What is MLA style?

- MLA stands for the Modern Language Association. MLA is the Association’s style and formatting guide for documentation.

- In the preface to the 8th edition of the *MLA Handbook*, Kathleen Fitzpatrick states that “the reasons for documenting sources in academic writing extend beyond simply giving a generic credit to the work from which a quotation or other borrowing was derived. Documentation is the means through which scholarly conversations are recorded, and the specifics of those conversations matter” (x).

- Through documentation you “certify the quality of your research, and in turn, receive credit for your labor. You also provide evidence for your claims” (Ruszkiewicz 502). 
The difference between the 7th Edition and the 8th Edition

- In the 7th edition, MLA was preoccupied with giving you a style that was “based on defining a citation format for each kind of source” (Fitzpatrick xii).

- However, because of new mediums, the 8th edition “shift[s] our focus from a prescriptive list of formats to the overarching purpose of source documentation. [...] Such participation requires the presentation of reliable information in a clear, consistent structure[, which...] will continue to serve writers well in a changing environment” (Fitzpatrick xii).

- In other words, it focuses on the common elements of a citation and how to combine those elements to create a clear documentation of any source.
How to use MLA:

- You should be guided by the principles found on pages 3-4 of your MLA Handbook:
  - “Cite simple traits shared by most works”
    - We will be looking at common traits shared in most works and using universal guidelines to cite.
  - “Remember that there is often more than one correct way to document a source”
    - A writer who is giving credit for borrowed items may need to provide less information than a scholar working in their field with a particular edition, etc.
  - “Make your documentation useful to your readers”
    - Your goal should be to create a consistent & comprehensible citation for your reader. You should think about your source, select the information about the source that is appropriate for what you are working on, and organize it logically.
“Academic writing is at its root a conversation among scholars about a topic or question” (MLA Handbook 5).

Being able to give credit where credit is due helps to verify your own work and allows for readers to see the conversation unfold.

“Learning a documentation style [also] prepares a writer to be on the lookout for the conventions to which every professional field expects its member to adhere in their writing” (MLA Handbook 5).
Evaluating your sources

- Evaluation questions are on pages 11-12 of the Handbook.

- Remember that research is not done in one search: “You should expect to search, evaluate the sources you find, refocus or otherwise revise your searching strategy, and begin again” (MLA Handbook 12).

- Keep notes on all of your research. This will simplify the task of documentation, as well as provide you with a good go-to-guide when you need to find a specific piece of research.

Kelsonanderson. “Just Get All of the Sources.” Someecards, Someecards, inc., http://www.someecards.com/usercards/unsubmitted/MjAxMi1kOGMyYThjNml2NDFmNjli.
Gathering information

  - Who is the author?
  - What is the title of the source?
  - How was the source published?
  - Where did you find the source?
  - When was the source published?

- Look at examples on pages 14-18 of the MLA Handbook.
Creating your documentation

- MLA has two parts:
  - The detailed entry listed in a works cited page
    - Your works cited should be a separate page (although the page numbering should follow in accordance to your essay), should be alphabetized, should be double spaced throughout, and should feature a hanging indent (.5 on the second and subsequent lines for each entry)
  - A citation in the text, which directs the reader to the entry.

- The Detailed Citation:
  - Author.
  - Title of the source.
  - Title of the container,
  - Other contributors,
  - Version,
  - Number,
  - Publisher,
  - Publication date,
  - Location.
Author

- The author’s name is usually displayed in a work near the title.
- Begin with the last name, followed by a comma and the rest of the name, as presented in the work. When you have 2 or more authors, list the first name inverted in the presented order and then list the subsequent names in normal order. If you have three or more authors, use the first name and put et al.

  - For example:
  - Gaiman, Neil.
  - Gaiman, Neil, and Terry Prattchett.

- They use the term author loosely here. It “refers to the person or group primarily responsible for producing this work or the aspect of the work that you focused on. If the role of that person or group was something other than creating the work’s main content, follow the name with a label that describes the role” (MLA Handbook 22).

