



**How to decide a research
topic?**

**How to Turn Research Topic
into an Argument?**

Source: Slide share

Deciding on a Topic

- What would you like to learn more about?
- Make a list of things related to it.
- Read around – not aimlessly but purposively.
- Read with questions in your mind:
 - What are some of the key studies in this field?
 - What kinds of approaches have been taken to the subject?
 - What are the key issues and questions in this field?
 - Are there any possible gaps, or approaches yet to be explored? (Digital Humanities, Film Studies, et al)

Turning a Topic into an Argument

- After ‘deciding a relatively narrow and sharply defined topic which nevertheless opens out into large and important issues’, the next step is *to give it a direction*.
- How?
- The way to do this is to develop out of your topic a set of **questions** you want to answer, or ***problems*** that you want to solve.

- Doing research is not about gathering information or data for its own sake:
 - the information or data is presented in order ***to answer questions***, in order to try ***to change what is thought about something***.

- Virtually every good dissertation / thesis will take the form of *argument*
 - An attempt to prove or establish something by means of analysis of *evidence*.
 - ***An insight of criminal lawyer and crime reporter is necessary in collection and analysis of evidence / proof.*** (Altick, Richard. The Art of Literary Research)

There are many possible ways of turning a topic into an argument.

- To give some examples, your dissertation might be one of the following:
 - An argument for or against an existing critic (or critical position) in relation to the author or group of works you are studying.
 - An argument about the importance of a particular influence on a writer or influence exerted by him or her.
 - An argument for the importance of some hitherto little-regarded piece of evidence to the discussion of the work of some author or group of authors.

There are many possible ways of turning a topic into an argument.

- An argument about the value of a new theoretical approach to a text or set of texts.
- An argument turning upon the nature of the genre of a work or group of works.
- An argument about some historical or literary-historical aspect of literature.
- An argument about the adequacy of existing scholarly texts of particular work

There are many possible ways of turning a topic into an argument.

- An argument about the significance of a little – known or undervalued author or work.
- An argument bringing together some aspect of a well-known literary text with a lesser-known text or with other media.
- An argument showing how a particular theme or concept may be related to a group of texts

Preparing a Research Proposal

- **Title:** Do not feel bound by this: it is imp to have title that is clear and informative, but a first attempt can be altered in the finished product.
- **Argument:** State as concisely as possible what your subject is and what your argument will be.
- **Materials:** Primary, Secondary, Tertiary Sources

Preparing a Research Proposal

- **Chapters:** Show how you think your discussion may be organized.
- **Conclusion:** Clearly this will be provisional at this stage. You have not yet argued your case, merely outlined the materials and likely directions of your argument.
- **Bibliography:** List of key primary, secondary and tertiary texts – it is provisional and will expand when you begin serious work.

Thank you

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