**Citation Mapping for Religious Studies Assignment**

**I. Introduction & Learning Outcomes**

This assignment is intended to introduce students in religious studies classes to the concept that scholarship is a conversation. Secondarily, it’s meant to illustrate the constructed and contextual nature of authority in academic discourse. This activity can be used to help students build up to completing an annotated bibliography, research paper, or presentation that requires scholarly sources.

At the completion of this assignment, students should be able to:

* Identify citations within a given book or article and look them up using Google Scholar.
* Find newer works that cite a given article or book using Google Scholar.
* Identify connections between scholarly books/articles by comparing their citations.
* Recognize standard elements of Chicago style citations.

**II. Assignment Instructions**

1. Begin by selecting an entry from the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (or another accessible subject encyclopedia with bibliographies attached to each article).
2. After skimming the entry, pick one citation from it that interests you. This will be the center of the citation web you will sketch.

(If the exercise is being done in class, consider limiting students to articles or books that can be accessed electronically. Look for open access PDF or library subscription links on the right-hand side of the Google Scholar search results. For any device not connected to the internet using your university’s network, turn on your school’s library links under Settings > Library Links.)

1. Use the “Cite” feature within Google Scholar to auto-generate the book/article citation in Chicago style. Do a rudimentary check against the online [*Chicago Manual of Style* Quick Guide](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) to ensure that all the major components are there (check the book/article itself to fill in gaps). Record the citation in the center of a sheet of paper, MS PowerPoint slide, or other document. Leave enough room to add citations to the left and right.
2. Record the number of citing documents included within Google Scholar in parentheses after this and the rest of the citations you add (Cited by X).
3. Look at the text of your chosen article/book to find two books or articles it cites. Add the Chicago style citations for these two on the left side of the citation map. Draw arrows pointing from your initial article/book back to these earlier books or articles, showing that the work in the center used them as sources.
4. Search for your initial article/book’s citation in Google Scholar. Then follow the “Cited by #” link to find two books or articles that cite your initial work. Add those two newer citations to the right side of the citation map in the same way (include the number of citing items and draw arrow to signify citations).
5. Finally, note any other connections through citation between the books and articles in the citation map (you’ll need to check the reference lists of all 5 of the books/articles you included). Draw arrows to show these links.

**III. Discussion Questions**

Consider wrapping up the assignment with discussion questions like the following to encourage reflection.

* Why do scholars and students of religion cite others’ work in their own academic writing? What functions do these sources serve?
* Can you make any inferences about the relationships between the books or articles you’ve identified based upon the citation map you’ve plotted?
* Google Scholar citation counts only include items that the Google infrastructure can find on the open web and appear to mostly likely be scholarly. Generally, this excludes many books and articles over 10 years old and includes a good deal of non-scholarly material.

What conclusions could you draw from the citation counts you found? What conclusions would you refrain from drawing?

* How would you move forward to develop this into a research paper? What are your next steps?