[This Handout Supports Goals 4 and 8]

A Brief Guide to MLA In-Text Citation

Just like in the rest of the courses you take at IUSB, when you are working with outside sources in an essay you are writing for one of your first-year writing classes, you are expected to give proper credit in the form of in-text citations to the author(s) of any and all material you use, whether it be material you quote or material you paraphrase. The citation style will vary from discipline to discipline. In English—as well as in most of the rest of the Humanities—the style you will use is that of the Modern Language Association, or the MLA.

Basic MLA In-Text Citations for Print Sources

The basic MLA in-text citation, also sometimes called a parenthetical reference since the citation appears in parenthesis, consists of:

- the last name of the author(s) you are quoting from or paraphrasing
- and the page number in the print source you are using where the information can be found.

For example, say that you are writing an essay about the role comic books played in changing the face of the pop culture landscape in the years following the Great Depression, and you are using David Hajdu’s book *The Ten-Cent Plague: The Great Comic-Book Scare and How it Changed America* as one of your sources. An in-text citation would look like this:

> The population boom that came after the Great Depression meant that in the years leading up to World War Two there were more Americans under the age of eighteen than there had been at any other time in history. This was good news for the comic book industry. Indeed, it seemed that “Superman and his costumed progeny bounded into the world at a good time, or the time fostered their propagation. Young people were buying more and more comics every month—and not only the ones about superheroes, but books with adventures of every sort, as long as they were depicted in panels and word balloons” (Hajdu 33).

Notice the placement of the citation: outside the quotation marks, before the end punctuation of the sentence. Notice also that there is no punctuation at the end of the quoted passage.

There are only two instances where you would place an end punctuation mark inside the quotation marks:

- if the passage you quote ends with an exclamation point
- or if it ends with a question mark.
In both cases, however, the end punctuation for the sentence would still come outside the quotation marks, after the citation.

There are two instances where you would not need to use the author’s name in your parenthetical reference:

- The first is when you continue to quote consecutively from the same source. In keeping with our example, if the next twelve quotes in your essay come from Hajdu’s book, you only need to cite by page number. If you were to quote from another source and then go back to quoting from Hajdu, then you will need to once again cite Hajdu by author and page number the first time you use him again.

- The second exception is if you were to mention the name of the author you are quoting from in the signal phrase you use to introduce the quote. Here again, you will only cite by page number. For example:

One perhaps unexpected genre of comic that drew considerable ire from parents, pastors and legislators were the so-called “romance comics.” Much like the “true crime” comics of the day, the story lines in romance comics tended to be fairly formulaic, but some writers went against the dominant trends and wrote stories that subverted the prevalent gender roles of the day. David Hajdu describes these particular stories, found in the pages of books like *Teen-Age Romances* and *Blue Ribbon Comics*, as “stories of free-spirited, willful girls who thought and acted independently, challenging not only their parents, but their boyfriends—adults and males, the two major forces of authority at the time. No other genre of comic books was as overt in its depiction of youthful rebellion as romance comics” (161).

One more thing: if you are working with more than one text by the same author, the in-text citation should contain a shortened version of the title of the piece—generally the first significant word of the title—so that the reader knows which text you are referring to. For example, if you were using more than one book by David Hajdu, your parenthetical reference for the passage quoted in the first example would be (Hajdu, *Ten-Cent 33*).

### Indirect Citations

Occasionally, you may find yourself wanting to quote a passage from an essay where the author that essay is actually quoting from someone else. This is what is referred to as an indirect citation, and it is perfectly acceptable for you to use an indirect citation. What you need to remember is that you need to give credit to both of your sources—the original source and the source you are quoting from. This can be done in a couple of different ways.

Indirect citations are probably easier to explain with examples. This is an example of an indirect citation where none of the authors are mentioned in the signal phrase:
Unsurprisingly, not all comic book publishers were happy about the creation of a Comics Code to regulate the content of their books. Some, like EC Comics, opted to pull certain titles from the shelves rather than subject their titles to what they considered to be censorship. The final issue of each of EC’s horror and suspense comics contained an editorial note that summed up the plight many publishers faced:

As a result of the hysterical, injudicious, and unfounded charges leveled and crime and horror comics, many retailers and wholesalers throughout the country have been intimidated into refusing to handle this type of magazine. Although we at EC still believe, as we have in the past, that the charges against horror and crime comics are utter nonsense, there’s no point in going into a defense of this kind of literature at the present time. Economically, our situation is acute. Magazines that do not get onto the newsstands do not sell. We are forced to capitulate. We give up. WE’VE HAD IT! (Gaines qtd. in Hajdu 290).

When the author is mentioned in the signal phrase, the citation would look like this:

Critics of comic books were plentiful, but none were more vocal than psychologist Dr. Fredric Wertham. His book *The Seduction of the Innocence* drew an explicit link between comic books and juvenile delinquency. In it, Wertham argued:

The very children for whose unruly behavior I would want to prescribe psychotherapy in an anti-superman direction have been nourished (or rather poisoned) by the endless repetition of Superman stories. How can they respect the hard-working mother, father or teacher who is so pedestrian, trying to teach common rules of conduct, wanting you to keep your feet on the ground and unable even figuratively speaking to fly through the air? Psychologically Superman undermines the authority and the dignity of the ordinary man and woman in the minds of children (qtd. in Hajdu 236).

**Online Sources**

Many of the sources you will be using in your research papers you may well find online, likely from one of the online subscription databases available via our library’s home page. Online sources can be incredibly handy and save you a lot of time, especially as more and more of them become available in full-text format through databases like EBSCOhost and JSTOR.
There are a couple of things to keep in mind when citing sources you found online:

- When citing an article that you found in a database like EBSCOhost, if you have the **original page numbers**—meaning that you have a .pdf version of the article exactly as it looked in its original print version—you follow the exact same in-text citation rules as you would for any other print source.

- If you do not have the original page numbers—meaning that you have an HTML version of the article that printed out with “Page X of Y” in one of the corners, usually the upper right, of the page—you **cannot cite in-text by page number**. The page numbers on your printed version only correspond to the copy in your hand, not a print version somewhere that anyone else could refer to. In these instances, your parenthetical reference will contain **only the author’s last name**. If you mention the author of the piece in your signal phrase, you will have no parenthetical reference at all. Do not cite by paragraph number, line number, or attempt to guess the page number from the original print sources based on the information you have for your Works Cited page.