

**INTRODUCTION TO  
ADDITIONAL SOURCES**

*Yang Interests, Yin Mindset*

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## **Yang Interests, Yin Mindset**

Near the end of my second year at the University of Georgia, I had a mid-college crisis. I was preparing for finals, strolling through the Miller Learning Center in search of a free study table. As I was scouting, my eyes were drawn to the whiteboards covered in wet, black marker. The whiteboards scattered with formulas. With beautiful sequences of numbers and algorithms that fit together like puzzle pieces. I found myself staring at these boards, mesmerized by the perfection of logic and the satisfaction I felt understanding how each process shown led to the end result. There was only one problem I couldn't understand: why was my mind so quick to pick up these formulas when I was far from a STEM major? I was a Cultural Anthropology major who had not taken a calculus or physics class in over two years. I began to question my decisions, and wonder if I had chosen the right path.

My interests have always been in the humanities. From a young age I excelled in art classes and I was never dethroned from being the first-chair violin in orchestra. I participated in choirs from elementary school through college and took AP art classes to pursue my artistic passions. Every opportunity I had to take a class in history, I took without a second thought. However, I could never get the grades I wanted in the social sciences. My grades were consistently highest in math and science classes, as these subjects came easy to me. I found myself studying for hours trying to memorize facts for history classes only to get mediocre grades far beneath what I had hoped for, while I would walk into chemistry tests without studying and make perfect scores. This pattern continued into college; I was thrilled when I was finally able to take any humanities class I wanted! African Religion? Count me in. Visual Anthropology? Awesome! Classical Mythology? Signed up and ready to go. But despite my excitement for these classes, my grades continued to dominate in my science classes. The first perfect score I made in college was not on any humanities test — it was on an Organismal Biology exam. My interests were heavily geared towards the humanities,

while my brain seemed to function scientifically. It began to become increasingly apparent to me that what I desired to learn and discuss was different than what my brain wanted to process.

When I first discovered this discrepancy, I was unaware of the extent to which it affected, and continues to affect, my writing. While I enjoy looking at literary works through a creative lens, my mind is often controlled by facts and logic. Finding the balance between creative and logical has always been a struggle for me, as it is easy for me to wander off in thought without properly explaining my ideas or do the complete opposite and write a dry, historically-based paper with no intrigue. Throughout this course, I was able to complement logic and creativity by finding creative angles to analyze literary works while backing these ideas up with historical and cultural context.

In my essay "Marxism in a Bug-shell," I struggled with relying too heavily on my knowledge and the logical side of my brain. This is what I relate to the yin element in the Taijitu, or the yin-yang symbol. Because yin in Chinese philosophy represents nighttime, rest, and the moon, I chose this element to represent the grounded and logical side of my writing. It was easy for me to speak about the elements of Marxism that were present in Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis," but I felt that my creativity was being overrun by historical interpretations. To find the right balance, I took elements of the story that seemed interesting and looked at them from a creative angle that may not have been explored before. In Kafka's "Metamorphosis," a working-class man named Gregor Samsa finds himself transformed into an insect overnight. Because of my inclination towards abstraction, I interpreted Gregor's transformation as a creative representation of oppression and struggle, claiming "Kafka creates a literal character transformation into a bug to imply that the working class are just as good as bugs to the upper class" (Riggs). I then supported this idea with textual evidence and historical context using the claim that "[t]his visual representation of class struggle forms the

base of Kafka's argument, as class struggle leads to alienation and, eventually, to the loss of one's humanity" (Riggs).

The opposing, yet complementary, element in the Taijitu is the yang element, which represents daytime, light, and activity. This is what I relate to the creativity in my writing. My yang element has always been my driving factor. Because of this, I instinctively interpret literary works abstractly, and when explaining my ideas to others I am often greeted with "Oh, I did not see it that way at all," or even "What? I don't get that." Nine times out of ten, this commentary discourages me and zaps my creative spirit. However, in my final essay "Hamlet's Battle With Patriarchal Gender Identity," I decided to hold onto my creative idea and risk the criticism.

My initial idea for this paper was one that I had difficulty explaining. It was an unconventional take on the ever-famous Hamlet play that has been analyzed for centuries. My idea was this: Hamlet's character continuously struggles with his self-identity and the apparent feminine qualities he possesses; however, these characteristics that he battles against are actually perfectly normal and do not truly represent a feminine nature within himself as they are merely the result of being raised in an extreme patriarchal society. Unfortunately, this abstract idea was more than a little difficult to properly articulate. However, by working through several drafts and revisions I was able to utilize my yang element to complement and aid my yin idea, and it blossomed into my best essay of the semester. My final thesis was my ideal balance of yin and yang: "Because of these traditional yet stereotypical views of gendered attributes, Hamlet's masculinity is questioned when he shows a reliance on emotion and passivity, and consequently he harshly compares himself to dominant men and projects his insecurities onto the women he loves. Hamlet's character shows the adverse effects of battling a deeply rooted patriarchal concept of gender identity, and how this can lead to self-renunciation and contribute to a loss of the will to live."

The most apparent imbalance of yin and yang in my writing was revealed to me through my writing process itself. I would begin my essays with a yang idea, and add

yin evidence and support to complete my second draft, simply tweaking these existing elements for my final draft rather than focusing on balancing the two. This process made it obvious when I was in an excess or absence of either element, as some of my works contained more yin and others, more yang. Too much "fluff" in an essays presents itself as an excess of yang, and conversely the overuse of evidence that is strictly factual shouts "Too much yin!"

Looking back over my essays, as well as my other writings throughout this course, it is now easy for me to notice when my balance is too far shifted towards yin or reversely too far shifted towards yang. I have always been aware of the lack of balance in my life between my creative interests and scientific mind. However, before I took this class I was not aware of how greatly this imbalance showed in my writing. The process of writing three drafts for each paper was totally new to me and made me uneasy, as I only saw it as extra work, but this was far from the truth. What I did not realize was how much I missed in each paper from one draft to the next, and how blatantly this process would show the imbalances in my writing. Now that I am more self-aware, I can finally have peace knowing that it is possible to create a healthy balance.