

# CRITICAL & CULTURAL STUDIES

## *Getting started on your assignment*

### **Step 1. Obtain background information on your chosen topic**

Read the Study Guide provided by your lecturer, carefully. This will usually contain key references to books and other materials that are recommended as starting points for your assignment.

The Library Web **e-Guide for Critical & Cultural Studies** lists further key resources for getting started using references, journals, databases and web resources.

<http://www.library.mq.edu.au/eguides/criticalandculturalstudies.html>

### **Step 2. Define your information need – Analyse the assignment**

Analyse the assignment question by identifying the key concepts or ideas contained in your topic. List alternative keywords for each concept. These terms may be more specific or general. Assignment question example:

*How is masculinity expressed and transformed in Asian popular culture?*

<b>Concept 1</b>	<b>Concept 2</b>	<b>Concept 3</b>
Masculinity	Asia	popular culture
Manliness	Japan	television
Men	Indonesia	movies
	China	internet

### **Step 3. Design a search strategy**

Decide on the type of information you would like to retrieve. Consider the period to be covered. With some topics older material may also be useful. Resources:

**Books** (Library catalogue)

**Videos** (Library catalogue)

**Journal articles** (databases)

**Newspaper articles** (*Factiva* database)

**Australian Statistics** (*Australian Bureau of Statistics - Statistics* database)

### **Step 4. Search for reference resources in the Library**

From the Library Home page <http://www.library.mq.edu.au> select **Databases**, click **X** and then **Xreferplus** to access electronic dictionaries and encyclopaedias. Similarly, **G** for **Gale Virtual Reference Library**.

Use the **Catalogue** to search for print and other electronic Reference materials. Critical & Cultural Studies is better searched by using more specific terms such as postmodernism, popular culture, gender, Select:

**Catalogue** Quick Search

At **Quick Limits** highlight **Reference**

At **Search Type** highlight **Keywords (boolean)** type the term in the search box  
eg *masculinity* eg. *postmodernism*

If you use a phrase, eg. *popular culture*, type **and** between the terms eg. *popular and culture*. Click **Go**

This search will display subject specific dictionaries, encyclopaedias, handbooks and other basic guides to your topic, which will give definitions, explanations or general overviews of topics. The materials are located in the Reference Collection (Level 2) and Ready Reference Collection (Level 3). For example:

*St. James Encyclopaedia of Popular Culture* Ref E169.1.S764/2000 and e-book Gale Virtual Library

*Encyclopaedia of Postmodernism* Ready Ref B831.2.E63/2001

*Men and masculinities: a social, cultural and historical encyclopaedia* Ref HQ1090.3.M436 2004

Broader terms may also return useful materials. eg. social **and** encyclopaedias

*International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*

Ref H41.I58/2001 and via Science Direct database.

Encyclopaedias may also provide a recommended list of readings at the end of the articles.

## Step 5. Search for Books and Multimedia

Use the terms you developed in Step 2 to search the Library catalogue to locate resources and their call numbers.

From the Library home page select **Catalogue**, Quick Search

Under **Quick Limit** choose **None (or Videorecording or Electronic books)**

At **Search type** select **Keywords (boolean)**.

At the search box, type in your topic/s separated by **and** eg. **“popular culture” and Asia**. (Use speech marks around a phrase). Look critically through the titles listed. Click on a title for further information.

Each item will indicate the collection and its location in the Library eg. **Reserve** (Level 2), **Main Collection**, **Reference**, **3 Day Loan** (located in Main Collection) **Electronic**, etc and each item will have a unique call number. Write down the complete call number to locate the item on the shelf. Look for call number location display boards beside the stairs. Also note the status (availability). **Check shelves** indicates the item is in the Library.

Macquarie University Library call numbers use a combination of letters and numbers. In general, most Critical & Cultural materials will be located at a wide range of call numbers, and subjects themselves may also be divided by geography. eg. American popular culture (E169) or subdivided eg. postmodernism and society (HM73), postmodernism and art (NX456.5). The following headings and call numbers are a guide only, enter your own specific terms.

**Critical and theory** HM101-

**Feminism** HQ1101 – 2030.7

**Sexuality and culture** HQ21-

**Masculinity** HQ1088-1090

**Performing and arts** PN1569- 3014

**Tourist trade** G154.9 – 155.5

**Australia and literature** PR9600 – 9619.3

## Step 6. Search for Journal Articles

Journals are also called **serials** and **periodicals**. Journal articles are valuable sources of research that contain more in depth articles than books. The articles may provide the latest published research in a particular field. Coverage in some journals may be general (*Cultural*

*Studies, Postmodern Culture*) and others more specific (*South Asian Popular Culture*). To locate articles in journals you need to use a database.

