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DHS Workshop: Writing Research Papers

Ash Catonio and Elliot Fonarev

Welcome

Elliot Fonarev
elliot.fonarev@mail.utoronto.ca

Ash Catonio
ash.catonio@mail.utoronto.ca

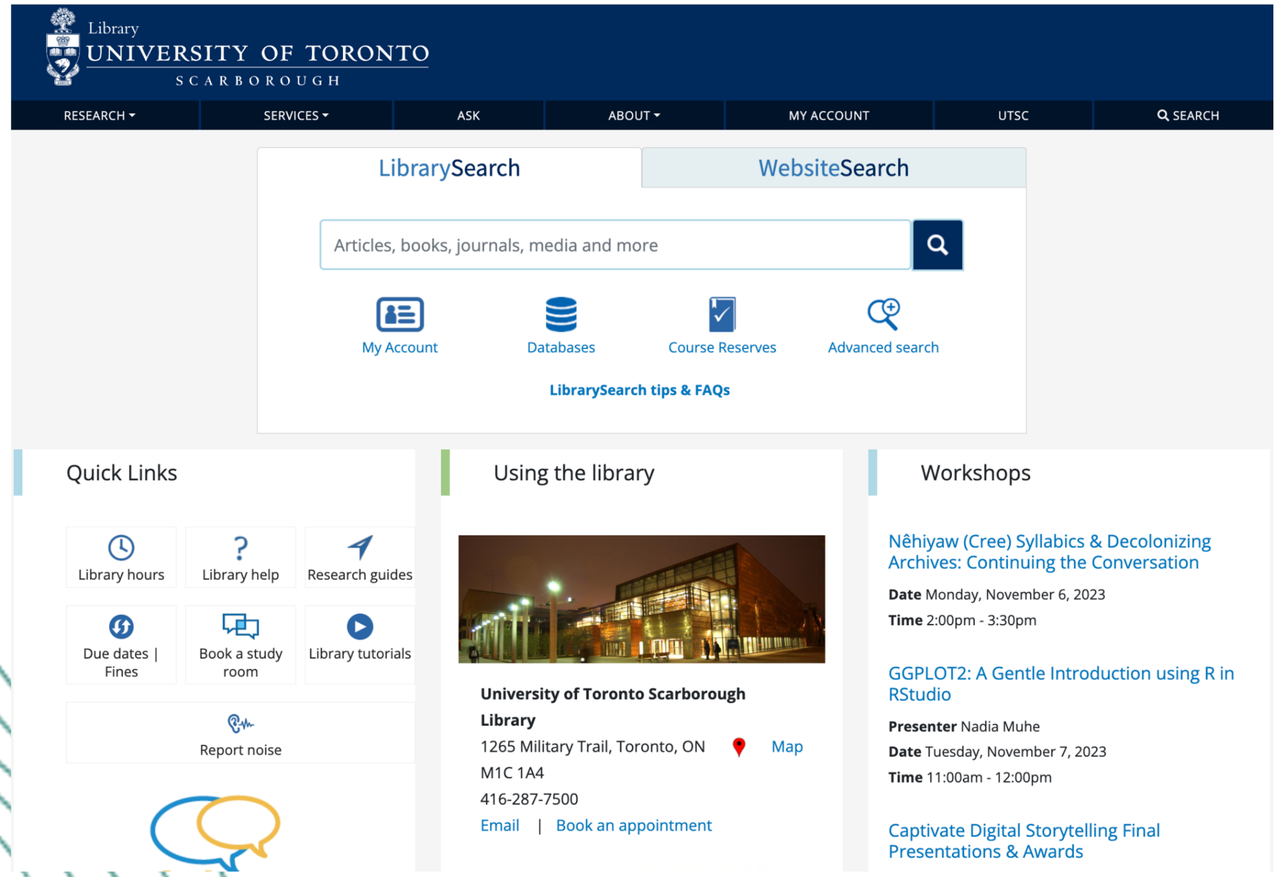
Today's Session

1. **Literature reviews**
    a. UTSC Library resources
    b. AI tools
    c. Citation managers

1. **Improving your writing**
    a. Best practices
    b. UTSC writing centre
    c. AI tools - ChatGPT
        i. Writing good prompts

