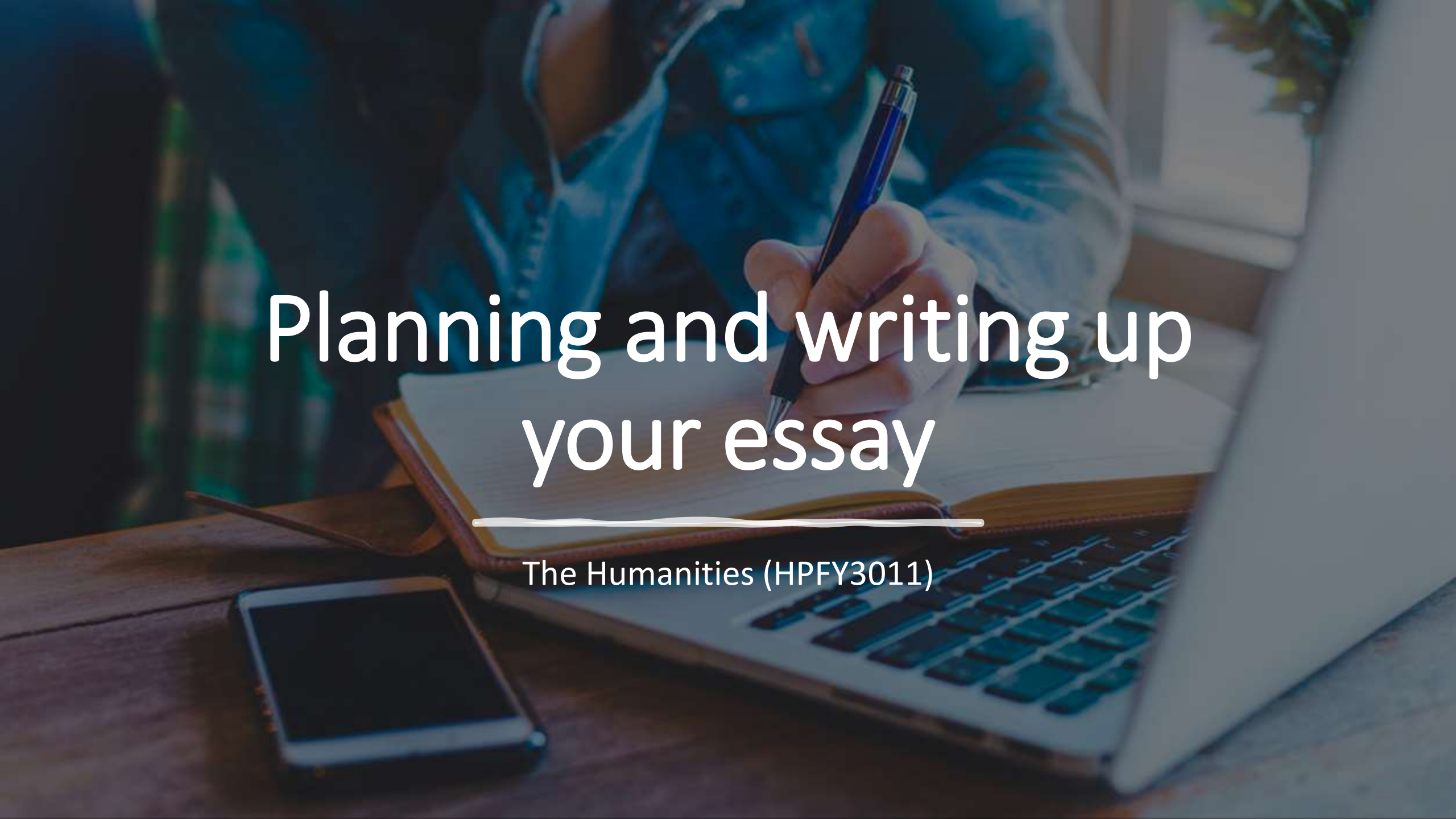




Planning and writing up your essay

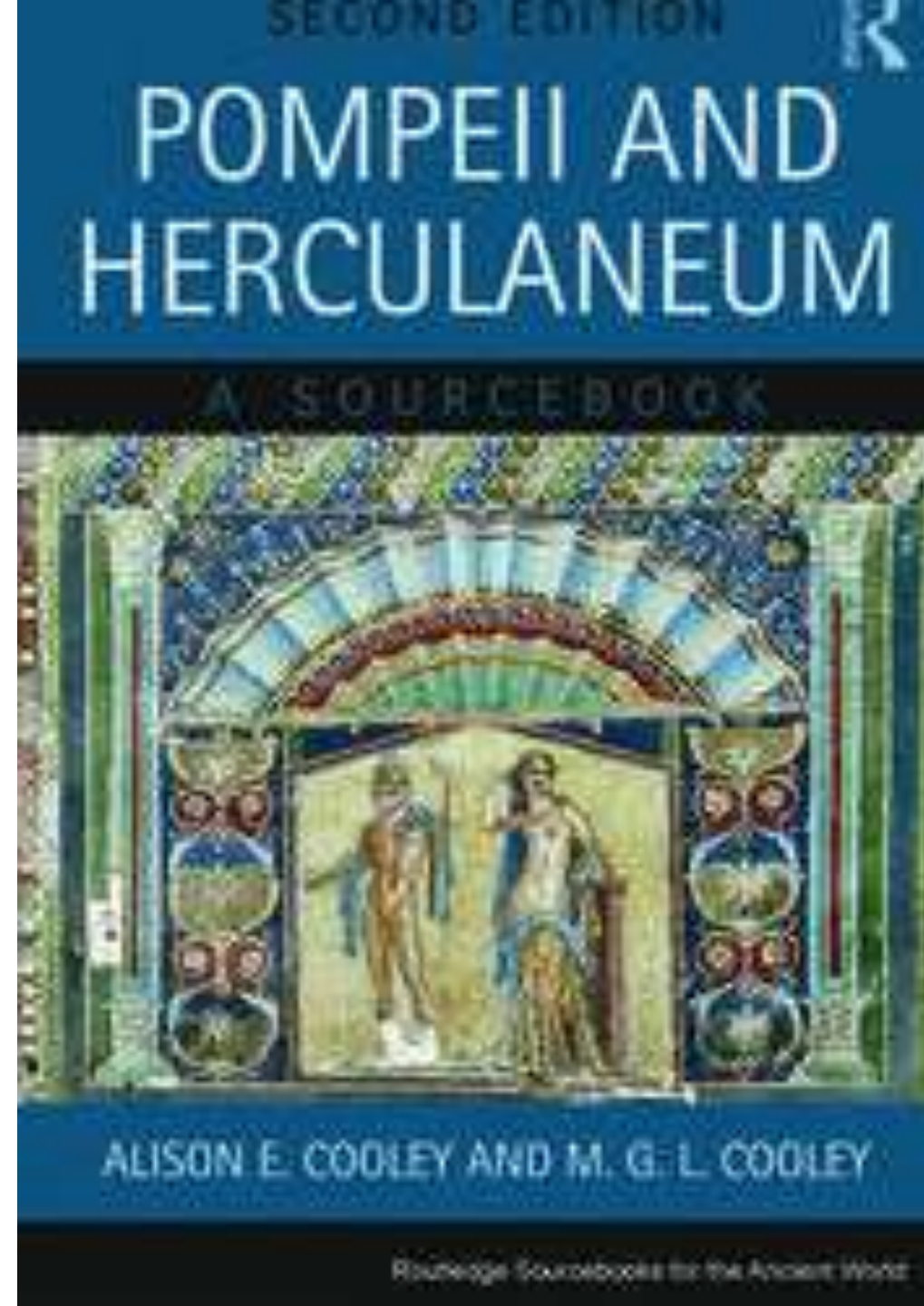
The Humanities (HPFY3011)



What are scholars trying to do?

Purpose of scholarship – what is the writer try to present? (1)

- Presenting “data”: an interim field report (arch), an edited text (Classics, medieval studies, etc.).
- Providing an overview / comments to guide the reader: such as a commentary.
- A source book (for students and researchers).
