Spring 2019

A GENERATION OF CYNICS:

BIAS, NEUTRALITY, & THE INTERNET

Course Times:

Monday (M) & Wednesday (W)
12:00 – 1:15pm

Course Location: Weinstein 307

THE SIMPLE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS THAT GET ASKED ABOUT EVERY NEW TECHNOLOGY:

WILL [____] MAKE US ALL GENIUSES?	NO
WILL [____] MAKE US ALL MORONS?	NO
WILL [____] DESTROY WHOLE INDUSTRIES?	YES
WILL [____] MAKE US MORE EMPATHETIC?	NO
WILL [____] MAKE US LESS CARING?	NO
WILL TEENS USE [____] FOR SEX?	YES
WERE THEY GOING TO HAVE SEX ANYWAY?	YES
WILL [____] DESTROY MUSIC?	NO
WILL [____] DESTROY ART?	NO
BUT CAN'T WE GO BACK TO A TIME WHEN—	NO
WILL [____] BRING ABOUT WORLD PEACE?	NO
WILL [____] CAUSE WIDESPREAD ALIENATION BY CREATING A WORLD OF EMPTY EXPERIENCES?	WE WERE ALREADY ALIENATED

Permanent link to this comic: https://xkcd.com/1289/

Course Instructors

SOJOURNA CUNNINGHAM, MLS

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Pronouns: she/her/hers

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Pronouns: she/her/hers

Office hours

are either in **Boatwright 185 or 182**. They are a chance for you to get help, go over material covered in class; talk about connections between class material or other academic work or even get help with your other classes (we are subject specialist librarians). They are generally student-directed.

Note from the Instructors:

We look forward to learning from you as much as sharing what we know. The subject matter of this seminar is close to our hearts. We will, at times, speak very passionately. We do not expect you will adopt all (or any!) of our views. Perhaps we will adopt some of yours. We're in this together and if you ever feel like we aren't, please do not hesitate to come speak to us.

During the coming weeks, we'll be grappling with sensitive and sometimes controversial subject matter. We will always do my best to fairly and sensitively moderate discussion, as well as make ourselves open to difference and opposition. We expect the same from you. We encourage you to share your varied positionalities in the spirit of community, learning, and growth, but also know that it is no one's responsibility to "teach" another about difference. We are all responsible for learning about each other and the world.

While certain readings and listening assignments will prompt personal introspection about your identity, you will never be required to disclose any aspect of you identity that you want to remain private. We are personally, pedagogically committed to equity and justice. These are the things that inform our practice. In this space, our expectation is that we all honor the experiences and lives of others.

Our classroom is dedicated to providing a harassment-free course experience for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion (or lack thereof) and political affiliation. We will do our best to assume good intentions and ask that you do same. That means trusting one another as best we can. It is our responsibility to hold each other to our community standards. If you feel like we are not upholding these values at any point, please bring it to our attention.

Welcome to your first year seminar!

Professor Cunningham & Professor Guss

Language borrowed and altered from Courtnie N. Wolfgang, PhD Assistant Professor of Art Education, VCUarts (2018).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this course is to explore the creation, consumption, and dissemination of information. The Internet has globalized and democratized access to information. Critical literacy has not kept up with that access, contributing to a generation that can be either too cynical or too accepting. Using a mix of scholarly and popular sources, students will explore their own information seeking behaviors, think about biases, and ultimately begin to place themselves as both consumers and creators of information.

OBJECTIVES & AIMS OF THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

This course, as a First-Year Seminar (FYS), was created to enhance and sharpen your college level reading, writing, and analytical skills through the lens of information work. In class we will be wrestling with questions such as: How does the process of seeking information create networks? What are the implications of corporate control of information? How do we create, judge, and evaluate the "value" of information? Can information ever be unbiased?

