Today’s Agenda: Why and How to Use Sources

1. Provide existing knowledge and data

2. Increase the quality, rigor, and integrity of your work

3. Model academic norms and rules
Simplified Research Process

SOURCE contributions

Research Question

Hunt and Gather

Analyze

YOUR contributions

Write and Share

Repeat

Your thesis or paper
Research: Explore, Share, Repeat...

Scholars share, because they trust they will get credit.
I. Sources provide existing knowledge and data

- Save time
- Improve accuracy
- Demonstrate your understanding of topic and state of knowledge
We might ask: Why do famines happen?

Victims, Great Famine of 1876–78 in India under British rule.
5.5 million people died.

Great Famine (Ireland), 1845–49.
Lost 20–25 percent of population.
What knowledge?

1. **Descriptive Data**: What have others studied? What happened and when? What context do we need?

2. **Explanations**: How have others answered my question? Do their explanations make sense?

3. **Opportunities**: What’s missing? What’s debated?
Why do famines happen?

1. **Descriptive Data**
   - Definitions
   - Locations, dates, deaths
   - Refugees and IDPs
   - Political dynamics
   - Natural disasters
   - Poverty levels
   - Regime types
   - Foreign aid

2. **History of Explanations:**
   
   “Famines are caused by **acts of God**”
   
   “Famines are caused by **poverty**”
   
   “Famines are caused by **policy decisions**”

3. **Opportunities:** What hasn’t been well described or explained?

   **Why do governments implement policies that cause famine?**
Why do governments implement policies that cause famine?

Psychopathic leaders?
State control of citizens?
International leverage?
Weak states?
Acts of war?
2. Sources can increase the quality, rigor, and integrity of your work

- Avoid “garbage in, garbage out”
- Transfer source’s reputation to yourself
- Raise your confidence
What are “high quality” sources?

1. Trusted and transparent methods
2. Tested theories
3. Reputable organizations, publishers, and researchers

Seek peer-reviewed, academic presses, and other trusted institutions

Be alert to bias!

Think critically, search deeply
Which is the “better” book?

Princeton University Press, 2015

- World’s leading authority on famine
- Other key scholars

Eating People Is Wrong and Other Essays on Famine Its Past and Its Future

Cormac Ó Gráda

Hunt and Gather

Analyze

Walker Books, 2011

- Scholar
  - Univ. London;
  - Hong Kong Univ.
  - Chinese archives

Mao’s Great Famine

The History of China’s Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–62

1958–62, 15–45 million died
3. Sources (and you) should model academic norms and rules

“Understand that you are accountable for your writing. You own what you write.”

—Admiral Richardson
CNO, U.S. Navy
“Now Hear This: Read. Write. Fight.”
June 2016
Look Smart

Accurate, thorough citations tell your readers:

- You are a **professional**
- You **respect** your readers
- Your own work most likely can be **trusted**
- They can **confidently continue** where you left off
Be Smart—protect yourself

Don’t be a headline

US Army War College master’s
Col. US Army (ret.)
U.S. Senator John Walsh

No statute of limitations

Plagiarized master’s final paper
Former U.S. Senator John Walsh
Former National Guard leader
Former master’s degree
Be Smart—know the core principles

Everything—words, ideas, data, definitions, theories, and images—in academic papers is assumed to be yours, unless:

➢ You **SIGNAL** that it belongs to someone else:

  “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

  Franklin D. Roosevelt
  1933 inaugural address

➢ The information is **COMMON KNOWLEDGE** and written in your own words:

  Fear can be a very powerful emotion that paralyzes some people and causes dangerous overreactions in others.

  Sandra Leavitt
Be Smart—follow norms and rules

- **Quote and cite** if you borrow *more than 5 words exactly* in a unique sequence:

  “Quote and cite with enough accuracy to bring tears to a scholar’s eyes” (John Locke, 2017).

- **Paraphrase or summarize, and cite:**

  Rewrite the original in your own words and writing style

  aka “The Uni-bomber”
When don’t you need to cite?

- False: I didn’t know the rules.
- False: I ran out of time.
- True: I copied and pasted my idea from my NPS class paper into my thesis.
- False: I forgot where the information came from.
- False: I changed every 5th word in their sentence; isn’t that enough?
- True: Anyone could have put those same words together, just as I did.
- False: It wasn’t intentional, so it’s not plagiarism.
- False: It’s “only hair,” for goodness sake!
We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit.

Aristotle
(paraphrased)