 - Sometimes with commentary.



Purpose of scholarship – what is the writer try to present? (2)

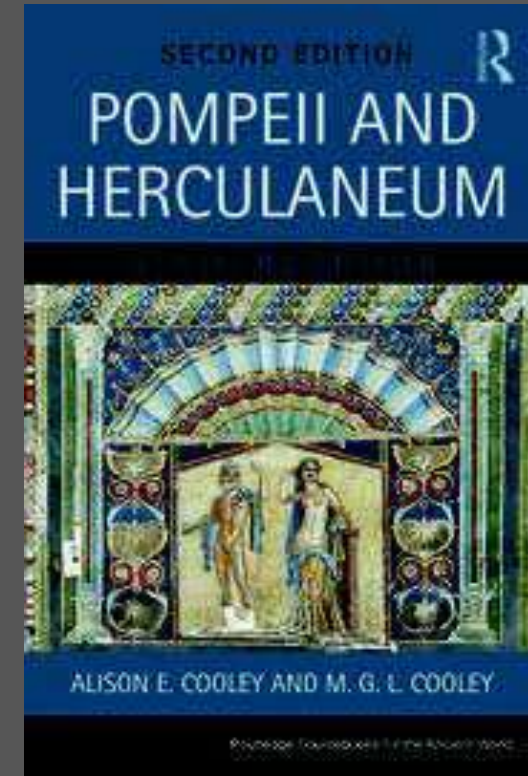
- Presenting an argument: their own argument (but likely built upon the work of earlier scholars).
 - Challenging an existing school of thought or consensus.
 - Supporting (but possible adding to or nuancing) an existing argument.
- Fictional or poetic writing – conveys ideas, provoking thoughts.