Gender issues	HQ1101 .F392	Vol. 16 (1998)-	.Main Collection
Gender issues [electronic resource]	<a href="#">Electronic journal</a>	Full text available: 1998-01-01 - 2000-09-22	Expanded Academic ASAP

### 6.1 Using Databases to locate Journal Articles on your Topic

Databases may cover many different topic areas (multi-disciplinary) or they may be subject specific. They can be searched by keywords, similar to searching the Library's catalogue.

Useful full text databases for Critical & Cultural Studies are:

**Australian Public Affairs Full Text** (useful for Australian issues)

**Academic Search Premier**

**Expanded Academic ASAP**

**Taylor & Francis Online Journals**

**JSTOR**

To locate databases, from the Library Home Page

Click **Databases**, click the subject **Critical & Cultural Studies** for a full list of databases.

Note at the bottom of the database list are links to further databases under **Related databases** and **Multi-subject databases**.

Although databases may use different layouts and terminology the principles of searching are the same. Select **Advanced** if that search option is available. The search boxes allow you to separate each search term and to select the field type (subject, author, article title, journal title etc). Some subjects may be topical, with others, the publication date may not matter. If full text is available click this option. **Example:**

To search **Academic Search Premier** click this database. Enter search terms for a topic eg. *masculinity in popular Japanese culture*

In the first search box: **popular culture**

In the second search box: **masculinity**

In the third box: **Japan** (Leave empty if you have no third term)

Leave the Field Searches at **Default fields**. Click **Search**. The search results will be displayed. Not all articles will be relevant to your topic. Look critically at the entries and if available look at the full text of the article.

Enter combinations of the other search terms selected for your topic (in Step 2).

While some databases provide full text of articles, other databases will only give bibliographic (citation) details ie. author, article title, etc. In this case, you will need to find out whether the library holds the journal you require.

*NB: Databases may be international or national in coverage, therefore Macquarie University Library will **NOT** hold all of the journals indexed in these databases.*

### 6.2 Locating Journals in the Library

To check if the Library holds the journal you require, from the Library Home Page

Click **Journal Finder**

Journal Finder lists journals that are available in full text electronically and also print journals in the Library. Type in the name of the journal. Several formats may be displayed, select the format on the

basis of the date you require. A dash after a date indicates it continues on from that date. If the item is held in print, a call number will be given. If the format is electronic, there will be a link to the appropriate database.

### 6.3 Location of Print Journals

Write down the call number and collection location. Print journals are located in four areas in the Library:

1. The latest issue of a print journal is located on Level 2, in the “New Serials” area.
2. Recent issues (last 12 months) are located on Level 2, in the “Current Serials” area.
3. Other journals (bound and unbound ) are shelved in call number order with the books in the main Library collections on Levels 3 and 4.
4. Older materials are located in Stack, Level 1.

### Step 7. Analyse and Evaluate the Information

When you begin to retrieve sources of information, such as books, journal articles or internet sites, you must evaluate the information in two ways.

#### **Does it match your information requirements (as stated in Step 2)**

A new source of information may require reviewing your original information need. You may realise that you were searching in the wrong direction, or that the original topic was too broad and you need to be more specific.

It is important to realise that the process of research is very often circular.

#### **Determine the worthiness of the source of information**

This step is very important, particularly with information found on the internet using search engines, as there is no scholarly control over what is written (anyone can place material on the internet).

#### **Five points to consider when evaluating a resource are:**

**Accuracy** Can you verify factual information provided? Is methodology stated?

**Authenticity** What are the author(s) credentials? Was it published in a recognised (or peer-reviewed/refereed) journal or web site?

**Objectivity** Are the arguments presented fairly? Does the author have a bias or are they expressing an opinion.

**Coverage** Is adequate detail provided? Is the information too basic, too complex or relevant?

**Currency** Was the item published recently? Is the data current and if not is it important with regard to your topic? Was the web page updated recently?

### Step 8. Presentation of Information (Citing references)

Sources of information or opinions in your essay must be appropriately acknowledged.

Refer to the **Essay Writing Guide** on the Division of Society, Media, Culture and Philosophy website for the preferred method of citation.

<http://www.scmp.mq.edu.au/undergraduate.html>

You may also wish to refer to the Library’s Ready Reference: **Citation & Style Guides** web links: <http://www.library.mq.edu.au/readyref/cites.html>

#### **Need More Help?**

The Library online modules for researching in the Library are available at **Information**

**Skills Online** <http://infoskills.mq.edu.au/> The Librarians on the information desk (Level 2)

will be able to assist you with any problems encountered when using the databases or finding items in the Library. Also Online Librarian at <http://www.library.mq.edu.au/onlinelib/index.html> during certain hours, provides real chat for research questions.