

Against the Blind Fetishization of Peer Review

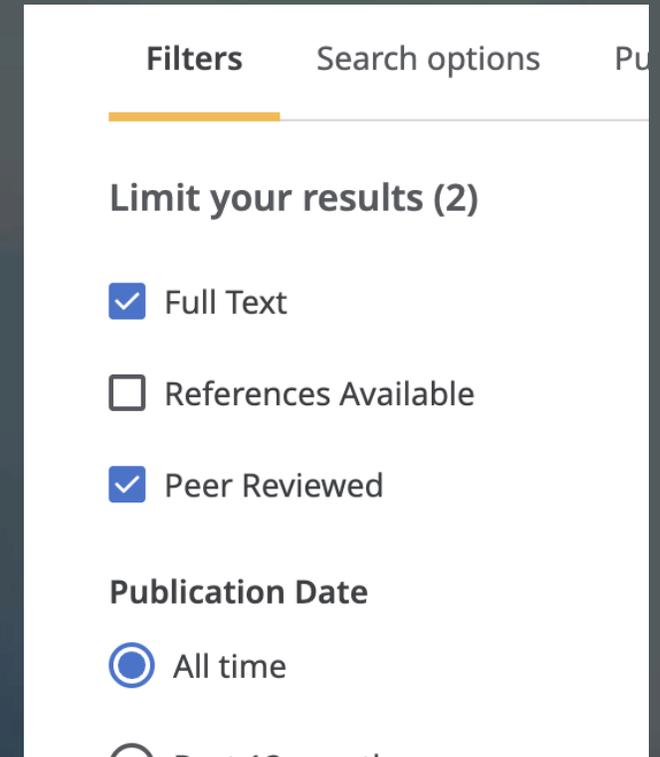
Rethinking How We Teach Authority to Community College Students

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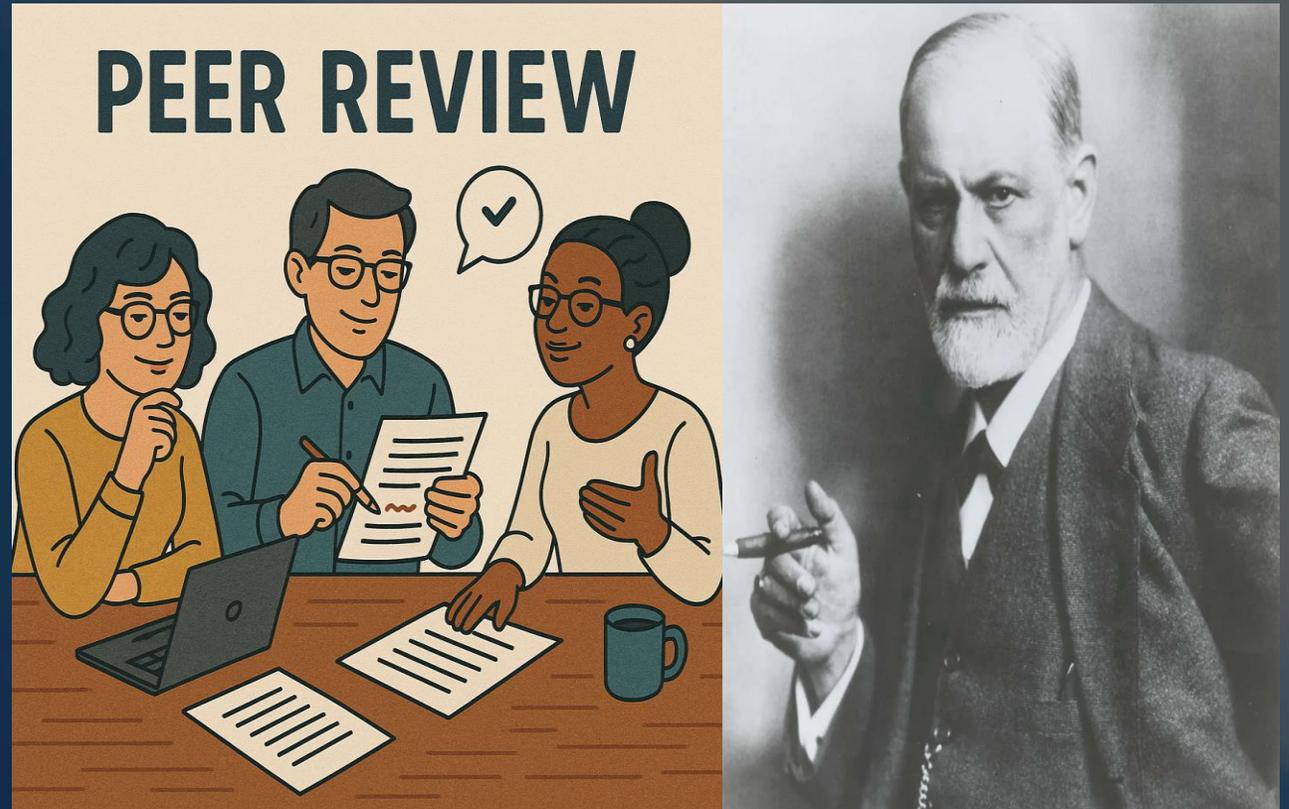


