

# Research Project Part One: Contexts

Two major assignments comprise the research project: Part One: Contexts (CP) and Part Two: Advocacy (AP). This first assignment, the CP, asks you to **(1) research and deploy various types of sources to describe, contextualize, and analyze a significant contemporary political/social/cultural problem; (2) summarize and evaluate conversations and debates happening between credible scholars, thinkers, and organizations about your topic.**

Together, the actions above comprise expository writing—the guiding method of this project—which means simply that with this first composition you are attempting to describe your project's central problem and explain its relevance by contextualizing it.

## Why “contexts”?

An informed, authoritative writer understands their topic in context. *Context can be historical.*

**Some questions that might help to direct your research include:**

**What** harm does the problem cause to individuals, communities, institutions, and/or ecologies?

**Why** does the problem exist? When and how did it develop? Do any individuals, communities, or institutions benefit from it?

**Who** is pay attention to and writing or speaking about the problem among journalists, politicians, scholars, other researchers, activists, governmental agencies, and/or industries?

Analyzing the past means grappling not simply with events, but with the issues and concerns of the time. It's not enough to read a contemporary account of the past; we must also look at the work produced in the past—its political speeches, court decisions, and media. Therefore, one goal of this assignment is to learn about the historical contexts of your problem: the laws, legal precedents, and institutional practices that underlie its current form, and economic, social, political, and/or environmental trends that have shaped its development.

*Context can also be rhetorical.* We want to present the stakes that a given community has in the topic of our research, but we also want to interrogate the way those stakes get articulated by journalists, researchers, and politicians. Even within “scholarly writing,” you should become aware of how various communities (called disciplines) frame the same topic quite differently from one another. Identifying these relevant communities of thinkers and writers, analyzing their perspectives, and bringing their views together will help you gain a comprehensive understanding of your problem, and the authority that understanding entails.

As you research for your CP, you will concurrently develop a **Working Annotated Bibliography** for your entire project that involves summarizing and analyzing individual sources (your instructor will provide you with separate instructions for this portion of the assignment).

By the time you complete the CP, you should be able to:

- Develop effective research note-taking habits through source annotations.
- Practice information literacy in the research process by locating and critically evaluating relevant and credible evidence from a variety of sources and genres.
- Understand research as a part of the larger composition process of prewriting, drafting, and revision.
- Collaborate with fellow researchers to give and receive constructive feedback on the work in progress.
- Plan, draft and revise an essay with organization and style appropriate for addressing a general academic audience.
- Arrange and integrate evidence—primary-source, secondary-source, and multimodal—intentionally, with particular attention to its argumentative purpose and rhetorical effect.
- Integrate and cite evidence in a transparent and ethical manner, using a standard citation system. Learn how and why to avoid plagiarism and patch-writing.

### **Assignment Requirements**

**Process work** is required to be eligible to submit a final draft for a grade. This may include but is not limited to topic development exercises, a proposal or prospectus, and multiple essay drafts. Late or incomplete process work may result in a grade penalty on the final draft.

The contextualizing in the CP must be supported by a broad and varied selection of **research**, including primary and secondary sources, scholarship, journalism, policy papers, reports, case law, and other sources as appropriate for your topic. While both you and your instructor will work to determine an appropriate scope and variety of research for your essay, at a minimum it should draw evidence from **6-8 sources, including TWO scholars in conversation**. *Keep in mind that the total number of sources for the entire project's bibliography is 15-20 sources.*

Your final submission for Part One should be a **1500-2000 word [multimodal](#) composition**. It should be formatted in [MLA style](#), with parenthetical citations, a Works Cited page, and a descriptive academic title.