**Read this excerpt** from “Academic Ethics: Should Scholars Avoid Citing the Work of Awful People?” by Brian Leiter, a professor of jurisprudence and director of the Center for Law, Philosophy & Human Values at the University of Chicago:

“Across academe, many scholars have been suggesting that we should not cite the scholarship of bad people. A recent essay in The Chronicle by Nikki Usher, an associate professor of media and public affairs at George Washington University, posed the question starkly: "Do we still keep citing the scholarship of serial harassers and sexists? Within their institutions, they may finally get the fate due to them (or not). But their citational legacy will live on, sometimes even in the form of the pro-forma citations that reviewers expect to see in a manuscript, and ask for if they don’t." She is not alone in raising this concern.

* After John Searle, the Berkeley philosopher of language, was sued for sexual harassment, Jennifer Saul, a philosopher of language and feminist activist at the University of Sheffield in Britain, suggested that, "If you can avoid teaching/discussing [Searle’s work], that may be the best strategy."
* Zachary Furste, a media-studies scholar, taught a class at the University of Southern California in which students read work by the literary theorist Avital Ronell — sued by a former graduate student for sexual and other harassment — but said if he taught the class in the future, "I haven’t really settled whether I will keep it."
* James Sterba, a philosopher at the University of Notre Dame, responded to allegations of sexual misconduct against Thomas Pogge, a political philosopher at Yale University, by declaring he would no longer include Pogge’s work in graduate classes: "You don’t need him. He carries too much baggage — he doesn’t have to be cited anymore. … He’s a negative image and we don’t need that. Maybe if he was Einstein we’d have to cite him, but he’s not."

**What is a scholar to do?**

I propose a simple answer: Insofar as you aim to contribute to scholarship in your discipline, cite work that is relevant regardless of the author’s misdeeds…The problem with deciding not to cite certain scholars because of their personal malfeasance should now be obvious. Scholarly citation has only two purposes in a discipline:

* To acknowledge a prior contribution to knowledge on which your work depends.
* To serve as an epistemic authority for a claim relevant to your own contribution to knowledge. (By epistemic authority I mean simply another scholar’s research that is invoked to establish the reliability or truth of some other claim on which your work depends.)

In each case, citation has its purpose — ensuring the integrity of the scholarly discipline in question. Failure to cite because of a scholar’s misconduct — whether for being a Nazi or a sexual harasser — betrays the entire scholarly enterprise that justifies the existence of universities and the protection of academic freedom. Of course, sexists and sexual harassers also betrayed their scholarly obligations by their citation practices and by driving their victims from the scholarly discipline...But to excise from the canon of relevant knowledge those who are appalling people is simply a further betrayal of what justifies the existence of institutions devoted to scholarship. You should not — under any circumstances — adjust your citation practices to punish scholars for bad behavior.”

Answer these questions with your partner:

1. According to the excerpt above, what are the pros and cons of citing problematic scholars?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the author’s opinion on citing? Why or why not?
3. How does the act of traditional citation reinforce oppression (e.g. classism, whiteness, sexism, racism, ageism, etc.) in our society?

Excerpt from Leiter, B. (2018, October 25). *Academic ethics: Should scholars avoid citing the work of awful people?* The Chronicle of Higher Education. https://www.chronicle.com/article/Academic-Ethics-Should/244882