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| Create a Source Matrix | |
| Description | A source matrix can help students analyze their sources’ key components in order to synthesize consensus, disagreement, and insights across the entire collection of sources on a given theme or topic.  Students choose a research topic of interest, and consider relevant subtopics. Students will locate x-# of scholarly sources on their chosen topic.  Professors will provide students with a matrix or table. Students will complete the Main Question portion explaining the problem they plan to research. Professors have the option to have students complete 1 - 3 subquestions. These can be related to a specific discipline or disciplines. Professors can also provide a section at the top of the matrix where students enter the search terms/keywords and databases they used to locate the sources.  Students will complete the matrix with specific information for the selected source: Source Citation, Main point or Claim (stated in their own words), Methods, Data, Conclusion (stated in their own words), Comments (Analysis). In the analysis, students will answer questions such as:   * Why is this article important? * How is it related or not related to your topic? * What are the strengths or weaknesses of the article? * How does this article compare with the other articles you found?   Students should also submit a properly formatted Bibliography or Reference List of the sources they found.  Professors will need to discuss with students how to avoid plagiarism in this assignment by highlighting the need to summarize, synthesize, and paraphrase rather than copy and paste or use block quotes. |
| Options | Professors have the flexibility to adapt the number and type of sources they want students to locate. They can also modify the headings for the columns. For example, rather than have one column for analysis, separate columns can be labeled with individual questions.  This assignment can be also used as a building step in a larger project, such as a literature review. Another option for professors to adopt is to have students complete the matrix online using [Google Sheets](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/). [(Matrix Template)](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ITc2yURAaGF8eaktp4OlrkWPkLZZMxNdmJ3vmKUdbrE/edit?usp=sharing). Using this tool, professors can facilitate peer-review of the matrix in their course. Also, the professor can easily “check-in” on their student’s progress if the timeline is spaced out over the course of several weeks.  Students can also complete a [research log](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qSkdYqB17lhPPD1WCU1BpNORKP96_tSUBKAwKiMftX8/edit?usp=sharing) as a complementary assignment. |
| Audience | 200 or 300 level |
| Learning Objectives | Students will be able to distinguish between scholarly and popular sources on their topic.  Students will summarize and synthesize sources as they relate to their topic.  Students will be introduced to a discipline’s specific research literature. |

[Source Matrix Worksheet](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ITc2yURAaGF8eaktp4OlrkWPkLZZMxNdmJ3vmKUdbrE/edit?usp=sharing) (Google Sheet link)

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| State main research question or topic | | | | | | |
| State subquestions | | | | | | |
| State keywords or search terms used | | | | | | |
| Databases used | | | | | | |
| Websites used | | | | | | |
| Source citation | Main point or Claim (state in your own words) | Methods  Summary | Data Summary | Conclusion | Comments/Analysis  (why is this article important? How is it related or not related to your topic? What are the strengths or weaknesses of the article? How does this article compare with the other articles you found?) | Permalink to source |
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Revised, 2020, Signature Working Group, Rollins College.

Credit: Marilyn K. Sharif – BIS 390 2013; revised 2016; updated 2017, George Mason University, Fairfax.