  - Nunberg, Geoffrey, editor.
  - Pevear, Richard, and Larissa Volokhonsky, translators.
  - Whedon, Joss, creator.
  - Kubrick, Stanley, director.
Title of Source

- The title is normally displayed by the author, and remember there might be a subtitle too.
- Capitalization is standardized, meaning that important words are capitalized. Articles, conjunctions, and prepositions are not.
- Should be put in italics or quotation marks depending on the work.
  - Good Omens. (Novel)
  - “MLA Documentation and Format” from How to Write Anything: A Guide and Reference (Chapter in a Textbook)

Containers

- When the source is part of a larger whole, the whole can be thought of as a container. The title of the container is normally italicized and is followed by a comma, since the information that follows describes the container.
- Irrelevant elements are omitted, so if you cannot find something then omit it.
- It is important to remember that there can be more than one container. For instance, an article found in a journal found in a database or a television episode found in a television series found on Hulu. Account for all containers that enclose your sources. See pages 32-36 for examples.
Other Contributors

- This is anyone who may be credited in the source.
  - Adapted by
  - Directed by
  - Edited by, etc.
- Ex: Cohen, Jeffery Jerome. “Monster Culture (Seven Theses).” *Monsters*, edited by Brandy Ball Blake and L. Andrew Cooper, ...

Version

- If the source carries a notation indicating that it exists in other forms, identify the version in your entry.
  - Books (editions)
  - Unabridged version
  - Director's cut.
Detailed documentation

Number
- The source might also be part of a numbered sequence.
  - Anthologies
  - Journal issues (vol. #, no. #)
  - Comic Books
  - Seasons of a television series and/or episodes (season 4, episode 10)

Publisher
- This is who is responsible for producing the source or making it available to the public.
  - For a book, look on the cover page or copyright page.
  - Films—producers/distributors (whoever is primarily responsible for it)
  - Websites—look at the bottom of the home page (next to the copyright) or an about page on the site.
Publication Date
- Keep in mind that sources may be associated with more than one date.
  - Ex: An e-book found on a database.
- Cite the date that is most meaningful or most relevant to your use of the source.
  - See page 43-46.

Location
- Depends on the medium.
  - Print sources-page number or a range of page numbers if you are dealing with a specific range of text. (Must put pp. or p. before the numbers.)
  - URLs for websites (depending on your instructor) or DOIs (digital object identifiers).
  - An episode of a show on a DVD set is indicated by the disc number.
  - A piece of art is located by the place where the art is installed.
In-text citations

- This is a brief reference that indicates the source you consulted.
- It should be linked to the detailed entry.
- It is usually composed of the element that comes first in the entry on the works-cited list and the page number where the information was found, if applicable.
- It should go in parentheticals, which is placed where there is a natural pause in the text.
  - Ex: Jeffery Jerome Cohen states, “No monster tastes of death but once” (13).
  - Ex: As it states in the text, “No monster tastes of death but once” (Cohen 13).
In-text citations

- If you have more than one work by an author, put the last name of the author, the work and page number—or act.scene.line numbers for drama or line numbers for poems.
  - (Shakespeare, Othello I.ii.34)
- If you do not have page numbers but you have paragraph numbers, use those.
  - (Chan, par. 41)
- If you have a commonly studied novel, play, or poem, it might be helpful to provide division numbers in addition to page numbers, so readers can find your reference in any edition.
  - (Austin 533; vol. 3, ch. 17)
- In time-cased media (audio and video), you can cite the relevant time or range of times if you are looking at a specific clip.
  - (“Buffy” 00:03:16-17)
- See pages 123-124.
Pages 75-91

We will go through these examples in class. However, the common way to quote, summarize, or paraphrase goes like this:

- Introduce your quote by using a phrase or a sentence (use a comma with a phrase and a colon with a sentence).
  - According to Cohen,
  - Cohen notices that the monster always escapes:

- Quote directly, word-for-word (or summarize or paraphrase). Put quotation marks around direct quotes.

- Put your in-text citation.

- Have commentary that contextualizes your quote.
Plagiarism

What is plagiarism?

http://www.plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/what-is-plagiarism/

Why is it a big deal?

"Plagiarists are seen not only as dishonest but also as incompetent, incapable of doing research and expressing original thoughts" (MLA Handbook 7).

"Plagiarism undermines the relationship between teachers and students, turning teachers into detectives instead of mentors, fostering suspicion instead of trust, and making it difficult for learning to take place" (MLA Handbook 7).
Plagiarism

What does it look like?


How can you avoid it?

- Be meticulous with your research method.
- Keep a list of all the research you have done as you are writing the paper.
- Do not procrastinate on writing your essay.
- Always check with your instructor if you are unsure about if something needs to be cited or not.
Not all information needs to be cited.

Common knowledge: If the information and ideas are common among your readers, you do not have to document. For instance, dates of historical events, basic biographical facts, circumstances of a historical event, or general plot in a novel do not need to be cited. Common knowledge will change as you advance in your fields of study, so keep that in mind too.

