be With Us Always?

Other Titles: Review Article

Personal Author: Goddard, Terry D.

Journal Name: *Journal of Urban History*

Source: *Journal of Urban History* v. 34 no. 4 (May 2008) p. 704-11

Publication Year: 2008

Abstract: The eradication of poverty has become a hot topic not only among scholars but also among rock stars, Hollywood actors, philanthropists and so on. These four recently published volumes all assert that the causes of poverty can be solved with a united, concentrated effort. They look for views other than the one that understands poverty through the inadequacies of the poor. They argue that some of the causes of poverty are inherent in capitalism. Simply working hard, they show, will not

change things for the better. Rather, they advocate forming some form of community empowerment program that will enable people to work together to solve problems of poverty.

Subject(s): *Poverty*

Peer Reviewed Journal:

Physical Description: Bibliographic footnotes

ISSN: 0096-1442

Language of Document: English

Book(s) Reviewed:

Title: One nation underprivileged [2004; Rank, Mark Robert]

Title: The end of poverty [Sachs, Jeffrey]

Title: The working poor [2004; Shipler, David K.; Knopf]

Title: Ending global poverty [2005; Smith, Stephen C.]

Document Type: Review Article

This entry looks helpful, because it takes you to a review of current books on the big questions of poverty. If you read this review, you will get a quick overview of the terms of discussion, the questions up for debate, the suggestions people are proposing, and the names of key theorists and researchers on the topic of poverty. The article also has a bibliography, which makes it easier to find other relevant sources, and it offers a framework or argument about capitalism as the cause of poverty that will help you assess the further reading you will do. Book reviews are also short, and written to a more general audience. It's a good starting place.

STRATEGY #4: Reading Actively and Critically

- From this initial entry point, you should begin to develop a list of significant, relevant, helpful, accessible, and useful sources for your researched essay on poverty. As you read these sources, record your responses to the claims and concepts in the articles and note any ideas you have that may help you later to develop your line of argument.
- Agree or disagree or qualify or critique quotations and claims.
 - What do I think of this idea?
 - How true is it?
 - How important is it to me?
 - Does it challenge anything I already know or believe?
 - Does it raise or answer questions?
- Jot down notes for how you might use this quotation or claim in your paper.
- Note further sources to pursue.
- Raise questions—how does this quotation or claim make you think differently about your topic? How does it challenge your thinking or give you a new line of thought to pursue?
- Emote!

STRATEGY #5: Bibliographic Information

Be sure to write down all the relevant bibliographic information as you are doing your research. You will need that information later for your Works Cited (MLA) or References (APA) pages at the end of your researched essay. Get in the habit of doing this, as it will save you a lot of time later.

- Book (edited collection): *Family Poverty in Diverse Contexts*. Edited by C. Anne Broussard and Alfred L. Joseph. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Book (single author): *Traveling Light: On the Road with America's Poor*. By Kate Weston. Boston: Beacon Press, 2008.
- Article in journal: "Multidimensional Poverty: An Alternative Measurement Approach for the United States" by Udaya R. Wagle in *Social Science Research* v. 37, no. 2 (June 2008), pp. 559-80.
- Article in alternative press: "Who Should Take Care of the Poor?" by Tony Campolo in *Tikkun* 23, no. 4 (July 2008), pp. 56-57.
- Article in alternative press: "The Irresponsibility of the Rich" by Ruth Lister in *Red Pepper* No. 161 (August 20, 2008), pp. 25-27.
- Film: *The End of Poverty? Think Again*. Director: Phillippe Diaz. Cinema Libre Studio. 2008.
- Website: The End of Poverty: In a world with so much wealth, why is there still so much poverty? Cinema Libre Studio. 27 December 200 < <http://endpoverty.ning.com/>>.
- Website: Poverty New York (State) Statistics: 2007 County Level Poverty Rates for NY. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. 27 December 2008 <<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/povertyrates/PovListpct.asp?st=NY&view=Percent>>.

STRATEGY #6: Crafting an Emerging Thesis

As you do your research and develop your argument, your ideas are likely to change and become more focused.

- Every few days, write down in 25 words or less what you want the reader to know or think or do differently after reading your essay.
- Ask yourself, "So what?" What is the significance of this thesis or its real point?
- See how this emerging thesis matches or does not match the evidence or ideas or conclusions you are discovering in your research.
- Think of this as your emerging thesis statement (which may or may not appear in your final essay).
- Use this strategy to move from having a topic, to making a general claim, to crafting a specific argument.