- Secondary source materials to be used for textual evidence
- Find **FOUR** scholarly journal articles through the ELAC Library databases. **ALL FOUR** of these sources should be from **THE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPY**.
- Students are required to incorporate **ONE** “direct quote” of 3-4 lines per article within the research essay.
- Make sure your scholarly journal sources (articles) are at least 15 pages in length and send me these sources via email as PDF attachments in a single email (or two).
- To be clear, download these sources to your hard drive, upload the four sources in a single email (two emails at the most) and send to _____. These sources should be sent to me when the Annotated Bibliography is due.
- **IMPORTANT NOTE: Not ALL sources found on a database are acceptable for this assignment. Please pay close attention during class and at the Library Orientation.**

Think-pair-vent: Have you ever felt frustrated by professors' prompts, specifically their source requirements? Are you ever forced to show students sources or database tools that you know they're going to struggle with?

Peer-review as Fetish Object

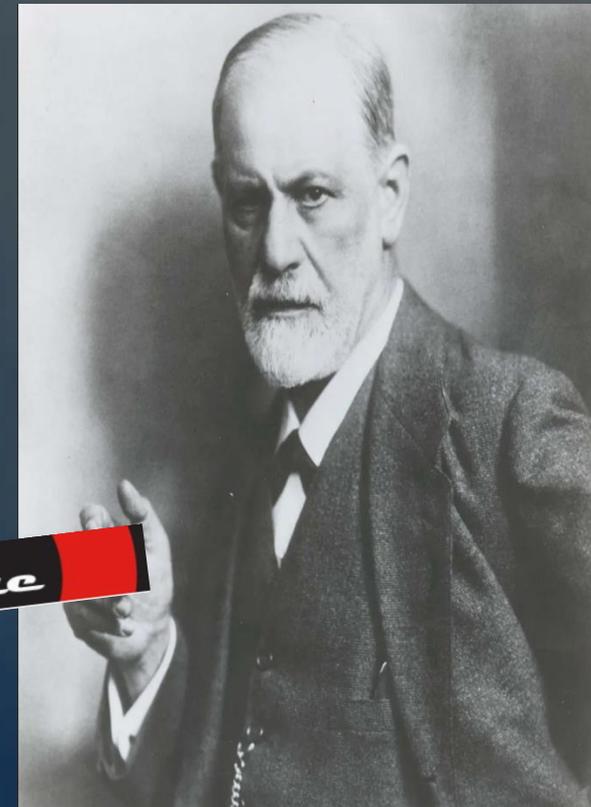
In the classic psychoanalytic formulation, the fetish operates as a magical talisman, a compensatory psychic mechanism through which a certain trauma or lack is managed and the fetishist is granted a certain power and authority.



Peer-reviewed journal articles act as a fetish object, a way to alleviate a deeper anxiety that many community college faculty feel about, crudely put, not being enough.



The Journal of
Popular Culture



Behind the fetishization of peer review is the narrative that community college faculty and students must do this to measure up to our university peers. If finding, reading, and integrating scholarly journal articles is truly the magical key to college transfer and research readiness, why aren't we engaging students better?

Where does this anxiety about community college students using peer-reviewed articles come from?

Why should students use peer-reviewed articles? Where is the scholarly discourse that researches and interrogates where this lore comes from?

- "If you've ever attended an intro session at your school's library, you've listened to the librarians lower their voice and speak in a reverential tone about peer review: the touchstone that separates rigorous research from mere opinion, hearsay, and the untutored opinions of your know-it-all roommate."

