The *MLA International Bibliography* indexes virtually all published scholarly essays and books on literatures written in modern languages. It’s available online via the Buley library website. Once you've located some articles worth pursuing, use CONSULS (also on the Buley website) to find out whether Buley owns or has access to the journals or books in question. If Buley doesn't have what you're after, you may file requests electronically for materials held by other CSU libraries (3-4 days till arrival) or from the library world at large (4-10 days).

**American Literary Scholarship.** Annual review of year's scholarship in American literature, published by the American Literature Section of the MLA. Runs two years behind the current year. Buley receives ALS, but may be a year behind in shelving it. A good place to find out what the current questions, issues, and approaches relating to a given author or work are. *The Year's Work in English Studies* performs a similar function for the broader field of English literary studies.

Sounds obvious, but check the CONSULS online catalog for book titles and essay collections that are right up your particular research alley and held by Buley or another CSU library. Try several different search strategies: by primary work title, primary work author, general and specific subject words. Go browse the shelves near any likely book title you find: there will likely be other titles of interest nearby.

**The web** is a disorganized mess, but following links to related sites may lead you to useful materials of various kinds. Be sure, however, to make careful decisions about the accuracy and reputation of these sources. Anyone can publish anything on the web—there are no web-universal procedures for scholarly review. Therefore, you need to pay close attention to who is responsible for the content and what their credentials are before incorporating web research sources in your work. Most web sources—except those that reprint published work, primary or secondary—are more useful as general aids to your thinking and research than as directly "cite-able" scholarly sources. (Under no circumstances, for example, should you use Wikipedia as a cited research source; Wikipedia entries are created, revised, and reviewed entirely by Wikipedia's users, who may or may not know what they're talking about.) Web resources can be reasonably good at giving a sense of general biographical, cultural, or literary historical background; “triangulate” multiple sources to double-check basic factual information. Other web resources are bona fide, intellectually robust, authoritative sources of information and opinion on various literary studies topics. But—again—it’s up to you to discern which kinds of sources are which. Depending on what course you’re taking, course-specific links to useful web resources may be available on the course website. Their presence there means that I am vouching for their usefulness on one level or another, but my imprimatur doesn't absolve you of responsibility for sussing out what kind of resource it is that you’re looking at, and what its appropriate uses are. See the Web Evaluation Guide for more information.
**Backwards chronology.** Always begin with more recent scholarship (within the last ten or fifteen years) and work backwards. While much older scholarship is still useful and valid, the older the work, the more likely its conclusions have been supplanted, refuted, or modified by subsequent scholarly work. This means, too, that you’re likely to find the most useful older criticism by tracing citations in newer scholarship.

**Essay anthologies.** Some important and influential essays originally published in journals that Buley does not own may be available in book form. On the other hand, try to get a bead on how the essays in a collection were selected; sometimes publication of these books results as much from nepotism and/or networking as it does from careful scholarly review.

**Different angles of approach.** You might (depending on the assignment) start with a topic—a particular primary work; a relevant literary, cultural, social, or historical context (etc.)—and go see what people have been writing about it and what niche their work leaves for you. Or you might browse the scholarship in search of a particular criticism that suggests a launching point for your own inquiry, either in opposition or extension. Or you might apply a theoretical paradigm (Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, etc.) to a particular literary text and see where the results take you.

Use your own **curiosity and serendipity.** Successful literary research depends just as often on accidentally discovered connections as it does on deliberate research paths. Be sure to check footnotes, endnotes, and bibliographies of resources you find. These can lead to other useful sources and suggest alternative approaches to your text and/or topic.

No matter what sort of search you are conducting, try searching under several (at least) **different search terms:** synonymous wording for key terms of your idea, allied or contiguous topics, "back doors" to the same topic.

**Avoid** using literary dictionaries, digests, abstracts or "Magill on Literature" (and the like) as sources. These tools are potentially useful in sorting out your own thinking and plotting a research path for yourself but they do not, in and of themselves, constitute legitimate sources for "cite-able" scholarly research. Also avoid sources like "Spark Notes," "Cliff Notes," "Monarch Notes," and the like. These are not legitimate research sources. Their ideas are usually derivative from more legitimate sources, and they often get key facts about texts and authors wrong. Likewise the aforementioned Wikipedia and its siblings.

**Use me.** Come pump my brain for ideas and suggestions in response to your initial insights, intuitions, or questions—and do so EARLY in the research and writing process.