

What's the conversation? What do they say?

This paper is a focused research assignment on finding and describing the scholarly conversation about a specific topic. The process of finding a scholarly conversation is called *discovery*.

Each section has been assigned one of six topics. Everyone in the section does the same topic. You will all become experts on your section's topic. You should work together if you would like.

Each fellow is responsible for the topic in your section and meets only with those section students for these paper meetings. You meet with the other fellow in your section after the first and second drafts. The sequence for revisions is the same as for paper 1: draft 1 gets read by a fellow and your faculty section leader; draft 2 is read by a different fellow. You discuss the final version with your faculty section leader in the assessment meeting.

In this paper you find a conversation among scholars, sometimes also journalists or public intellectuals, and present that conversation to us, your readers. You are not making arguments, nor, generally, evaluating the scholars' work in detail. Rather, you are seeking to discover that a conversation among scholars is out there and you want to introduce us to the conversation and its participants. This paper is a small version of what is often called a literature review at the beginning of a larger research project. A shorthand version of this kind of work is sometimes called an annotated bibliography. This paper is neither of those, but rather something in between. In your process of discovery, you will research the topic (in databases), find at least eight or so sources that engage with the topic in some way (by powerskimming, reading quickly the abstracts, intros, conclusions), then present some—three or four—of those sources to your readers (by summarizing the arguments, based on a closer reading, and making connections).

You will search in some specific library databases and you will use Zotero to save your sources, tag them with keywords that seem to you to name aspects of the scholarly conversation you find, and take notes on them. *Write as you read*. This is key. Be descriptive in your notes in Zotero. Zotero is a powerful organizing tool for research and writing in the academy. Learn it and use it now and you will be less stressed with research projects throughout your time at Davidson. (There are other similar tools, but this one is great and Davidson supports it.)

Start here:

- [Zotero: Get Organized and Spend Less Time on the Dark Side of Research](#) (a one minute video that shows off the cool features of Zotero and helps to answer the question: why should I download this?)
- [Zotero guide](#) (includes step-by-step guidance on set-up, adding sources, and citing sources)
- [Zotero.org](#) (there are two parts to install – the Zotero stand-alone piece that lives on your desktop and the browser connector)

If you have questions or problems with the install process, the librarians are certainly happy to help you troubleshoot if you email them at [library@davidson.edu](mailto:library@ davidson.edu) or make an appointment through their [Ask Us page](#).

As you begin your discovery process, be sure to use several databases hosted by the library.

- worldcat search
- JSTOR
- Proquest
- Academic Search Complete
- and some discipline-specific or subject-specific databases

On the open web will generally not yield useful results for many kinds of scholarly searches, but try

- google scholar

for citation tracing and to get a sense of influence;

and finally, last of all, try a regular

- google search

Google scholar is a useful tool to trace citations. This tool will let you see what one author is cited by other authors. In lots of cases google scholar presents some version of a scholarly conversation. (But the algorithm! True.)

From your notes in Zotero you can then step back a bit and write, first introducing us to *the problem* (the *difficulty*) and *the conversation* (what *they say*), before presenting some of the key participants, their interests and claims in some detail. Though you will *not* make an argument in this paper, you can see how after surveying the conversation, what “they say,” you and your readers would be interested in what you think, the “I say” part of scholarship in the humanities. That move happens not here, but in paper 3 and then again in your research paper.

So, this paper is about the intellectual acts of *discovering*, *representing*, and *connecting* the ideas and claims of others in a specific topical context.

We can imagine you will find (*discover*) eight or so sources for each of these topics. Engage with three or four these scholarly conversation partners in your paper. You do this by *representing* their work (describe, summarize, explain) and *connecting* their ideas and claims—position, put in a chronological structure if necessary, explain their relationships to each other. They are likely not actually responding to each other directly and many will be working across time and space, but you can find a conversation nonetheless. (You did something similar to this in paper 1 by reading one author from the perspective of another. And in your posts for Prof. Green’s class on 29 October. Those connections are a kind of conversation.) Seek out and explain *how* the scholars address the problem, puzzle, or conflict they are working on in the artistic, creative, philosophical, ethical, historical, performative, etc. context and find their claims, their arguments, the crux of their paper. Keep it tight. Keep it brief.

Topics for your papers:

Professor Robb’s section:

What is the scholarly conversation around Harry Frankfurt’s essay *On Bullshit*? Keywords

Frankfurt and *bullshit* will narrow the search quickly.

