Varieties of Radical Dissent: Evaluation/Conversation Prelim

The next stage of your bibliographic work is to fit together sources that are in conversation with one another. Sometimes this conversation will be literal: a set of authors will reference each other, respond to one another, or be in outright debate. Just as often, you will have to create the conversation by connecting authors who are talking about similar things but with differing conclusions. Just as often you may find that your "conversation" is one-sided or otherwise missing a voice, and you'll need to return to the library to find additional sources.

A Conversation: Evaluation/Conversation Bibliography

Reflect:
Return to your bibliography and to your thinking about the environment (including your original Pitch Paragraph and your Headnote sketch of the major ideas being raised by these authors). Whose idea seems most closely allied to your own? Whose idea stands in opposition to yours—but will need to be acknowledged before it can be turned away from? Who among your sources is compelling enough to take a central position in your research; and is this source more an ally or more an opponent?

Focused Follow-Up Research:
With these determinations in mind (and the feedback of the Pitch Class), return to your research. Whose voice are you lacking? If you need a better ally, set out to find one. If you have no opposing views in your bibliography, go find a source which is counter to the others. You will likely find these additional sources by tracking down the breadcrumbs in one of the articles from your Preliminary Bibliography. Or you might return to the databases with new keywords that come from one of those first articles. (This might even be the time to look in the popular press to see what the "public" viewpoint is.)

Each of you will find yourselves in a slightly different situation at this point. You are welcome to distance yourself from this first set of sources if none seems to be going anywhere. If this is your situation, however, you might want to talk with me so we can discuss tactics for an effective second round of research.

Re-assess & Re-group:
You may have many sources in play at this point, but you ultimately want to create a tight set of voices who are all talking about related or relatable ideas. All of these sources may have been in your Preliminary Bibliography (if you are a lucky or an exceptional researcher) or none may have been there. I recommend keeping 4 working sources—1 more than the required 3 for the 3rd Essay so that you can still throw one out if it ultimately doesn't fit after you write your Workshop Draft.

Strategize & Orchestrate the Conversation (Write):
Now, the writing for this prelim: Re-present your sources to me in a "conversation paragraph." Give me a brief analysis and evaluation (not summary) of each of your sources as you show me how you might configure them all in your argument. Who starts the conversation (and what issues does he or she raise)? Who extends those issues? Who complicates them? Consider ways in which the same voices might speak to and disagree with each other (on which issues do they align and on which do they separate?).