From the chapter "Show Me the Evidence: Why Scholarly Sources are Better than Promotional Materials, Newsletters, and Random Tweets" by Michael Caulfield and Sam Wineburg, *Verified: How to Think Straight, Get Duped Less, and Make Better Decisions About What to Believe Online*.

We are doing our best to teach students how to use filters in databases and other ancillary tips.

Again, I've felt like a glorified box checker!



Filters Search options Publications

Limit your results (2)

- Full Text
- References Available
- Peer Reviewed

Publication Date

- All time

“Beyond Peer-Reviewed Articles: Using Blogs to Enrich Students’ Understanding of Scholarly Work” by Anne-Marie Deitering and Kaye Gronemyer

“While knowing how to use library-provided resources to find peer-reviewed articles is an important skill for students to master, they can successfully complete this task without ever understanding how this skill might relate to anything they will need to do outside the classroom in their personal or professional lives.”

“When we require students to read and analyze these sources without explicitly addressing the intellectual assumptions that govern what and how material comes to be published in this literature, we are asking them to grapple with multiple and often implied intellectual standards that they do not understand and may not know exist.”

Implied standard = hidden curriculum

These “implied” standards, in addition to what we already call the “hidden curriculum,” take considerable work to demystify and make visible to students; it is no surprise students rely on those database limiters and keywords to do the work of constructing authority and entering these scholarly conversations for them!

The Framework describes a novice learner of authority as having to “rely on basic indicators of authority, such as type of publication or author credentials,” but many times we barely have time to go beyond those database functions and limiters.

Popular & Scholarly Sources in Honors LS101: College Research Skills

- I take a complementary approach in showing how popular sources can support the peer reviewed articles their professors fetishize.
- I don't shy away from using this language: "This is why many of your profesors '*privilege*' these sources." I want to be blunt that when they're being asked to locate and integrate peer reviewed articles in their research, it's a gatekeeping strategy to prove their competence as college students. I'm helping them acclimate to this academic game!
- I try to show there is value and beauty to the communal nature of scholarly dialogue in academic communities, as well as in popular information sources.

Introducing Journalism and "Public Scholars"

The importance of journalism and popular writers, researchers, and scholars

Newspapers are an excellent popular sources for students researching politics and current events because newspapers are published every day. Need an up to date source about a current event or pop culture phenomenon? You most likely have to use a popular source until scholarly sources catch up. Even though I consider myself a librarian and scholar, I particularly appreciate journalists writing for popular sources. While academics focus their writing to an audience of other academics with generally the same educational background and research interests, a journalist has to relay information to a wider range of people.

Think of it this way, imagine you're very into anime or K Pop and you're giving a presentation just to other very informed anime or K Pop fans at a convention. That'd be great, right? They'll know all your references and you don't have to worry about boring folks or explaining basic information to people who don't enjoy anime or K Pop. Now imagine you have to give that same presentation at a senior citizen center filled with people who've never heard of anime or K Pop. You'd have to change the way you talk and relay information, correct?

Well, that's what journalists have to do! Journalists who write about important issues like politics, health, economics, and global events (just to name a few) have the responsibility of communicating difficult to understand topics and facts to a broad public. This is why I've always admired science journalists. As a person who leans towards the humanities, I appreciate the work of science journalists and writers in helping me understand concepts I'm interested in like neuropsychology.