Professor Fache's section:

Responses to Beyoncé's *Lemonade*.

What is the scholarly conversation around Beyoncé's *Lemonade* and her take on historical, cultural, and familial legacy (-ies), Black women's convergent history(-ies) and stories and representation? How do scholars engage with the type and genre of intermedial artwork Beyoncé produces?

This topic will require close attention to the differences between reviews, discussions among journalists and critics, and *scholarly work* by (ethno-)musicologists, historians, cultural studies, Africana studies, gender and sexuality scholars and others. There may be several different related conversations and you may need to focus on just one or two.

Professor Green's section:

What is the scholarly conversation around the politics of representation in Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight, Los Angeles*?

This topic will require close attention to the differences between reviews, discussions among journalists and critics, and *scholarly work* by theatre scholars, cultural studies, Africana studies, literary, and performance studies scholars, and others. Choose just one or two conversations.

Professor Tamura's section:

What is the scholarly conversation around Suheir Hammad's poetry and creative writing?

This topic will require close attention to the differences between reviews, discussions among journalists and critics, and *scholarly work* by cultural studies, literary, and performance studies scholars, Arab and Arab-American studies scholars, and others. Choose just one or two conversations.

Professor Luis's section:

What is the scholarly conversation around archives and colonialism?

How do we know what we know (or what we think we know) about the past? Scholars continuously debate what we can and can't know from historical documents, eyewitnesses, newspapers, material objects, maps, performances, etc. Colonial power dynamics inevitably shape the kinds of narratives that these documents provide and produce in contemporary scholarship. Begin searching with [Saidiya Hartman's article](#), the [Safiya Umoja Noble article](#) from Unit 4.1, and the [Diana Taylor excerpt](#) from Unit 4.2, and expand your searching from there. Consider using and combining search terms like "archives," "colonialism," "silences," "erasure," and so on, as a starting point, also with the names of these scholars. Perhaps, you'll come across an article by Zeb Tortorici, who radically rereads sexuality in colonial archives. What is the scholarly conversation around how do scholars like Tortorici confront the limitations of what we can and can't know about the past? Be open to where in the world and where in the past your search takes you!

Professor Denham's section

What is the scholarly conversation around Anna Akhmatova's poem "Requiem"? There will be several, choose only one. Or two if you're really excited about this project! Pay attention to various kinds of readings and readers, since the conversations will flow among certain readerly

interests: poetic, aesthetic, historical, biographical, or ideological, for example. Be sure to read the two translations and the glossary in the [Tamura readings folder](#).

An excellent conversation paper:

- discovers, represents, and connects participants in a scholarly conversation about an idea or problem or complex of ideas that matter for them and for readers;
- helps your reader understand what that conversation is and why it matters to the participants;
- presents and describes the work of three or four different scholars or critics in the context of a problem or question that matters for them and their readers;
- includes in your bibliography at least eight citations of scholars or critics who are in the conversation you present, even though your focus on only three or four;
- supports the summaries of those scholars claims and arguments with adequate textual evidence and a few key quotations from their work; integrates those quotations seamlessly into the summary;
- illuminates your process of discovery for the reader;
- presents your readings with clarity and grace, and thus avoids verbal clutter, clichés, typos, awkward syntax, and overly colloquial phrases;
- acknowledges the work and ideas of others; (if you collaborated with other Humesters, acknowledge their support with thanks in a footnote)
- follows perfectly the notes-bibliography style of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for punctuation and citation; (You should be able to find the link in our syllabus to the Chicago notes and bibliography style section in your sleep!)
- has a cover page with a title and a bibliography (works cited) page; the pages are numbered;
- is about 1000 words long (not including the bibliography), that is, about four pages, double spaced, in twelve-point Times New Roman font;
- is delivered on time to your teachers, fellows, and peer review partners in the proper drive folder, with the correct filename protocol.

Timeline

- paper 2 draft 1 due
 - Sunday 8 November 11pm
- one-on-one meetings with your section's fellow A
 - Monday 9 November – Thursday 12 November
- one-on-one meetings with your section faculty member
 - week of 9 November, any time *after* your fellow A meeting
- paper 2 draft 2 due
 - Sunday 15 November 11pm
- one-on-one meetings with your section's fellow B
 - Monday 16 November – Friday 20 November
- Paper 2 final version due
 - Sunday 22 November 11pm
- one-on-one assessment meetings with your section's faculty leader
 - week of 30 November – 4 December