Source
material

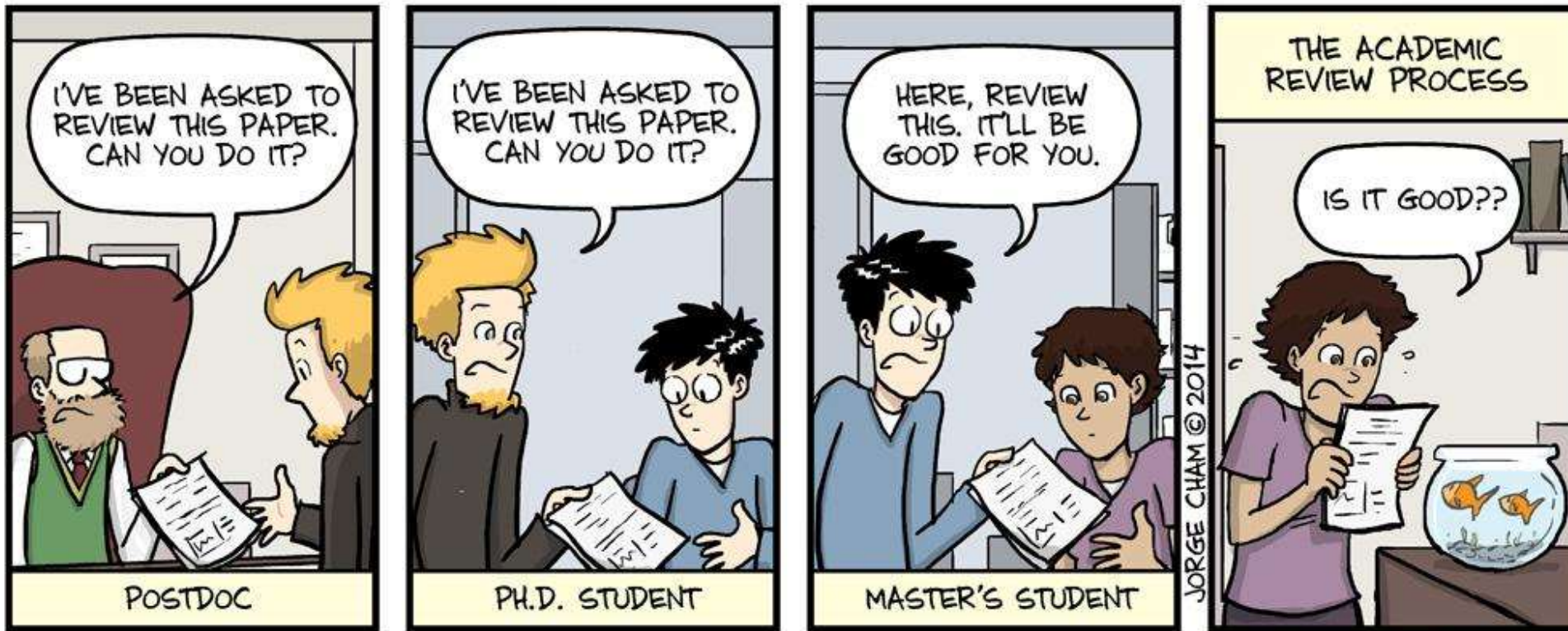


- One of your first steps should be to identify your source material / evidence.
- Following the bread-crumb trail: what sources do introductory (or advanced) scholarly texts on your topic mention?
 - Remember that scholars are not infallible, may only be interested in specific things, etc...
- Using bibliographic overviews:
 - Check if there are any specialist thesaurus/encyclopaedic style resources (e.g. Brill's New Pauly).
- In some disciplines you can find useful source books.



The image features a central white diamond shape containing the text "Academic scholarship". This diamond is set against a background of overlapping geometric shapes in shades of blue, grey, and yellow. To the right of the diamond, there is a photograph of a graduation cap (mortarboard) resting on a stack of books. A rolled-up diploma tied with a red ribbon is placed in front of the cap. The entire composition is framed by a light blue border.

