

Instructor: Michael Powers  
Writing 150  
Law and Social Justice  
Writing Project #3

### **Writing Project #3: Researching the Local Situation**

**Purpose:** The training wheels can finally come off! For this third assignment you will have to conduct your own research to locate and incorporate a variety of sources of your own choosing. While we will continue to work on invention, thesis development, conceptual structures, paragraphing, and evidence and analysis, and revision, we will also focus on how to find, evaluate, select, cite, and integrate secondary sources into an argument.

**Premise:** Research must depart along a definite trajectory, but once you begin, each source can also be an inspiring clue that takes you from one step to another and out into the unknown. How you then connect those traces forms a unique constellation of ideas. In this way, research is both a methodical scholarly process and a journey of discovery.

It is important to keep in mind that research should be focused, but not so narrow that you become blind to other ideas, approaches, or possibilities in understanding your subject. Every discourse community has its own rhetorical conventions, and to some extent its own epistemology—its idea of what constitutes knowledge and how knowledge can be legitimately acquired and disseminated. When we are too closely tied to the conventions of any one discourse community—that of contemporary sociology, for example, or political science—we can miss out on other, perhaps equally important, ways of knowing.

In a region as socially, economically, and even geographically complex as Southern California, easy answers and clear blame become elusive when discussing the many conflicts and social movements that arise month after month. Understanding the push-and-pull factors, the imbalances, and the strategic goals in these situations requires research. Your goal should be to understand as fully as possible the conversation that is already taking place around a given issue, so that you can productively add your own voice to that conversation.

**Writing Task:** Identify a persistent, seemingly stuck social justice issue of local importance to Los Angeles or Southern California. Then research the contemporary debate surrounding this issue, identifying current or proposed efforts to address this problem through changes to law and public policy, and through direct action within communities. Finally, in a 5-7 page, thesis-driven essay, answer the following question:

**What key conflicts are preventing the region from effectively addressing this issue?**