1.Literature Reviews

UofT Library - Databases



Kathryn Barrett

kathryn.barrett@utoronto.ca

416-208-5199

Responsibilities

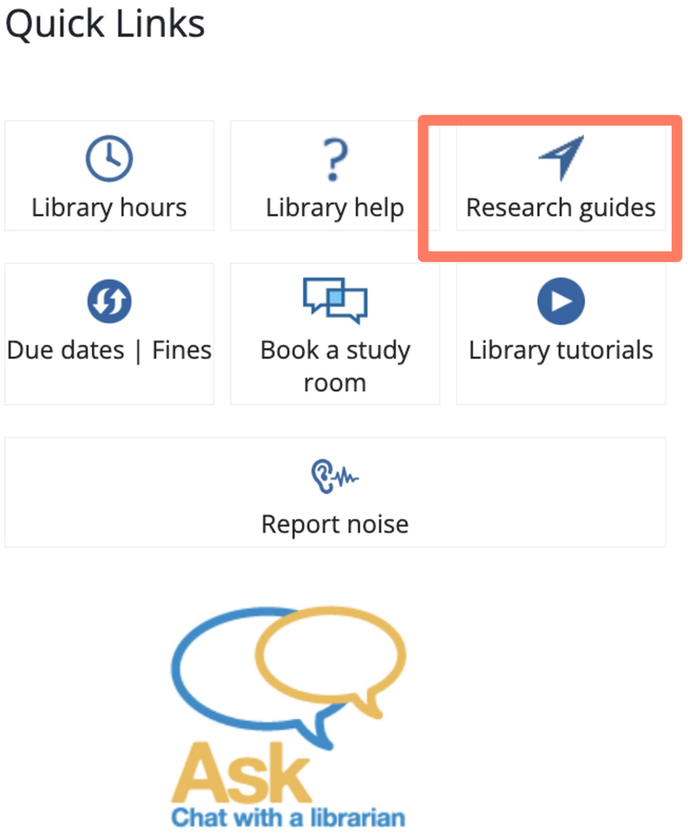
Health & Society

Paramedicine

Top Resources: Databases & Policy Collections

- MEDLINE (Ovid)
  Core database for health sciences disciplines. Contains citation information and abstracts from biomedical journals. The Ovid platform is appropriate for systematic and scoping reviews as well as other advanced searches. When in doubt, start with Medline.
- PubMed
  Public version of Medline, the core database for health sciences disciplines. This platform is best for quick clinical searches.
- CINAHL
  Contains citation information and abstracts from journals in nursing and health professions.
- Policy Commons
  The world's largest database for public policy, with millions of reports, working papers, policy briefs, data sources, and media drawn from a directory of more than 20,000 IGOs, NGOs, think tanks, and research centres.

UofT Library - Research Guides

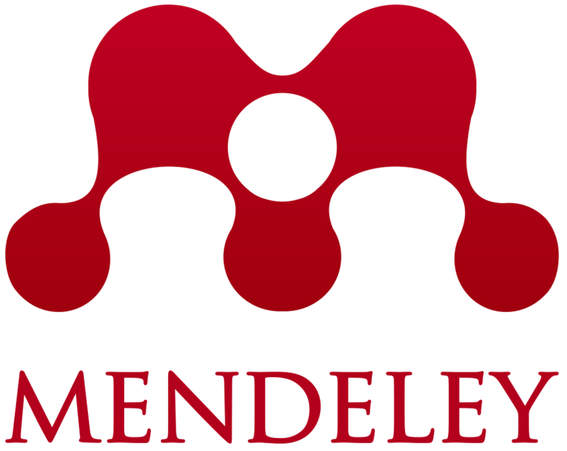


A Guide to Comprehensive Searching

STEPS TO SEARCHING THE LITERATURE
Formulate your search question
Determine whether to search precisely or sensitively
Gather synonyms for your search concepts
Combine your search terms logically using AND/OR (Boolean Operators)
Find database-specific subject heading(s) and create textword queries for each search concept
Select appropriate database(s)
Use a structured, methodologically rigorous approach to conduct your search
Supplement your search with pearl-growing, handsearching, and grey literature
Manage your results