Academic scholarship



Utilising reviews and abstracts

- Abstracts give a précis of what a book or journal article is about.
 - **Usually written by the authors.**
- Reviews provide a summary / judgement of the book.
 - **Written by others.**
- They may help provide you with inroads into scholarly debates.

Picking out Debates

“Traditionally, scholars have regarded goods that were brought to the Roman Empire from lands such as India... as luxuries, which were consumed by the wealthy and those of high social status... However, more recently, Sidebotham set a trend by arguing that some of these eastern imports, especially spices and aromatics, held medicinal, funerary, religious, and culinary importance in Roman society, and were therefore considered by the elite as necessities and not luxuries... This article argues that the notion of these goods being either luxuries or necessities is problematic and misleading...” – Cobb, M. A. (2013) ‘The Reception and Consumption of Eastern Goods in Roman Society’, *Greece & Rome* 60 (1): 136-152, at 136-37.



What to do with debates

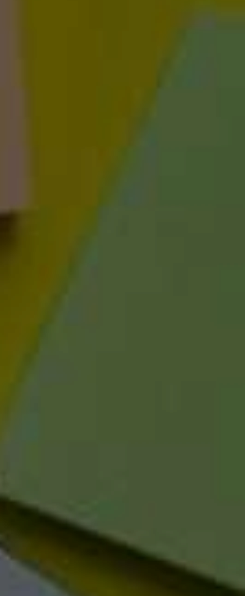
- You are bound to come across debates in your research.
 - It might be central to your subject or tangential.
- You need to show that you know of the debate (all sides).
 - Not just the side you agree with.
- You will need to reference both sides of the debate.
- Always consider how the debate impacts on your argument(s).

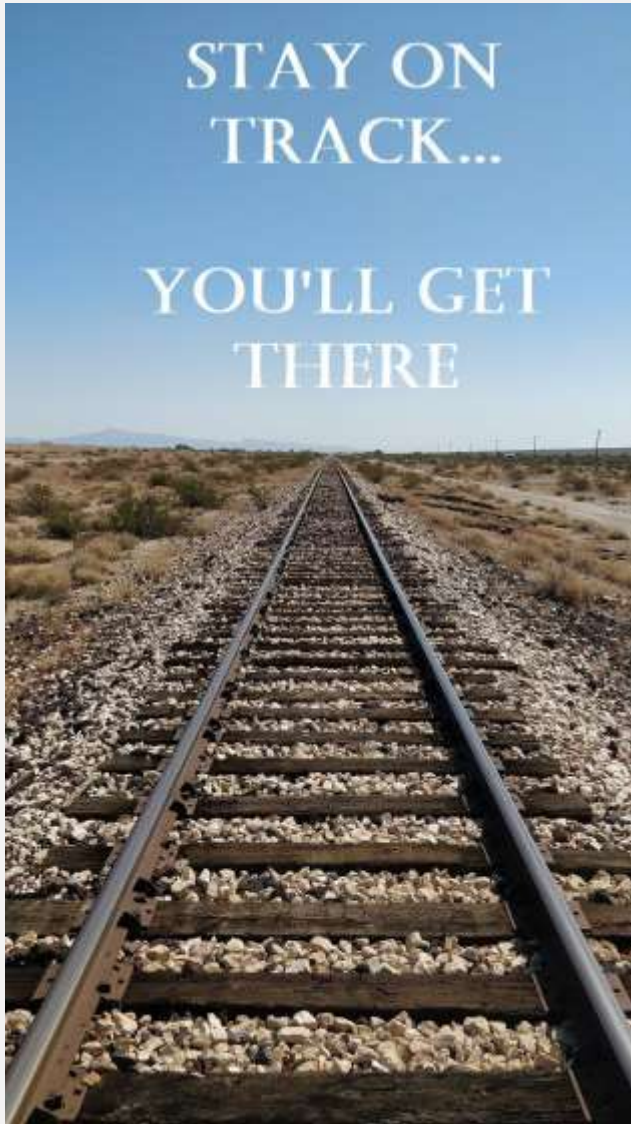
Courtesy

- Never rubbish scholarship!
- Be clear in your opinions but do not present them as the undoubted truth.
- If you disagree, present your arguments with evidence and reasoning.
 - **In other words, avoid adjectives: e.g. unbelievable, out of touch, stupid, uninformed.**



Study plans?





Planning and keeping on track

- Take note of your working patterns and what is effective for you:
 - Is it worth keeping a project diary or progress journal?
- Is it worth creating a study plan for your assignment?:
 - Achievable targets, week by week? [tick-box approach]
 - Do you still need to get access to material that you have not yet acquired?
 - Factor in sufficient time for proof-reading and getting feedback
 - a day or two before is very risky.