STEP 1: Identify your topic of interest and generate three to five questions to research about it.

Using A Topic to Generate Questions

Research requires a question for which no ready answer is available. What do you want to know about a topic?

1. Questions require answers. A topic is hard to cover completely because it typically encompasses too many related issues; but a question has an answer, even if it is ambiguous or controversial.

   TOPIC: Drugs and crime

   QUESTION: Could liberalization of drug laws reduce crime in the U.S.?

2. Questions give you a way of evaluating the evidence. A clearly stated question helps you decide which information will be useful. A broad topic may tempt you to stash away information that may be helpful, but you're not sure how.

Consider topics we’ve read about or touched upon in class together this semester. List as many as you can remember below or on the back:

Consider topics that may not appear on the above list, but that are of personal interest to you. List as many as you can below or on the back:

Choose a topic and begin generating questions for it. You may either try brainstorming or concept mapping.

BRAINSTORMING Brainstorming is a free-association technique of spontaneously listing all words, concepts, ideas, questions, and knowledge about a topic. After making a lengthy list, sort the ideas into categories. This allows you to inventory your current awareness of a topic, decide what perspectives are most interesting and/or relevant, and decide in which direction to steer your research.

CONCEPT MAPPING Concept mapping is a process, focused on a topic, which produces a visual graphic that represents how the creator thinks about a subject, topic, etc. It illustrates how knowledge is organized.