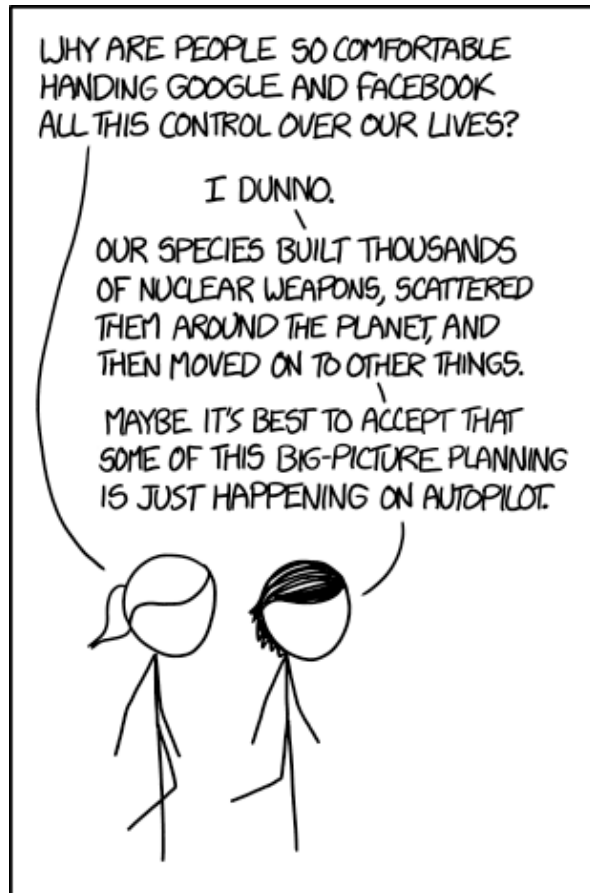All First-Year Seminars share the same five common goals:

- Expand and deepen students' understanding of the world and of themselves
- Enhance their ability to read and think critically
- Enhance their ability to communicate effectively, in writing, speech, and other appropriate forms
- Develop the fundamentals of information literacy and library research
- Provide the opportunity for students to work closely with a faculty mentor

Permanent link to this comic: https://xkcd.com/1269/
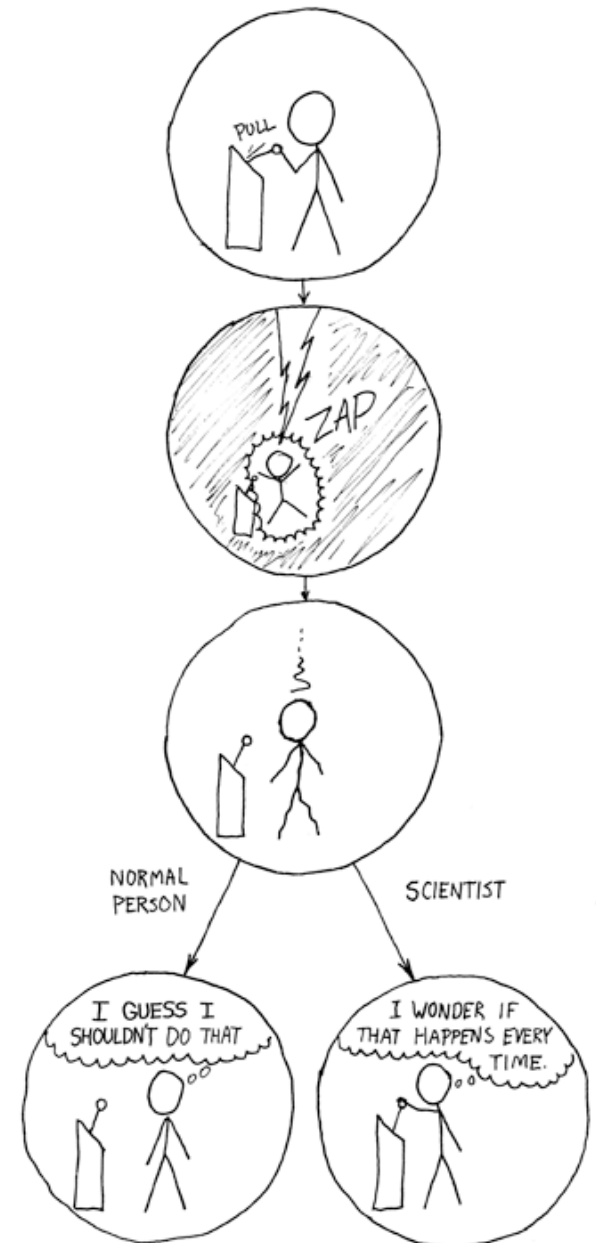
BLACKBOARD

All course-related information will be available on Blackboard (abbreviated "Bb" or "BB"). That includes readings, copies of the syllabus, assignments, rubrics, and grades. If you have not already, please familiarize yourself with the Blackboard website and contact us immediately if you have any difficulties. We may also use Blackboard to post announcements and other communication.