Citation Managers

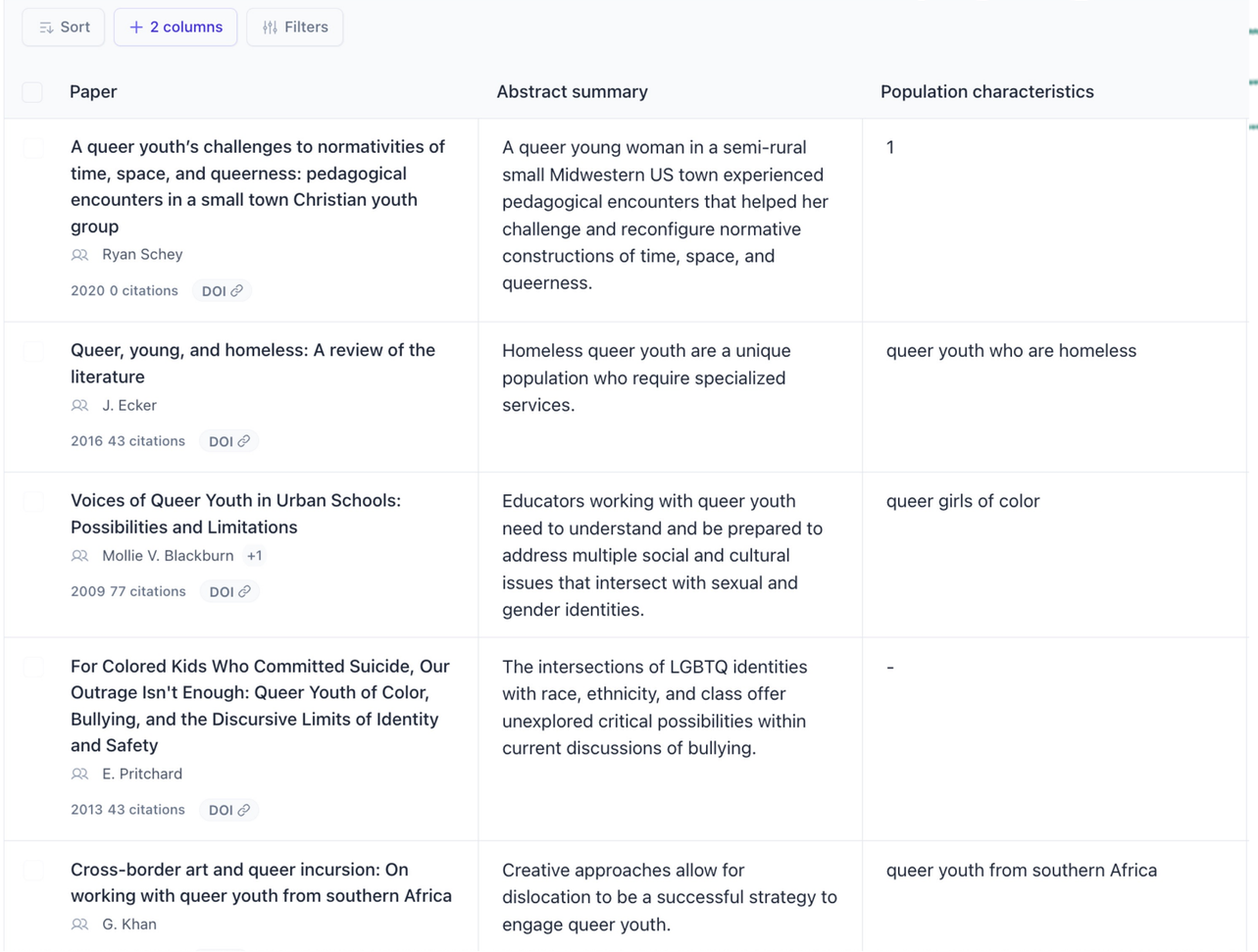
- EndNote – a free web version of this citation manager is offered via the Web of Science database.
- Mendeley – a citation manager tool provided by Elsevier, with a free version.
- RefWorks – a citation manager tool free while you are at UofT.
- Zotero – a free citation management tool.



