

# Studying with multiple sources

Course information can be delivered through a variety of formats:

<b>Lectures</b> by teacher or guests	<b>Textbooks</b>	<b>Fictional story/novels</b>
<b>Interviews and biographies</b> eyewitness accounts or commentaries	<b>Duplicates/hand-outs</b> of (text) chapters, magazine articles	<b>Original source material</b> as diaries, government documents, proceedings, minutes
<b>Electronic media</b> such as videos, radio programs	<b>Internet</b> web site pages, discussion groups	

Stahl, et al (1998) found that using multiple-text sources can only be effective if we are taught to use them properly. As beginners, we tend to be more consistent in what information we select from short, well-constructed texts. Longer, less structured documents tend to be more confusing.

## Text books

- provide a foundation of facts and viewpoints to provide an overview
- sequence information and facts to understand issues
- create a context for comparing and understanding other sources
- are written in a neutral, objective tone

## Problems with a single text

for a subject or course include:

- information is often "academic" lacking the drama of real life experience, adventure, and experimentation
- bias is hidden or concealed ignoring competing facts, priorities, minority viewpoints
- a single interpretation limits how reported facts are prioritized/sequenced restricting viewpoint (Euro/Caucasian) or subject testing (white male)
- original/eyewitness sources of information are secondary to interpretative accounts

## Additional readings and alternative sources

of information can assist you to

- **create a richer understanding** with additional information and perspective
- **interact or engage with facts, actors, circumstances** of the material
- **practice and familiarize** yourself with new subject vocabulary and concepts
- **process opposing, even conflicting,** points of view in order to assess, evaluate, defend

## Conflicting information however can impede your learning,

unless you can

- **analyze it** for commonalties

- **reorganize or synthesize**  
your model for understanding it
- **consider the impact of, and evaluate, conflicts**
- **filter it with a context presented in the basic text**

**Some Recommendations:**

- **Read your text**  
to provide the factual framework from which to begin  
(see also [Taking notes from a text book](#))
- **Proceed to shorter, more focused sources**  
of information especially if you are inexperienced in the subject
- **Practice with multiple texts** to improve your evaluative skills:
  - compare and contrast your sources
  - analyze them for bias or viewpoint
  - note when and where they were written, and how that affects the viewpoint
- **Understand the connections**  
between events, actors, and circumstances rather than learn a series of "facts" which can be easily be forgotten
- **Use in-class or on-line discussion time**  
to test your understanding and ask questions!