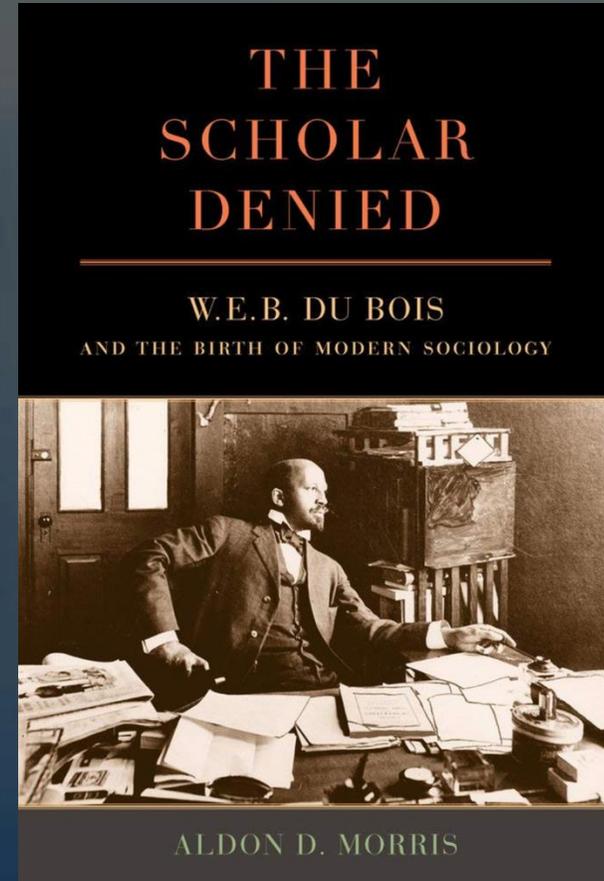
Notable journalist and popular writers

One of the most famous popular writers of neuropsychology was a neurologist named Oliver Sacks who eschewed academic writing and publishing and chose to write more journalistic essays and published books through main stream publications for the general public. If you're interested you can read about him [here](#) and [here](#).

Here is a popular Ted Talks Sacks did in 2009 explaining the importance of hallucination and the brain. It has great captions as well so you can read long.



Another popular writer and journalist doing astounding work is Maria Ressa, who is one of the two journalists awarded the Nobel Prize in 2021. A working journalist hadn't received that honor since 1936! Ressa has been a journalist in Asia for more than 35 years. Her work focuses on the weaponization of social



Why Do Professors *Privilege* Scholarly, Peer Reviewed Journal Articles?

Scholarly, Peer Reviewed Sources

Why Do Professors Privilege Scholarly, Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles?



I've highlighted the unique attributes of popular sources and scholarly peer-reviewed journals articles in the previous page, but we've yet to go over the details of the peer-review process and the history of the scholarly process.

The peer-review process

First let's define "peer-review." Peer-review is the formal process scholarly journals employ to ensure that a manuscript's writing, methodology, arguments, and conclusions are sound. Peer-review has long been a marker of quality that sets scholarly articles apart from popular articles (like those you would find in a magazine or newspaper). Below is an awesome video breaking down the peer-review process made by the excellent librarians at Cal State San Bernardino. Please watch! Don't forget to click on the closed captioning (cc) button for captions.



Scholarly , Peer Reviewed Sources Continued

More fun facts about scholarly journals and research using *The Journal of Popular Culture* as an example:



- To see what a submission page looks like for a journal, check out the submission requirements for *The Journal of Popular Culture* [here](#).
- To subscribe to *The Journal of Popular Culture* for just one year it's a whopping \$500-\$600!! Yikes!
- Guess what- ELAC subscribes to this journal. Click [here](#) to be redirected into Proquest's portal for *The Journal of Popular Culture*.
- Most colleges prefer to purchase digital subscriptions to save space and money, so it's imperative to learn how to use databases in this era of scholarship.

That's why we need those popular articles to support the scholarly journal articles.

You need popular sources for their timeliness and the scholarly journal articles for their thorough research.

Professors want students to get acquainted with scholarly articles because if you choose to go to graduate school, you'll primarily be working with these types of articles and may even publish in them!

If you're a nerd like me and interested in the history the peer-review process, you can read this very short fascinating article. Don't worry, this is not something you'll be quizzed on. Read if you're interested and curious about the history of how knowledge!

- [Scientific American: "The Birth of Modern Peer Review"](#)

English Composition Case Study: The First-Person Research Paper

Requirements:

- No peer-review articles necessary!
- In a 5-7 page paper, students will choose a person or place from their local community that speaks to an important cultural or socio-political topic affecting America in 2025.
- Students will go to person or place, talk to them, be led by their curiosity to find out what's interesting about them.
- Student must talk to/interview at least 2 "experts" about their subject (what we call first-person research) and you must incorporate at least 1 popular source from library or internet (what we call secondary research).

