**What is a Scholarly Source?**

When I use the term "scholarly source", I mean a source that is peer reviewed or published in a recognized scholarly source, like a journal or a university publisher. How do you tell the difference between a scholarly source and other sources?

**Here are a few tips:**

1. Is the journal published by a scholarly association or society, or a university, or a recognized scholarly publisher? If it is not one of these, then it may not be a scholarly journal. Now, you might not know all of the scholarly associations or publishers, so you might have to apply some other criteria...

2. Are the articles reviewed in some way? You may well find a statement in the masthead about reviewing policy. If the articles are sent out to "peers", or other members in a field, for anonymous review, that's a good indication that the journal is scholarly.

3. What are the articles like? Are they written for an academic audience, or for a popular audience? How do they use evidence or support? Are the citations clear and abundant (in general - not every article will necessarily be like this).

4. What if it is a book you are looking at? Well, same thing about the publishers - there are some recognized academic publishers that regularly send work to peer reviewers before it is published. Some of these are university presses, others (e.g., Routledge, Blackwell, Peter Lang, etc.) are not associated with universities, but are still excellent academic publishers.

5. Is a course text a scholarly source? If it is a textbook written for classroom use, probably not. It is intended as a teaching tool. It should not be used in a paper, although you can use the references in the textbook to look in more scholarly sources. However, sometimes professors assign classic works as classroom reading. These are works not originally written for classroom use, and can be used in a paper. When in doubt, ask the professor.
The key in looking for a scholarly source is to identify the mechanisms used to ensure that the article is of a high standard. Sometimes we just trust the reputation of a journal or publisher, and sometimes we actually look for a statement about the review process. Magazines, in general, do not have a review process, and their material is meant for a wider audience. It may be valuable, but it is not scholarly.