STRATEGY #7: Annotating

- To annotate is to note main argument, types of evidence, style, tone, and rhetorical devices to persuade the reader, and the main strengths/weaknesses.

STRATEGY #8: Summarizing

- To summarize is to put in your own words the main argument of the text or a section of a text.
- Summarizing others' ideas requires that you document the source.

STRATEGY #9: Paraphrasing

- To paraphrase is recast the specific language of a text in a mixture of the author's and your own words.
- Paraphrasing others' words requires that you document the source.

STRATEGY #10: Interviewing and Informal Surveying

- Find expert sources by noting who is quoted often in your sources, by checking the phone book or faculty directory (e.g., the head of the Economics or Social Work Department), and by asking teachers and students.
- Consider too 'nonexpert' sources such as your roommate who had had personal experience with your topic, or your family, or
- Make contact by calling or emailing the interviewee and explaining briefly what your research project is about and asking when it would be convenient, if he or she is willing, to talk or to respond to emailed questions.
- Decide what kinds of questions you want to pose in your interviews or surveys:
 - open-ended so interviewees have plenty of room to invent their own answers ("What do you think the main causes of poverty are in the US and across the globe?")
 - directed so you get answers focused on your research ("Do you think that community empowerment programs will work?")
 - avoid loaded questions ("Do you think poor people are morally lax?").
 - avoid vague questions ("What do you know about poverty?").

STRATEGY #11: Working with Quotations

- Reasons for selecting and incorporating exact quotations in your final essay:
 - Offers definitions of technical knowledge
 - Conveys ideas eloquently and persuasively
 - Tells a story needed for the essay
 - Grants authority to the claims and arguments
 - Provides data or illustration
- Introducing quotations with tag lines – "As President Obama says," or "As Kate Weston claims in *Traveling Light*," or "As research has proven."

- Blocking quotations – When a quotation is more than four lines long, set it off from the text by indenting one inch (or ten spaces) from the left margin and double space the quotation.
- Cutting quotations – When you want to use only a part of the quotation, use an ellipsis (three periods separated by a space) to indicate that you have removed text.
- Don't over-quote – your essay should not be a string of quoted and paraphrased material. Use sources to authorize and support and develop and highlight your argument.

STRATEGY #12: Crafting a Final Thesis

- Narrow your focus: decide how much ground you can realistically cover, with the intent of going as deep as possible over limited territory versus going for broad but surface coverage of wide territory.
- Identify tension: what competing or conflicting forces or ideas do you see at work in your topic? Why does this issue matter now, at this particular moment in time? What is at stake in the issue?
- Specify and subordinate: do not generalize, do not offer a cliché, do not merely identify a topic and make no claim, and do not overstate
- Rephrase the thesis: specify and subordinate
 - “The economic situation is bad” → “The tax policies of the current administration threaten to reduce the tax burden on the middle class by sacrificing education and healthcare programs for everyone.”

STRATEGY #13: Arrangement

- Let your thesis guide you: as you draft your essay, keep checking back to your thesis, and ask yourself, am I remaining consistent with my stated focus? And, does each new idea somehow build on my thesis—extending and deepening the thesis and not just repeating it?
- Map your essay: once you've drafted, write a quick summary of each paragraph in the margins to see where you've gone and if the organization makes logical sense.
- Ask yourself, what do I have to say first, and then second, and then next?
- Locate key arguments: block out the most important ideas and claims of the essay, and determine if they are situated in the appropriate places.

STRATEGY #14: Citing Sources—MLA or APA—and preparing “Works Cited” or “References” pages—use the documentation sections of your handbook.

APPENDIX C: A Thematic Table of Contents

[1] Language and Identity

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Eye's "Negative, 1996"
Jordan's "Nobody Mean More to Me than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan"
Kumar's "Language" from *Passport Photos*
Smith's "Broken Sentences: Women in prison tell their stories straight"
Smitherman's "Black English/Ebonics: What It Be Like?"

[2] Academic Writing: Skills and Standards, Resistances and Refusals

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[3] Gender and Sexuality

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Hawkins' "A Dumped Car"
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