

Top newspapers do not include the humanities within crisis discourse

Major U.S. newspapers typically treat large “crisis” topics, particularly those related to economics and politics, as issues in need of critical decisions (Greek *krisis* = “decision”). However, the humanities tend not to be included in media discourse characterized by alarmist rhetoric, or at most are peripheral to such discourse (see Fig 1).

This finding is supported by our analysis of [Collection 4](#) (C-4), comprising 28,375 unique articles mentioning *humanities* (1977 to 2018) in the 15 top-circulation U.S. news sources. In [topic models](#) of these articles created at various numbers of topics, “crisis” or crisis-related words such as *situation*, *trouble*, *dilemma*, *emergency*, *plight*, etc. are highly associated with topics that are *not* focused on the humanities and do not contain *humanities* as a top-frequency word. A minor exception to this pattern is the word *problem*, which in a [250-topic model](#) (C-4.250) is a top word in [topic 231](#) (the university and research) and [197](#) (literacy). However, in the case of both these topics, *problem* is not near the top of the list of most frequent words. Similarly, in the 100-topic [C-4.100](#) model of this collection, [topic 5](#) (the U.S. economy) features both the words *education* and *crisis* among frequent words. But again these are not in the top tier of the term frequency list.

These findings about Collection 4 are corroborated by observations of our larger [Collection 1](#), comprising 82,324 articles mentioning the humanities in a wider pool of publications see [KF-4-3](#)). In sum, models of our collections indicate that public discourse as represented by the media does not picture the current state of the humanities as an extraordinary juncture requiring

critical decisions for the future. Instead, public discourse is oriented toward problems in the humanities as a constellation of related concerns (e.g., related to economics) rather than toward a *crisis* of humanities per se. (See in model C-4.250 the sample articles [a](#), [b](#), and [c](#) in [topic 231](#) and [d](#) in [topic 197](#)). These concerns, however, are not exclusively specific to the humanities. Rather, they represent more general issues of *employment* ([i](#)), *curriculum infrastructure* ([h](#), [l](#)), and *ideology/discipline* ([e](#), [f](#), [g](#)) within education in general (see details in [KF-1-3](#)).

The fact that public discourse fades the problems of the humanities into concerns with larger problems suggests that the humanities “crisis” is recognized only in specialized discourses (see [KF-1-3](#)).



Fig. 1: Topics #235 and #243 identified by “crisis” keyword search do not show “humanities” or “education” as key words (viewed in [TopicBubbles](#))

Document collection studied: [Collection 4](#): U.S. Top Newspapers, 2000-2018 (articles mentioning humanities)

Topic model studied: [C-4.250](#) (250 topics)

Interesting sample topics: [#231](#), [#197](#)

Representative articles: [a](#), [b](#), [c](#), [d](#)

Reports & lab notes behind finding:

Lab-1 documentation, DOI [10.5281/zenodo.4891827](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4891827)