

Assignment

Handout

Mapping the Conversation—Finding Connections

Step 1: Note Taking

Now that you've completed reading all texts and taking notes (see your Reading & Note Taking handout), put all the different pieces of information you collected on sticky notes. Capture details, even small ones. Think about using different colors for different texts.

Step 2: Clustering

Capture details, even the small ones. Use your physical space—cluster the sticky notes according to the texts.

Map out ideas & Get deeper into your analysis

See if you can find themes, problems, or topics across the different texts. Include context whenever necessary and helpful. Mix and match your sticky notes.

Here are some relationships you might find:

- Historical—think about the “before and after” of your topic; how was it a product of its particular historical circumstances
- Disciplinary—multiple academic disciplines often study the same phenomenon
- Cultural or social—consider national, regional, ethnic, racial, gender, or other kinds of social identities

Step 3: Drawing Connections

Start with anything, perhaps a problem or a common theme. Organize the ideas in your clusters. How do clusters and ideas connect? Why do clusters and ideas connect? Move the sticky notes across the whiteboard; use markers, pens, colors, paper to visualize the connections you discover. Write and draw. Play with fonts, arrows, shapes, and sizes, and images. Do whatever helps you visualize the connections you are drawing.

And repeat! Rethink, reorganize, keep asking why.

Step 4: Discussion

What topics have you identified? What connections have you discovered? Have you found conflicts? Who agrees with whom and who disagrees? How do the different ideas build on each other? What is missing in the conversation? Think about the authors and their audiences—how does that help you put the texts in perspective? Where can you take your research from here? What other texts do you need to find and read for your own research?