WHY ARE PEOPLE SO COMFORTABLE HANDING GOOGLE AND FACEBOOK ALL THIS CONTROL OVER OUR LIVES?

I DUNNO.

OUR SPECIES BUILT THOUSANDS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, SCATTERED THEM AROUND THE PLANET, AND THEN MOVED ON TO OTHER THINGS.

MAYBE IT'S BEST TO ACCEPT THAT SOME OF THIS BIG-PICTURE PLANNING IS JUST HAPPENING ON AUTOPILOT.

Permanent link to this comic: https://xkcd.com/1539/

COURSE READINGS AND ACCESS

We will read several chapters from the following text:

> danah boyd. 2014. *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

This text is available for purchase in the campus bookstore. It is also freely available on Blackboard, but if you prefer to read on paper, it will be more efficient and eco-friendly to simply buy a copy of the printed book (rather than printing it out yourself). A physical copy of the text is also available at Boatwright Library as a Course Reserve. It can be checked out for two hours at a time by asking at the front desk.

Additional readings will be required throughout the semester and are listed in the course schedule on the day when we will discuss them (that is, you should have read them prior to class on that day). All readings will be available through Blackboard. **It is recommended that you print out copies of these readings and bring them with you to class.** We will be providing reading guides for all of the assigned readings. Quizzes will be based upon the reading guides and will be open-note.

SPECIAL ISSUES FOR THIS TEAM-TAUGHT COURSE:

- **Communication**
  We (instructors) will work hard to communicate clearly and consistently with each other and with you (students), so we ask the same of you. Please communicate with us as much as possible and **please email both of us.** We check emails frequently but are not on-call 24/7. We will try to get back to you as soon as we can. If you think we have missed an email, do not hesitate to follow up with us.

    Email Etiquette. Emails should include the following outline:
          Dear Professor Guss and Professor Cunningham,
          --Insert questions here.
          --Sincerely, Your first and last name

  See also: https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087

- **Grading**
  At the beginning of the semester, we will both review each piece of written work, will both provide comments, and then will work together to give you a grade. Later in the semester, you may receive comments and a grade from only one of us for a given assignment, but both of us will always read all of your writing and we will be careful to balance grading to avoid bias.

POLICIES

Attendance & Student Safety

We will take attendance in every class. You are welcome to miss up to 2 classes without penalty. After missing more than 2 classes, we will subtract 1 percentage point from your final grade for each additional missed class. If you miss more than two classes, we will be concerned with your ability to keep with the course work and discussions. We do however recognize that life is complicated and you may be sick or have familial obligations. Your health comes first, if you are sick, please stay home and take care of yourself. If attendance becomes a problem, **communicate with us.** Credibility is earned and communicating clearly is one way to earn credibility.

Absences for Religious Observances and Holidays

The University is a secular institution that values a diversity of religious expression. Any student may be excused from class or other assignments because of religious observance. A student who will miss an academic obligation because of religious observance is responsible for contacting his or her professor within the first two weeks of the semester. The student is responsible for completing missed work in a timely manner. The entire religious observance policy may be found at:
http://registrar.richmond.edu/services/policies/religiousobsv.html

Late Assignments

We expect all assignments to be submitted on the day that they are due. If they are not submitted on time, you will be penalized 10% of your grade. i.e. if your assignment was a B+, it will now be a C+. 10% will be taken for every day a paper is late. If there is an emergency or problem with submitting an assignment, please let us know as soon as possible.

Cell Phones & Other Electronic Devices

This course is designed to be a collaborative and discussion based class. So we ask that you put away all laptops and cell phones during the class period. Please take notes on paper. We find that laptops are disruptive during class discussions. If you need to use your laptop, please have a conversation with us after class.

Exceptions to this rule may be made on a case-by-case basis. One of the books is available online and if you need to use the online version of the book, you may open your device.

