

## Module 1.1 Finding Research Topic Ideas

It can be more difficult than it sounds to develop a paper topic; you might feel like you don't know as much about the class subject as you need, to confidently choose.

The topic you choose will have implications for how you search; but some searching will give you ideas and help you choose something at a size reasonable for the length of your paper and the time you have to complete it.

A good topic paper should have three qualities: it should fit the assignment instructions, it should be able to be discussed in the required paper length, and it should be interesting to you.

Try these suggestions to help you come up with a topic:

- Think about the most interesting discussions that you've had in the class; what were they about? Did you have any questions that were not answered in those discussions?
- Think about the most interesting readings you've read, or look over your class notes, to help you remember. Were there any points that you were interested in looking at more deeply?
- Has your instructor provided a list of topics that you need to choose from?

Once you have an idea that interests you, choose three keywords that summarize that idea. For example, perhaps you are interested in the topic of how the definition of "marriage" has changed in Canadian society. You might choose the words: marriage, Canada, and definition as your keywords.

Do a quick search in a database like Academic Search Complete (for humanities and social sciences), or Scopus (for health, science, and engineering)

Look at the first couple of pages of article citations; are they on your topic? Do any of the relevant article titles give you ideas of how to write about your topic? Do you have hundreds of citations, or just a few? If there are two or three, maybe there aren't enough for the paper. If there are hundreds, maybe you need to be more specific in choosing your topic.

If you feel stuck here, you can get help. Try contacting a librarian through our Ask Us! Service. One of us will talk with you about how to move forward. Or contact your instructor or the class teaching assistant. Talking about your confusion and your interests can help you focus.

Library staff can also suggest ways to quickly get an overview of your topic with academic publications like encyclopedias and handbooks.