

# Sources, Citations, Quotations, Book Reviews, Your Topic, and Your Background

Edward Morey, Rough working draft January 12, 2010

## Your sources:

You read a book or article by Joe Blow and Joe says on page 10 that the Guber River is trashed. You reference Joe Blow to substantiate your statement that the Guber River is trashed.

### **not**

Unless Joe is some noted expert on pollution levels in that river, Joe is not an authority. Try and reference the basic scientific studies.

There are many things in books and articles that are opinions or perceptions, but presented as if they are facts – maybe they are. Just because Rush Limbaugh or Paul Krugman says something does not make it true. Try and cite the original source, or something close to it.

If Rush says Hillary had an affair with the Governor of NY, you can report that as something Rush said. If your reader does not know Rush, you might add some clarifying information such as “Rush Limbaugh, a conservative bombastic radio host, said, ‘ ...’”

In general your research should be based on academic literature, academic journals, government reports, magazines and books. Your reference list should not be only a bunch of web pages. The web is a great place and it is ok to use it for research, but it should not be all of your “research”.

When you cite a web page, you need to identify the author of the page (the individual, the organization, the firm, the government, etc.) and the reader should get some sense of why the information cited is not just from some kook – you should not be citing, for example, Fred Goober’s blog on who will be the next pope, unless, of course, Fred is a well-known expert on Vatican politics and then only if you are writing about Vatican politics. I have a friend who is an economist and an expert on how Popes are selected.

Most journal articles are available online from the CU library. Once you get to a journal’s web page, one can typically search by key words over all issues of the journal. Journals at CU are accessed through, <http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/research/ejournalfinder.htm> . To open or download an article, you need to connect through the CU network.

Once you find an article of interest, it is possible to find the articles that cite the article. This is called a reverse citation search. This is an easy way to find the most recent research articles on a topic.

It is OK to use Google or Wikipedia, but as a place to start your research, not end it. For example a search of “suicide ethics” would have a lot of hits.

Do you know about Google Scholar? Check it out

If you start with a respected lay source (like the NY Times), you will want to go to their sources – the research and researchers the articles mentions. It is easy to search the NY Times online.

Web pages that are not produced by experts, government agencies, or major organizations (WWF, Red Cross, etc.) should typically be ignored. If you reference something like the WWF, make clear the organization’s agenda.

Distinguish between facts and research, and the opinions of interested parties. Interested parties will often make shit up or present stuff in a misleading way. For example imagine you don’t want cockfighting banned in Louisiana. So, want to impress your reader with how much the economy will suffer if it is banned. You report that “poultry is a 2 billion dollar industry in LA” – a true statement - hoping your reader will think 2 billion will be lost if cockfighting is banned. It won’t: most poultry production in LA has nothing to do with cockfighting. If you are discussing a source with a fact presented in a misleading way, note that it is misleading. In your arguments do not use facts, out of context, to mislead your readers.

A good working assumption is that much of what is on the web are opinions not facts or conclusions based on research. And most of these opinions are being expressed by non-experts with an agenda. You want to learn about a topic from neutral parties that have thought long and hard about the topic, and who have done extensive research on the topic, not from a bunch of uniformed fools, or from people whose job is to spin the facts to their employer’s advantage.

Ideally your paper will provide the evidence so the reader can decide for himself whether increased dopamine increases happiness. Don’t just say that it does, let the reader see the evidence, or at least give them quick access to the evidence.

Sometimes it is appropriate to cite a non-expert simply because they have influence.

For example you might quote the former President on his view of the medical procedure known as partial-birth abortion, not because he is a medical expert, but because his actions contributed to its ban. He is a person of influence on the topic. On the other hand, quoting me on whether the procedure is medically safe would not be informative to your reader.

## How to cite and reference?

Consider the following: You want to report that 47% of all gubers like gomers. Your source is Morey, E.R. (2007), “Everything you wanted to know about Gubers and Gomers,” *Journal of Stupid Economics* (27): 12-28.

In the essay you would write “Forty-seven percent of all gubers like gomers (Morey, 2007).” Or you would write, “Forty-seven percent of all gubers like gomers (Morey, 2007, p.14).”

Look at my research papers on my web page and copy one of the reference styles. The following is an example of one style.

### References

- [Baumol & Oates, 1988] Baumol, W.J., & Oates, W.E. 1988. *Theory of Environmental Policy*. London: Cambridge University Press Inc.
- [Buchanan & Stubblebine, 1962] Buchanan, J.M., & Stubblebine, W.C. 1962. Externality. *Economica*, 29, 371-384.
- [Kahn, 1990] Kahn, J.R. 1990. *The Economic Approach to Environmental and Natural Resources*. Second edn. New York: The Dryden Press.
- [Kolsted, 2000] Kolsted, C.D. 2000. *Environmental Economics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [Mishan, 1969] Mishan, E.J. 1969. The relationship between joint products, collective goods and external effects. *Journal of Political Economy*, 77, 329-40.

Put hot links in your paper when you are referencing or discussion something on the web; that way, the reader can click and see for herself. Another way to expand your paper without making it longer is to have an appendix. You could then add hotlinks in the text to materials in the appendix.

Every webpage you use has to be referenced.

When you put a hot link in your paper, give the link an informative name if the link itself is not informative. For example, your reader should not see something like the following (<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdf?vid=3&hid=12&sid=3424a8fb-3c30-4faf-adb1-963cebd6a0b4%40sessionmgr2>). Rather give the link a “name” that includes the author or organization and the year, and then when one clicks on that link, one goes to the above address.

## Quotations:

Quotations should be delimited by quotation marks unless the quote is long; in which case the quote can be presented in a text block (some indenting to set it off) with a different font.

If someone else wrote the sentences you are writing, the quotation has to be identified as a quotation and referenced.

## Write about something you know something about:

If you want to write your essay on some aspect of, for example, international trade, consider abandoning this idea unless you have taken an economics international-trade course – ditto for other economic fields. Write about something where you know the basics of the economic theory. Or said another way, I will grade your essay starting with the assumption that you know at least as much about the topic as good student would learn in the appropriate field course.

## If you are critiquing a book from the perspective of economics or moral philosophy:

The author should have standing in their field, not just the kind of expert you see on Dr. Phil or the Fox Network. Books by well-respected academics that are written for the educated general public are a good bet. This does not mean the author has to be a good economist – they have to be knowledgeable and respected at what they do (philosophy, biology, ethics, a type of religion). An exception to this rule are those with power; their views are important even if they know knowing about what they control. If you are critiquing an economics book, the author should be a well-respected economist.

If you do critique a book, tell us whether you recommend it, or not, for this class, and why. That said, finding good stuff for the class is better than saying “I read x, and I would recommend it to no one.” Recommending a book does not mean you agree with everything in it.

A place to start is by reading other reviews of the book. Look for review in places like the New York Times, the Washington Post, The New Yorker, The London Times literary supplement, etc. Just Google the title and a bunch of review should come up.