

Unit 2: Sources Matter [Analysis & Rhetorical Précis]

Rhetoric matters because rhetoric—which demands engagement with the living—is the process through which texts are not only produced but also understood to matter.

– Rosa Eberly, “Rhetoric and the Anti-Logos Doughball” (296)

Like all writers, intellectuals need to say something new and say it well. But unlike many other writers, what intellectuals have to say is bound up inextricably with the books we are reading, the movies we are watching, the music we are listening to, and the ideas of the people we are talking with. Our creativity thus has its roots in the work of others—in response, reuse, and rewriting.

– Joseph Harris, *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts* (2)

In the above quote, Harris claims that “intellectuals” are always checking in with other writers, thinkers, and texts. We do this because *our* writing projects necessarily involve using and rewriting the words, ideas, and perspectives of others. In unit 1, we practiced writing critical summaries and explored our inquiry through the questions (and flashpoints) you found most interesting. The research questions generated at the end of unit 1 will guide you as you search for new sources, and the sources you find will also impact your research focus. That is, be open to shifting and nuancing your questions as you continue to research. Be prepared to review, refine, and narrow your research questions, ultimately choosing *one* specific and precise question.

This assignment, “Sources Matter,” is the next step toward preparing to compose a full synthesis essay in unit 3. Over the next 4 weeks, we will work together to...

- **create a more focused question** for your own research project
- **conduct research** that helps you begin to continue to shape and develop your focus
- **carefully choose the three secondary sources** that you deem the most interesting or worthwhile to your developing research project
- **analyze these sources** in relation to your developing research question
- **compose 2 products:** a source analysis essay and a rhetorical précis for the sources selected

Learning Outcomes:

- Evaluating the validity of sources in the context of research questions.
- Reading sources rhetorically.
- Practicing & producing analysis as a central component of researched writing.

I expect you to engage closely and critically with your sources—to use sources as evidence for the claims you make in the written products for this unit. All of this work will enable you, as Harris puts it, “to say something new and say it well” in your synthesis essay in unit 3.

The Written Products.

You will compose a **6-page essay** in order to demonstrate the careful reading and analysis of your selected sources and your growing awareness of the relationships between those sources and your research question. In the essay, you should make interpretive claims about your research question, sources, and your project. These claims should make evident your *new thinking* about the sources, about the research question, about your writing project.

You will also compose and submit a **rhetorical précis** for the three sources you have chosen.

Note: Of your three chosen sources, one must be a [scholarly source](#).

Guidelines.

30% of your analysis should focus on audience & exigence:

What is going on *right now* that makes this topic relevant? What assumptions about your topic currently circulate that you could effectively address? Who is affected by this topic? What are the implications for caring about (or not caring about) this issue?

10-20% of your analysis should focus on the relevancy of your sources:

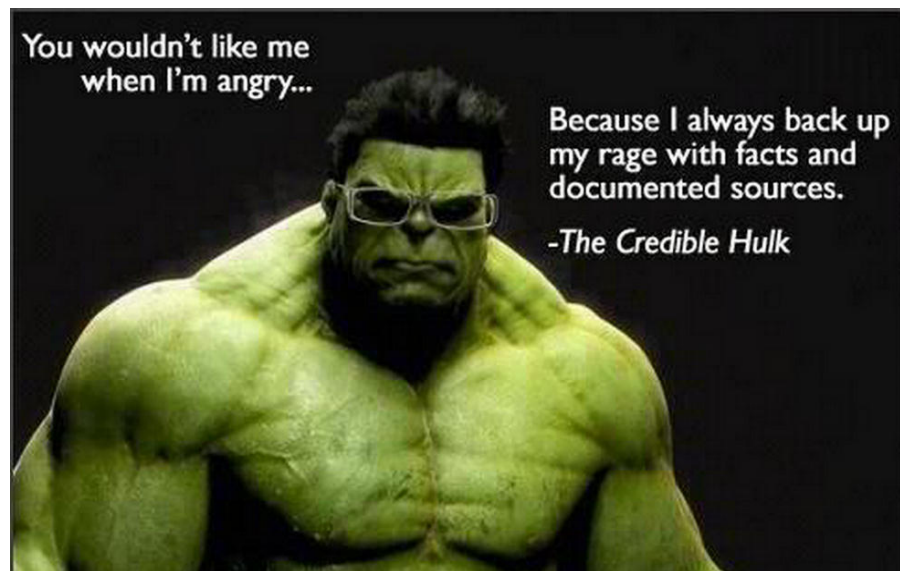
How do the sources connect with your research question? Do they offer a range of perspectives on the topic? Are those perspectives and ideas sufficiently engaging, interesting, provocative for you and your (future) readers? Are the arguments timely?

50-60% of your analysis should focus on the credibility of your sources:

What are the genres of the sources? Who are the authors? Are the arguments reasonable and thoughtful? What kinds of evidence do the writers use to support their arguments, and is it effective? Do these texts get picked up by other authors?

The Nitty Gritty.

The Unit 2 source analysis essay should be 6 pages, 12 pt. font, double-spaced, and formatted according to MLA guidelines. Please include a Works Cited page and appropriate title. The rhetorical précis should be 2 pages. All materials are due on **Wednesday, March 6th**.



"The Credible Hulk" ([weknowmemes.com](#))