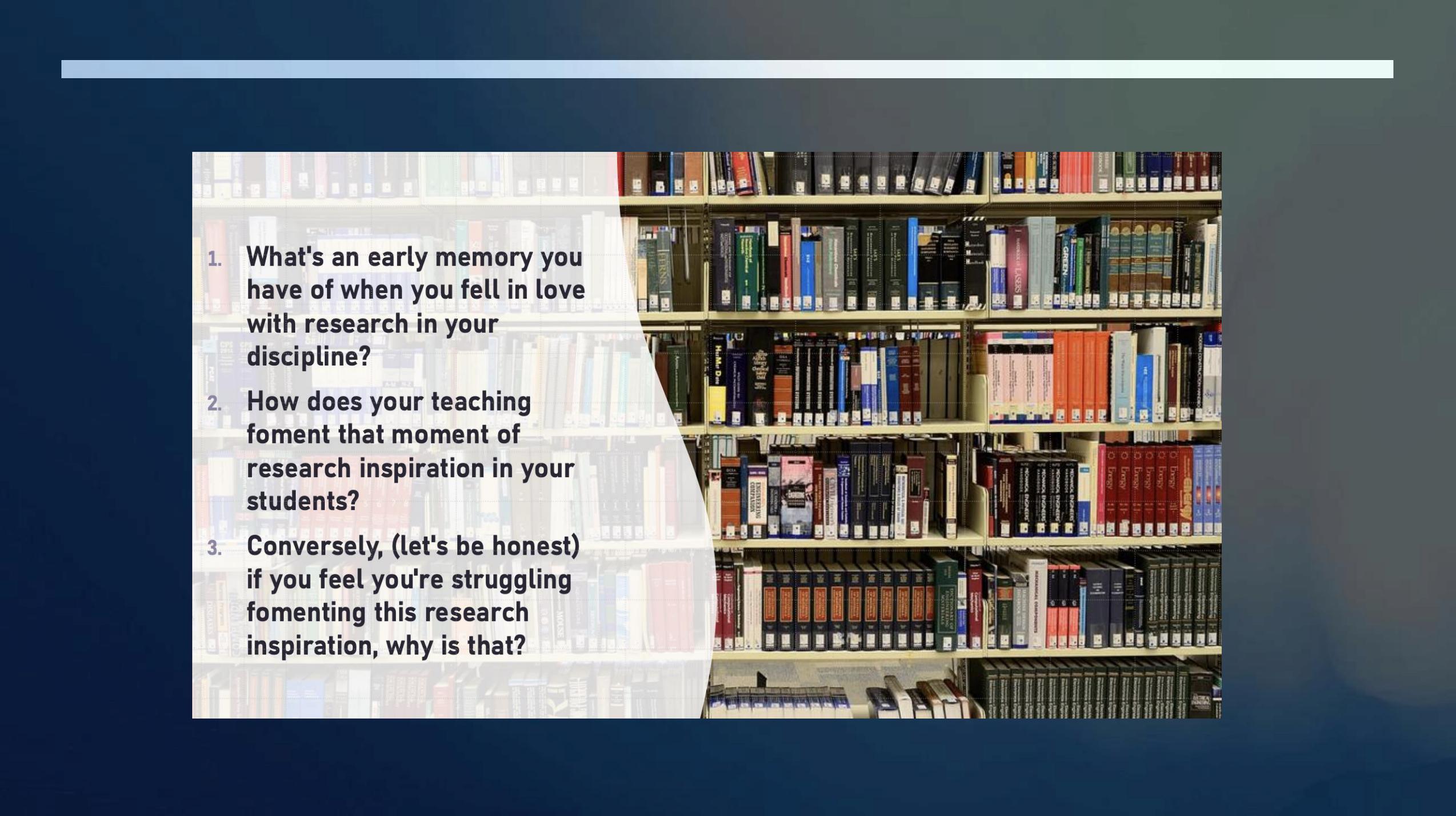


(Re)connecting with Research. (Re)connecting with the Library

Erika Montenegro, Prof of Library Science, purveyor of research stuff.



Using what we loved about research when we were students as a lens to (re)connect and (re)engage with the research process.

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1. **What's an early memory you have of when you fell in love with research in your discipline?**
 2. **How does your teaching foment that moment of research inspiration in your students?**
 3. **Conversely, (let's be honest) if you feel you're struggling fomenting this research inspiration, why is that?**

Takeaways, Discussion, Questions

- How can we have collaborative conversations with faculty about assignments, source requirements, or just teaching students why they use peer reviewed articles in their research?
- How can anything we've discussed today translate into a one-shot session?

Further reading:

- “Problematizing Peer Review: Academic Librarians’ Pedagogical Approaches to Peer Review” by Lana Mariko Wood and Gr Keer
- “The Cultural Artifact Collaboration An Info Lit Love Story between a Sociologist and a Librarian Collaboration as Rom-Com” by Erika Montenegro and Marcel Morales

Thank you!

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