AI Research Apps

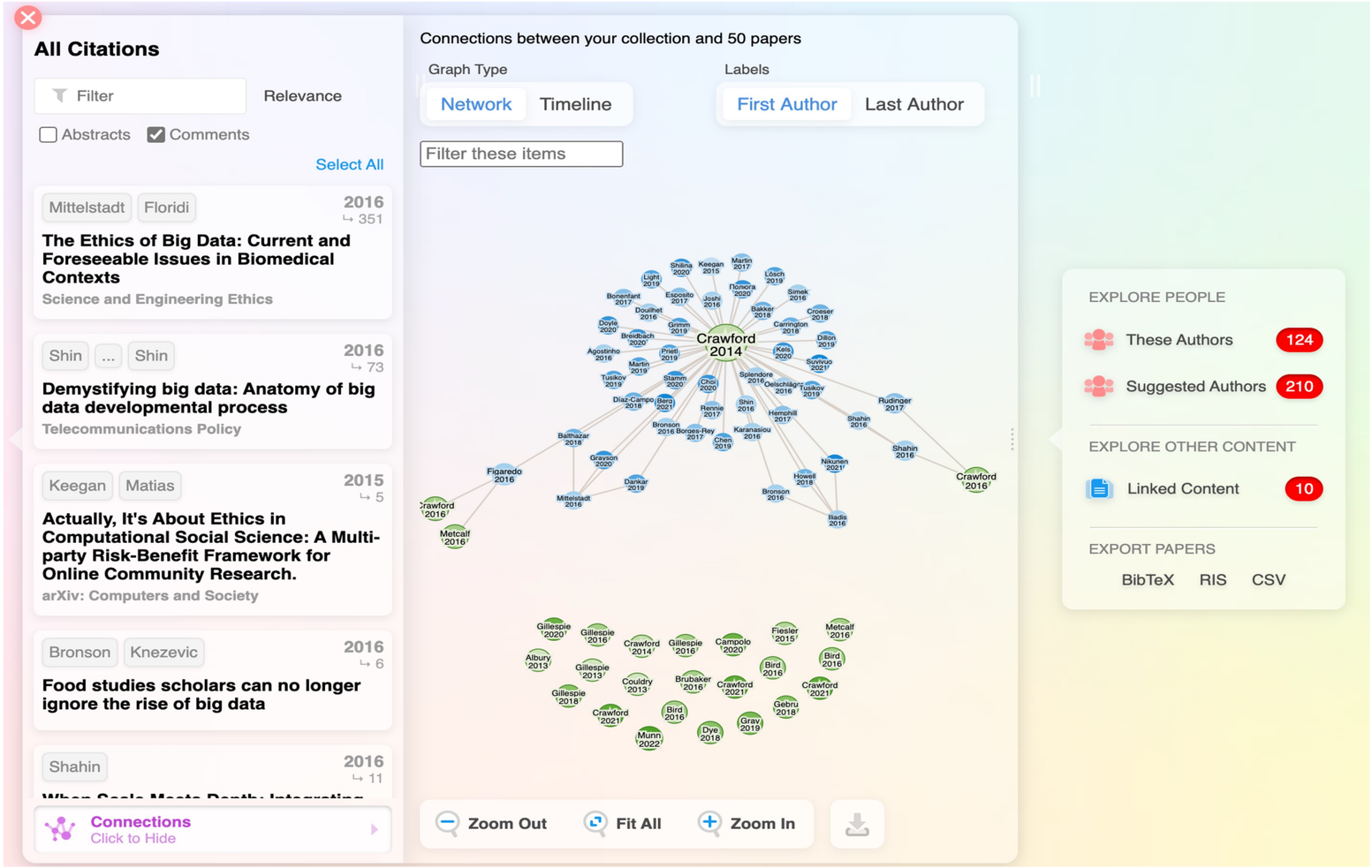
Elicit

- search optimization for sources (by like-sources)
- quick-view and summarize key points in sources, perma-links to full source
- collecting and organizing source lists
- export bibliographies
- brainstorm research question
- refine search terms
- and more!



ResearchRabbit

- search genealogically for sources (by author's citations & author's friends/collaborators)
- quick-view of and perma-links to full source
- collecting and organizing source lists
- export bibliographies
- visualize how sources fit together (who is speaking with who)



Resource Page

Toolkit for social science research projects and papers

Researching	UofT Libraries - Databases* Elicit, Research Rabbit, Google Scholar
Note-keeping/mapping	OneNote, MindNode
Citation Manager	Zotero, Mendeley, Refworks, Endnotes

2. Improving Your Writing

Writing strategies?

