

1 Finding Literature

Offline Resources

If you really don't know where to start, have a look at textbooks within a given field, or alternatively, subject-specific anthologies and encyclopaedias. (E.g., search the library catalogue for introduction development economics or introduction comparative politics).

Also, ask experts (e.g., former or current professors)! Suggestions from others are often the most efficient way to get started.

Online Resources

philpapers.org	Large database for philosophy papers, sorted by category
plato.stanford.edu	Highly respected philosophy encyclopaedia, in-depth
iep.utm.edu	Smaller, less comprehensive than SEP, but still useful
ssrn.org	Large database for law/economics papers, often working papers too
academia.edu	Networking site for academics (humanities), often working papers too
econpapers.repec.org	Large database for economics papers, often working papers
nber.org	Economics working papers sponsored by NBER
scholar.google.com	Search results are mixed; but useful for "Cited by" function
books.google.com	Often has free scans of older books which are out of copyright

Do *not* trust the Wikipedia; although sometimes it can give you useful links to respectable literature.

Literature Search Process

Normally, you will quickly find much literature than you can read. In that case, you need to be selective on what you read. You could follow this strategy:

1. *Make initial list.* Use a reading list, overview article, famous paper, book (etc.) as a starting point to create an initial list of potential readings.
2. *Prioritize.* Start with books/articles which (i) are from more famous authors, (ii) more recent, (iii) published in more prestigious journals/presses, (iv) had more of an impact (e.g., measured by Google Scholar citations).
3. *Skim.* Don't invest too much time in your first survey. Read the abstract, the content list, and the introductory section or chapter. Determine whether the paper is relevant to you.
4. *Find further literature.* Search papers you have read for references which seem interesting or relevant. Add them on to your list, and go back to step 2.
5. *Find Connections.* Take special care to find connections between readings—who is reacting to whom? Is there a back-and-forth between important authors? and so on.
6. *Narrow.* Once you have a sense for what readings there are, narrow it down to a shortlist of the ones you think are most important/relevant/interesting.
7. *Take Notes.* Read the readings on the shortlist (care)fully; take notes (see below).

Steps 1-7 are an ongoing process. Don't be afraid to drop/add literature at later points.

Search Terms & Other Tips

If you want an overview on a given topic, search for syllabi or reading lists (e.g., search "deliberative democracy" syllabus in Google).

When searching online, or in databases, remember to put multi-word key phrases in quotation marks (search “victim rights” rather than `victim rights`).

Non-Academic Sources

Be careful with non-academic sources—e.g., online articles, news reports, blog posts, and so on. Always consider whether they can be trusted.

If you take statistical data (etc.) from a news source, see whether you can track down the original source.

2 Analysing Literature

Taking Notes

One important task is to take good notes. This can be done in many forms (within the margins of the paper, in a separate document, etc.). *How many* notes you take will also differ—depending on how important the paper is for your research.

Taking notes has important advantages: (i) it focusses your reading, (ii) it requires you to re-think the reading for yourself, and (iii) it allows you faster access if you need to go back to a text.

Another good practice can be to write a short “summary & reaction” for each text after you’ve read it.

The Principle of Charity

An important principle in working with literature is that you should apply the *principle of charity*. According to this principle, you should reconstruct the argument of someone else in the strongest possible form.

One upshot of this principle is that, unless you have very convincing evidence to the contrary, you should not accuse authors of being vague or contradictory. If you think that an author is vague or

contradictory, you should first try to see how the relevant vagueness or (apparent) contradiction can be resolved.