FYS SUPPORT

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

http://wellness.richmond.edu/offices/caps/ or (804) 289-8119
Assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include short-term counseling and psychotherapy, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.

One of the best practices that you can begin as a young adult is learning when to take care of your mental health and knowing your stressors. Your well-being is of primary importance to us. If you are facing any challenges to your mental or physical help, or obstacles like food or housing insecurity, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. However, we are mandatory reporters. That means if you disclose any information about discrimination or harassment, we have to report to the appropriate office. We take student privacy very seriously but we also know that reporting these incidents are necessary for the safety of all members of the university.

The Writing Center

http://writing.richmond.edu or (804) 289-8263
Assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can schedule appointments with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work. The Writing Center is located in Boatwright Library on the first floor in the Research Commons area and we have a Writing Consultant assigned to our course, **Alexis Hills**. Part of your grade will involve making appointments with Alexis after the completion of your annotated bibliography *and* after finishing the rough draft of your final paper.

Boatwright Library

An important aspect of this First Year Seminar is the work you will do to build your information literacy and library research skills. These skills will be developed throughout the semester, but enhanced by our library research session with our FYS librarian,

Natisha Harper (nharper@richmond.edu).

The library research session will introduce you to Natisha and to the resources available at the UR Libraries, including the library website, catalog and research databases. The session will also discuss ways to cite and evaluate your information.

Even though we are also librarians and are available any time to help you with library research, we think it's important that you have the option to meet with a librarian who is not your instructor and can model the role that librarians will play throughout your career at UR. Feel free to email Natisha any time for help or consultation about your research (in any class!).

GRADING

A	95-100
A-	91-94.9
B+	87-90.0
B	83-86.9
B-	80-82.9
C+	77-79.9
C	73-76.9
C-	70-72.9
D+	67-69.9
D	63-66.9
D-	60-62.9
F	0-59.9

EXTRA CREDIT

You will have several opportunities to earn extra credit points for things such as attending campus lectures and events. These opportunities will be announced as they occur over the course of the semester and we will give specific instructions about what you must do to earn credit.

All Extra Credit must be completed by April 1

GRADING OVERVIEW

Throughout the semester you will have the opportunity to earn up to 450 points towards your final course grade. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped. We will monitor your participation in class discussions and other forms of class participation and at the end of the semester we will provide you with a final score. Mid-semester, we will provide you with an estimate of your participation score and you will be required to complete a self-assessment.

Fractional grades may be rounded up at the discretion of the instructors. This will only occur when you have demonstrated sustained involvement and engagement with the course material. This sustained engagement can be demonstrated by consistent attendance, handing in all assignments on time and regular participation in class discussions.

COURSE WORK EXPECTATIONS

Your final grade will be based upon your performance on written assignments, class participation, discussion leadership, and your oral presentation. This is a seminar-based class. This means you **must** do the readings and participate during class discussions. Participation will be measured will be through pop quizzes, reading logs, journals, and in-class discussion engagement.

We will provide a rubric for all written assignments that clarify our expectations on your writing. All of your written assignments are scaffolded, meaning that they are created to build upon each other. **To receive a passing grade for this course, you must hand in all written assignments and complete the required oral presentation**. Failure to do will result in an F for the course.

We recognize that reading, researching, and writing are processes. To that end, we have built in time in class to revise, rewrite, and think. Our ultimate goal is to help you become a better reader, writer, and thinker who is prepared for–and excited about–future college-level work. We want you to produce products in this class that you are genuinely interested in and passionate about.

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

As social scientists, we are aware of the role unconscious bias can play in evaluation and so will attempt to remove as much of that bias as possible.

To do so, we ask that you **submit all of your writing assignments with your UR ID and word count** in the upper left corner instead of your name. Points will be taken off if you do not use your ID.

We ask that you **submit all of your written assignments through Blackboard** (with the exception of your rough draft, which requires that you bring a paper copy with you to class, and peer review forms, which you will complete on paper). Please do not email assignments to us.

All papers should be in **12-point font and in MS Word, PDF, or Pages format**.

Please use the **6th Edition of APA** as the guide for writing and referencing your work. We will be reviewing APA style several times during class.