The writing process

- Pre-writing (brainstorming, outlining, planning your writing)
- Drafting sections (thesis, intros and conclusions, effective paragraphs, argument techniques eg comparing)
- Incorporating sources (note-taking effectively, summarizing, paraphrasing, quotation)
- Revising (reverse outlining, editing, proofreading)

A series of decisions from finding your focus, to choosing sources, to making and organizing arguments.

UTSC Writing Support

https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/264288/pages/writing-support-resources

Have a question about academic writing that isn't answered here? Ask us now!

Types of Writing at University

Using and Citing Resources

Writing, Reading, and Note-taking

Writing Style and Grammar

The Writing Process

Quick Links

- Book a writing tutorial
- Sign up for writing retreats and workshops
- Writing programming for multilingual students
- Ask a Writing Instructor
- CTL Student Support Website

Writing with AI assistance?

A note of caution: AI Bias, Accuracy, & Privacy

- All LLM's have potential for bias via their training and human intervention
- LLMs don't have real "understanding", but fill in what they think comes next based on their training (predictive models)
- Humans build and use the tool: "garbage in, garbage out"
  - Biases in the training data = biases in the outputs
  - Vague prompts = vague and over-generalized answers
  - Plausible-sounding info is NOT synonymous with factual or accurate info
- Also can produce plausible sounding info: Don't trust it's output at face value (needs to be verified/ critically evaluated)
- Do not share anything with LLM's you want to keep private

WRITING GOOD PROMPTS

Turns out having an AI assistant work effectively for you requires you to master skills like planning, writing, editing, and critical thinking!

- 1) Planning: your ‘use case’
  - What is your goal or need? (eg. revision for grammar, brainstorming questions)
  - What is the *specific* process that you’re trying to automate (consider your role)?
    - Check: is automating this process going to meet your need/goal? Break it down. (eg. turn this critique into a research question, revise questions)
- 2) Writing: best practices
  - Assign a role to the bot based on your need and the process you want it to automate
  - Review guides for writing good prompts & what can be automated
- 3) Editing and critical thinking:
  - A *role*/*persona* as ‘an expert’ = a functional tool, NOT the same as a human expert
  - Output is *designed* to sound good and use cogent grammar, but often superficial and NOT necessarily accurate or well-reasoned.
  - You must think what kind of input is appropriate for the desired output, review and fact check, and constantly revise processes!

i would like you to help me revise my writing for grammar and clarity. I will provide a paragraph of writing. Then you will evaluate it based on these criteria: strength of topic sentence, clarity of sentence structure, cohesion between sentences, grammar and spelling errors. You will provide a summary of your evaluation on each of these criteria, and suggest a revision based on your evaluation. You should not change the meaning of what I have written, but focus only on these criteria.

Detailed prompt with guardrail

Of course, I'd be happy to help you revise your writing based on the criteria you've provided. Please provide the paragraph you'd like me to evaluate, and I will give you feedback and suggestions accordingly.

Since bylaw officers are public servants who patrol public spaces, the use of the term squatter can be seen to reframe public space as private space in specific reference to specific people. Calling street-involved people ‘squatters’ on public space destroys their legal rights to exist anywhere. For those people who do not have access to inhabit private property, being seen as trespassers in public spaces gives those spaces the quality of private property, which they do not have lawful access to. In other words, when private space is not accessible, classifying people as a squatter on public space suggests that those people have no space to be in whatsoever. In contrast, those people who already do inhabit private property can access public space as public goods for leisure and enjoyment. Consequently, though anti-homeless laws are presented as an urban benefit, the effect is to erode the rights of particular people to public space and displace vulnerable people.

