

## Week 12: Topic Selection and Research Strategy

### TOPIC SELECTION: NARROWING YOUR TOPIC

It's time to select your topic for your final research essay. Your topic must meet three criteria: (1) it must be related to your field of study, (2) it must be a topic about which there is enough research for you to create an essay with at least FIVE credible sources, and (3) it must be a topic about which you can form an argument. This is NOT a research report, where you simply share information with the reader. You are required to make an argument about this topic, so make sure you select a topic that lends itself to argumentation.

You will also need to narrow your topic appropriately. Your final paper is required to be 8-10 pages in length. This topic will not work for that length of essay: "The causes and effects of the American Civil War." This broad topic could be narrowed in any number of ways. Note the reading this week to help you adequately narrow your topic.

### THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND RESEARCH STRATEGY

As you begin the research process, you should always start with a question. The purpose of your paper will be to answer that question. In fact, your eventual thesis will probably be a direct answer to that question. Consider the following:

- Topic: gun control. Research question: should guns be outlawed in the United States?
- Topic: game systems. Research question: what is the best game system?
- Topic: Barack Obama. Research question: was Barack Obama a good president?
- Topic: abortion. Research question: should abortion be legal?
- Topic: same-sex marriage. Research question: should same-sex marriage be legal?
- Topic: trans-gender individuals. Research question: should trans-gender individuals be allowed to use the bathroom of their choice?

You can imagine how each topic could have more than one question, right? Decide which question YOU wish to pursue.

Once you have a topic and a question, you need to create a strategy. This is simply a "plan of attack" for where you hope to find the information you need. If you simply start your research with a Google search, you will likely waste hours looking at bogus websites that are not credible or useful to you. So take a few minutes and ask yourself, "Where am I most likely to find useful, credible information on this topic?"

### READING

Review the following websites on finding and narrowing a topic:

[http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/PORT/topics/narrowing\\_topics.html](http://gethelp.library.upenn.edu/PORT/topics/narrowing_topics.html)  
<http://www.library.arizona.edu/help/tutorials/narrowyourtopic/>

Review the following website on research questions and the research strategy:

<http://guides.lib.byu.edu/stepbystep>

### THE TOPIC SELECTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION/STRATEGY DISCUSSION FORUM

In your opening post this week, share these things:

1. Your proposed topic
2. How you have narrowed that topic from the broad to the narrow
3. Your proposed research question
4. Your working research strategy

In your responses to your classmates, provide any suggestions you might have about the topic, potential alternatives for narrowing that topic, potential alternative research questions, and ideas (sources your classmates might not have considered, for example) for the research strategy.

### **ASSIGNMENT 1: TOPIC SELECTION**

In one paragraph, tell me your topic, as well as how you have narrowed that topic. Consider the readings about how to narrow a topic as you prepare this paragraph. There is no right or wrong answer here; I just want to see that you have a topic that can be adequately handled in 8-10 pages, and I want to see how you arrived at that topic.

### **ASSIGNMENT 2: RESEARCH QUESTION AND STRATEGY**

In this assignment, I want you to give me two things:

1. A research question that will naturally lead to an answer that can be easily converted into a working thesis statement.
2. A bullet-point list of your research strategy. This list should include at least five sources that you believe will be the more useful, most credible sources to use as a starting point for your research. Give me specifics. For example, "The Internet" is not a specific source.