When we finish grading your assignments, we will match them up to your name in Blackboard and return the graded assignment back to you via Blackboard or in class.

Your numeric grades will be recorded in Blackboard, but because our points system is complicated, please use the chart at right to calculate your overall grade.

ASSESSMENTS

Information Log Assignment
Data collection & analysis about your information consumption

Wrong on the Internet Project (WIP)
Semester-long research project on a topic of your choice

Discussion Leading
You and your group will lead the class in a discussion of course readings

Class Participation
Your contributions to the class community & discourse

Quizzes, Reading Logs, & Journals
Measures of your engagement with our course readings

Assessment	Points
Information Log	10
Information Log Response Paper	25
WIP Finding Your Original Articles (Step 1)	5
WIP Finding a Scholarly Source (Step 2)	5
WIP Initial Reflection Paper (Step 3)	25
WIP Sample Annotation (Step 4a)	5
WIP Annotated Bibliography (Step 4b)	40
WIP Research Paper Rough Draft (Step 5)	40
WIP Peer Review (Step 6)	10
WIP Research Paper Final Draft (Step 7)	60
WIP Presentation in PK Format (Step 8)	20
WIP Final Reflection Paper (Step 9)	25
Discussion Leading	30
Participation	60
Quiz 1	5
Quiz 2	5
Quiz 3	5
Quiz 4	5
Reading Log 1	10
Reading Log 2	10
Reading Log 3	10
Journals	40
TOTAL	**450**

JANUARY

WEEK 1

January 14

Syllabus Review, Classroom Expectations

January 16

• boyd, *It's complicated*, preface, Introduction & Chapter 1 (RT 30-35 min; if you don't have your book yet, look for the link on Bb)

WEEK 2

January 21

No Class (MLK Day)

January 23

WIP ORIGINAL ARTICLE (STEP 1) due by 11:45am

• Wildemuth,"Developing a research question" (RT 15 min)
• "What is a research question?" ASU Quiz (RT 10 min)
• McMillan Cottom, "The #LowerEd 'so what?'" (RT 10 min)

WEEK 3

January 28

INFORMATION LOG due by 11:45am

• Irvin, "What is academic-writing?" (RT 15-20 min)
• Lettuca & Stark, excerpt from "Shaping the college curriculum" (RT 15-20 min)
• Hjortshoj, "Rules and errors" (RT 15-20 min)
• Madigan, Johnson, & Linton, "The language of psychology: APA style as epistemology" (RT 20 min)

January 30

• White, "Authoring the self: Scholarly identity in performative times" (RT 10 min)
• Grollman, "Objectivity doesn't exist (and that's a good thing)" (RT 10 min)
• Sumerau, "What is me-search?" (RT 10 min)
• Jafar, "Fox News, Aslan and the presumption of bias" (RT 5 min)
• boyd, "what's in a name" (RT 5 min)

WEEK 4

February 4

INFORMATION LOG RESPONSE PAPER due by 11:45am

• boyd, *It's Complicated,* Ch. 2 (RT 20 min)

• Dash, "What is public" (RT 10 min)

• Find Twitter Trolls: (Username: GenofCynicsUR@gmail.com/Password: Fallof2018) (RT 25 min)

February 6

WIP FINDING A SCHOLARLY SOURCE (STEP 2) due by 11:45am

• King, "Letter from a Birmingham jail" (RT 20 min)

• Review boyd, Ch. 2 (RT 5 min)

WEEK 5

February 11

• Bloyd-Peshkin & Sivek, "Magazines find there's little time to fact-check online" (RT 10-15 min)

• Berry, "Why objectivity still matters" (RT 10 min)

• McPherson, "How editors choose which human rights news to cover: A case study of Mexican newspapers" (RT 25 min)

• Jacobs, "How to increase trust in the media" (RT 5 min)

February 13

• Bergstrom & West, "How do you know a paper is legit?" (RT 10-15 min)

• Kluger, "Why scientists should celebrate failed experiments." (RT 5 min)

• Listen to podcast: "Adam Ruins Everything episode 38: Professor Brian Nosek on science's reproducibility crisis and opportunity" (first 20 minutes)