Let's evaluate your paragraph based on the criteria you provided:

1. **Strength of Topic Sentence**: Your paragraph starts with a clear topic sentence: "Since bylaw officers are public servants who patrol public spaces, the use of the term squatter can be seen to reframe public space as private space in specific reference to specific people." This sentence effectively introduces the main idea of your paragraph.
2. **Clarity of Sentence Structure**: Your sentences are generally clear, but there is room for improvement in some areas. For instance, the sentence "Calling street-involved people ‘squatters’ on public space destroys their legal rights to exist anywhere" could be rewritten for better clarity. Additionally, the sentence "In contrast, those people who already do inhabit private property can access public space as public goods for leisure and enjoyment" might benefit from restructuring for smoother flow.
3. **Cohesion Between Sentences**: Overall, your paragraph has good cohesion between sentences. Each sentence builds on the previous one to convey a coherent argument.
4. **Grammar and Spelling Errors**: There are a few grammatical issues, such as missing articles (e.g., "Calling street-involved people ‘squatters’ on public space" could be improved to "Calling street-involved people 'squatters' on public space"), and some sentences might benefit from minor punctuation adjustments for clarity.

Here's a suggested revision based on the evaluation:

"Since bylaw officers are public servants tasked with patrolling public spaces, the use of the term 'squatter' can be interpreted as an attempt to reframe public space as private space, specifically in reference to certain individuals. Referring to street-involved people as 'squatters' in public spaces undermines their legal right to exist anywhere. For those who lack access to private property, being labeled as trespassers in public spaces falsely imbues these areas with the characteristics of private property to which they lack lawful access. In essence, when private space is inaccessible, classifying individuals as 'squatters' in public spaces implies that they have no space to occupy whatsoever. Conversely, those who already reside in private property can enjoy public spaces as common resources for leisure and recreation. Consequently, while anti-homeless laws are presented as urban improvements, their actual effect is to erode the rights of specific individuals to public spaces and displace vulnerable populations."

This revision maintains your original meaning while addressing the clarity and grammar issues identified.

But the P.G. data shows a further reframing of non-belonging = the homeless squatter as not just without private space and undesirable in public space (like the vagrant), but in effect and expression, and spurred by discourse of a threat to the body public (like the criminal), as intruding on public space (ignoring both reliance and right, like the adverse possessor and privileging the consumer-citizen's reliance and right like rightful property title holders). This makes public property take on the quality of private property in reference to specific people, and municipal law take on the quality of criminal law (punitive prohibitions). And it reproduces the municipal colonization of space in reference to Indigenous peoples.

Let's evaluate your paragraph based on the criteria you provided:

1. **Strength of Topic Sentence**: Your paragraph begins with a clear topic sentence: "But the P.G. data shows a further reframing of non-belonging = the homeless squatter..." This sentence effectively introduces the main idea of the paragraph.
2. **Clarity of Sentence Structure**: Your sentences are complex and contain multiple ideas, which can make them challenging to follow. Simplifying some sentences and breaking down complex ideas into smaller, more digestible parts would enhance clarity.
3. **Cohesion Between Sentences**: Your paragraph demonstrates good cohesion, with sentences building on one another to present a coherent argument.
4. **Grammar and Spelling Errors**: There are no significant grammar or spelling errors in your paragraph.

BUT, I've prompted it to not change or add new meaning

BUT, are terms well-explained for a human audience?

Here's a suggested revision based on the evaluation:

"However, the P.G. data reveals a deeper transformation of the concept of non-belonging, depicting the homeless squatter not merely as someone lacking private space or unwelcome in public spaces (akin to a vagrant). It portrays them, driven by discourse that labels them a threat to the public, much like a criminal, intruding on public spaces while disregarding both their reliance and rights—similar to an adverse possessor. This discourse favors the rights of the consumer-citizen, akin to rightful property title holders. As a consequence, this perspective blurs the line between public and private property concerning specific individuals, causing municipal law to resemble criminal law with its punitive prohibitions. Furthermore, it perpetuates the municipal appropriation of space concerning Indigenous peoples."

Not clear, needs added context & explanation. AI can only string together words - makes sense formally, but doesn't have reference to substance. = Back to drafting...

This revision maintains your original meaning while enhancing clarity and readability.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS

- AI writing assistance is a limited tool that, if used, should be incorporated carefully into existing writing processes, eg. pre-writing, outlining, revising
- You use the tool in your workflow, the tool shouldn’t complete your work for you
- Be mindful of academic integrity policies and use with the permissions of your supervisor (be transparent about how you’re using it)