Interacting with Secondary Literature

There are several ways how you can interact with secondary literature (and often, you will interact in several ways):

- *Use for factual information or summary.* You use an author for an empirical claim or the summary of a theory.
- *Interpret.* Especially with famous or difficult authors, you might want to offer your own interpretation on the basis of close textual exegesis.
- *Endorse.* You think that an author is convincing in some respect. You should always ask *why* they are convincing, however, and connect it to your own argument.
- *Take slogan or formulation.* This shouldn’t be done too often, but sometimes you might think that an author has a particularly succinct or pungent way of putting a point.
- *Use for structuring debate.* Sometimes, you might like how an author outlines a problem, without necessarily agreeing with them.
- *Compare.* An author might have a similar argument, or achieve at a similar conclusion, as you do or some other author.
- *Fill in gaps.* You might agree with an author, but think that there are gaps in their argument; you could then fill them in.
- *Apply/expand.* The author might have worked on a narrow question; you outline how their view could be applied to a new topic they had not considered.
- *Modify/fix.* You might think that an author is almost right, but overlooked something. You could then consider how the author’s argument could be “fixed”.
- *Refute.* Perhaps there is no way to fix an author’s argument; then you should show how it is wrong.

3 Working with Literature

Citing & Paraphrasing

If you *cite* a work—i.e., take content one-to-one from it—it needs to be put in quotation marks, and properly referenced (with page number, where available). There are *no* exceptions to this rule. Longer quotations should be set apart from the text.

Paraphrasing means that you summarise someone else’s work, but do so in your own words. In this case, you *must* also reference that author’s work. You should always be clear where your ideas are your own, and where they come from someone else. Example:

Similarly, Stephanie Collins has suggested that we sometimes have a duty to collectivize—to form a group—if we do not currently do (Collins 2013). For example, she argues, if we come by a drowning child and need to form a group to save the child, then we ought to form a group.

It is *not* enough for a paraphrase to change a few words around, but otherwise keep the sentence structure/wording of the original (see the plagiarism example below!). You must summarise the original entirely in your own words.

Paraphrasing is different from merely agreeing with another author, or being inspired by their general argument. When in doubt, however, err on the side of caution. Always be intellectually honest. For example, you could write the following in footnotes:

In this paragraph, I rely on some claims made in ...
See also ..., from which I take the central idea.
The inspiration for the following argument comes from ...

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is not acceptable in any form, and will have severe consequences for you (especially within U.Va.’s honor system). If you have any doubts about your usage of sources, talk to me or your supervisor.

The following is a case of plagiarism and would get you into SEVERE trouble, even if it was only in a single passage.

Student writing	Source
Clearly, the corporation cannot check off a box on a ballot, occupy a seat in a jury box, or load and fire a weapon.	The corporation cannot, as a result of the kind of being it is, check off a box on a ballot, or occupy a seat in a jury box, or load and fire a weapon.
We also do not expect the corporation to vote, or to perform jury or military service.	It is because of these incapacities that we do not expect the corporation to vote, or to perform jury or military service.
But we have such expectations because corporations are not physically capable to do so, not that they should or should not do so.	Our expectations then follow from, rather than proceed independently of, the corporation’s ontological or metaphysical status.

4 Citing Literature

You need some system to cite literature. There are different citation styles you might have heard of—e.g., APA, Chicago, MLA. In general, there are no “better” or “worse” styles, and you can deviate from existing styles.

The main rule you should always respect is that your citation style should be *consistent, transparent, and provide all relevant information*.

Main Styles

There are three main styles which can be found in the Humanities:

1. Author and date in parentheses within the text, with 'Works Cited' at the end. (Some citation styles do not give the year.)

Within text:

Especially where moral emergencies are concerned, we might be permitted to infringe someone's rights (Thomson 1990, 24).

(Detail given in 'Sources' section at the end.)

2. Abbreviated titles in footnotes, with 'Works Cited' at the end.

Within text:

Especially where moral emergencies are concerned, we might be permitted to infringe someone's rights.¹⁷

In footnote:

17. Thomson, *Realm of Rights*, 24.

(Detail given in 'Sources' section at the end.)