FEBRUARY

WEEK 6

February 18

WIP INITIAL REFLECTION PAPER (STEP 3) due by 11:45am

• Treem & Leonardi, "What is expertise? Who is an expert? Some definitive answers" (RT 10-15 min)

February 20

• boyd, *It's Complicated,* Ch. 6 (RT 25 min)

WEEK 7

February 25

• Bizup, "An alternative vocabulary that emphasizes use," pp. 75-77 ONLY (RT 5 min)

• Swales, "Create a research space" (RT 10-15 min)

• Booth, Colomb, & Williams, "Assembling reasons and evidence" (RT 10-15 min)

February 27

DISCUSSION LEADERS: READING LOGS (individual) & READING GUIDES (group) due by 11:45am

Library Session! Meet in Boatwright Library, Seminar Room 2

MARCH

WEEK 8

March 4

• Dvorsky, "The 12 cognitive biases that prevent you from being rational" (RT 5-10 min)

• The Oatmeal, "You're not going to believe what I'm about to tell you" (RT 10 min)

• Coil, "Why men don't believe the data on gender bias in science" (RT 10 min)

March 6

Discussion Leaders Group 1

• Wright, "The secret history of hypertext" (RT 5-10 min)

• Winner, "Do artifacts have politics?" (RT 25 min)

• Groeger, "When the designer shows up in the design" (RT 20 min)

WEEK 9

March 11 & 13

No Class (Spring Break)

WEEK 10

March 18

March 20

Discussion Leaders Group 2

• Jeffries, "Google's featured snippets are worse than fake news" (RT 10-15 min)

• Noble, "A society, searching" (RT 30 min)

• Benton, "The forces that drove this election's media failure are likely to get worse" (RT 10-15 min)

• Read, "How much of the internet is fake?" (RT 10 min)

WEEK 11

March 25

• Best, "Thinking about social statistics" (RT 10-15 min)

• Levitin, "How numbers are collected" (RT 10-15 min)

March 27

Discussion Leaders Group 3

• Zhang, "How big data has created a big crisis in science" (read first; RT 5 min)

• boyd & Crawford, "Six provocations for big data" (RT 25 min)

• O'Neil, "Introduction" & "Bomb parts, what is a model?" (RT 25 -30 min)

• (Optional but suggested!) O'Neil, "Arms race, going to college" (RT 10 min)

APRIL

WEEK 12

April 1
Discussion Leaders Group 4
• Davies, "How statistics lost their power" (RT 10 -15 min)
• Mooney, "The science of why we don't believe science" (RT 15 -20 min)

April 3
WIP ROUGH DRAFT (STEP 5) due on Blackboard by 11:45am AND bring a copy with you to class

WEEK 13

April 8
Discussion Leaders Group 5
• Caulfield, "Yes, digital literacy. But which one?" (RT 20-25 min)
• boyd, "Did media literacy backfire?" (RT 10-15 min)
• boyd, *It's Complicated,* Ch. 7 (RT 20-25 min)

April 10
WIP Peer Review Class Session (Step 6)

WEEK 14

April 15
Guest speaker: Race and Racism Project Archivist Irina Rogova
• Drake, "Documenting dissent in the contemporary college archive; Finding our function within the liberal arts" (RT 15 -20 min)

April 17
No formal class. Instead we'll have one-on-one paper review appointments – schedule & location will be posted on Bb.

WEEK 15

April 22
• Jackson & Jamieson, "Was Clarence Darrow a creationist? How to be sure." (RT 15 -20 min)

April 24
WIP FINAL PAPER (STEP 7) due by 11:45am
• Skim *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (RT 15 -20 min)

FINALS PERIOD & BEYOND

Tuesday April 30th , 12pm-4pm
WIP FINAL PRESENTATIONS (STEP 8)

Sunday May 5th, 2019
WIP FINAL REFLECTION PAPER (STEP 9) due on Bb by 9:00 AM

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY
An APA-style list of all our course readings

Association of College & Research Libraries. (2015). *Framework for information literacy for higher education.* Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework

Bergstrom, C. & West, J. (2017). How do you know a paper is legit? Retrieved from http://callingbullshit.org/tools/tools_legit.html

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