3. Full titles in footnotes, often without 'Works Cited' at the end.

Within text:

Especially where moral emergencies are concerned, we might be permitted to infringe someone's rights.¹⁷

First footnote in which Thomson is cited:

17. Judith Jarvis Thomson, *The Realm of Rights* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1990), 24.

Footnotes afterwards:

23. Thomson, *Realm of Rights*, 24.

Specifics

Short Titles

If you use styles 2 or 3, you need to shorten titles in a reasonable way. If a work you cite has an overly long title, break it down into something shorter but recognisable.

Example. Andreas Georg Scherer and Guido Palazzo, "The New Political Role of Business in a Globalized World: A Review of a New Perspective on CSR and Its Implications for the Firm, Governance, and Democracy"

→ Scherer/Palazzo, "The New Political Role of Business"

Works Cited Section

One way to format your "Works Cited" section is as follows:

Book	Thomson, Judith Jarvis. 1990. <i>The Realm of Rights</i> . Harvard: Harvard University Press.
Edited Book	Landemore, H�el�ene, and Jon Elster (eds.). 2012. <i>Collective Wisdom: Principles and Mechanisms</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Article	Owens, David. 2011. "The Possibility of Consent". <i>Ratio</i> 24 (4): 402-421.
Article in edited volume	Landemore, H�el�ene. 2012. "Democratic Reason: The Mechanisms of Collective Intelligence in Politics." In <i>Collective Wisdom: Principles and Mechanisms</i> , edited by H�el�ene Landemore and Jon Elster, 251-89. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Website	Christiano, Thomas. 2013. "Authority". <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> , URL: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/authority/ (last accessed October 7, 2015).

Special Cases

If you are citing a source without a clear date, put “n.d.” (for “no date”) or “ms” (for “manuscript”)—Example:

The effects of growth on democracy are subject to debate (Smith ms).

If you are citing a source without a clear author, use the institution which has issued the relevant source instead—Example:

UNFPA. 1993. “Population Growth and Economic Development: Report on the Consultative Meeting of Economists Convened by the United Nations Population Fund, 28–29 September, New York.” URL: <http://www.un.org/popin/unfpa/pubs/econmeet/> (last accessed October 7, 2015).

Quibbling

Some citation styles use “p.” and “ibid.” (you don’t have to use them), but they are often misused (and I’m annoyed about it when people do). Here’s how to do it right.

Referring to Individual Pages

Note that the abbreviation “p.” is used for “page” (in the singular) and “pp.” for “pages” (in the plural) in some citation styles. Some citation styles use “p.” for both “page” and “pages”. You do not need to use “p.” at all, if you do not wish to.

There needs to be a blank space between “p.” and page number.

Similarly, “f.” is sometimes used for “following page” (in the singular) and “ff.” for “following pages” (in the plural). These follow *immediately* after the cited page number.

Right	Wrong
p. 41	pp. 431
pp. 46–53 (<i>or</i> : p. 46–53)	p.173
pp. 37f. (<i>if 37–38 are meant</i>)	pp. 37f. (<i>if 37–40 are meant</i>)
pp. 37ff. (<i>if 37–40 are meant</i>)	pp. 88 f.

Ibidem

“Ibid.” is an abbreviation of “ibidem” (“in the same place”), and used in some citation styles. As it is an abbreviation, it needs a period at the end. Also, note that “ibid.” abbreviates the title of the work you cite, and so normally there needs to be the standard separating comma if you also cite a page number.

Right	Wrong
Ibid.	Ibid
Ibid., p. 37	Ibid. p. 37

Footnotes

A footnote forms a complete sentence. For that reason, it needs to end with a period, even if only a single citation is given.

Right (in footnote)	Wrong (in footnote)
For a critical survey, see Simmons 2005.	For a critical survey, see Simmons 2005
Ibid., p. 37.	Ibid., p. 37

Normally a footnote should follow after a full sentence, *immediately* (without a blank space) after the period ending the sentence.

Right	Wrong
This has been argued by several authors. ⁴¹	This ⁴¹ has been argued by several authors.
	This has been argued by several authors. ⁴¹