College Writing and Research

Chapter 3: Identifying a Topic

Reading and Discussion Guide

This chapter is all about selecting and narrowing a topic. Consider the research you conducted for your blog analysis paper. In two to three sentences, explain the process you used to narrow your topic from “Blogs” to what you eventually wrote about in your formal paper.

“Research in Action” (page 38) – Group Discussion and Summary (Oral Response)

What are the two situations a research and writing project develop from?

What is “kairos”? What is a moment you experienced kairos? When have you been given and taken the opportunity to respond because of a moment of kairos? (Consider the questions at the bottom of page 39).

In the chart below, take some time to explore the various communities you participate in:

1. What discussions engage you and other members of the community?
2. What events or experiences have happened that you still remember and that left you, or other members of the community with questions or concerns?
3. What problems or concerns exist in this particular community?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Personal Participation | Academic Participation |
|  |  |  |
|  | Professional Participation | Civic Participation |
|  |  |  |

Now, find, highlight, and focus on ONE of your answers above and dig deeper.

Chosen topic/event: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Who is involved in this discussion, event, or problem? Why are they involved?

When and where did/does this discussion, event, or problem take place?

What exactly is the topic of the discussion, event, or problem?

Why is the discussion, event, or problem significant to the community members?

How does the community usually start to resolve the discussion, event, or problem?

Let’s generate some more ideas…for three minutes, brainstorm a list of topics that YOU find interesting and compelling.

Highlight six to eight possibilities of topics from the above list.

Take those six to eight topics and REWRITE each one as a question.

Choose one of the created questions that seems to really intrigue you. For five minutes, write about this particular topic/question. What do you know about it already? What do you want to know? Why does it sound interesting?

Take a look at your five minute free write and highlight or underline the most interesting idea you came up with during your writing. Now, with that idea, write for five more minutes focusing on this underlined/highlighted idea. (Thinking Move)

New Thinking Move: Consider the topic you have been concentrating on during the free writes and thinking moves. Now, write for five minutes on the following ideas: What about your topic might the audience be interested in? How can you relate your topic to your audience’s experience(s)? Also consider whether or not this particular topic will satisfy the purpose of writing and research for this class. Is it a topic you believe you can find adequate information about as you research and write? What do you need to keep in mind as you choose and research a topic?

Why is having an interest in your topic important in research? How can you work to have a   
“topic of interest” as you go through courses?

“Exploring and Narrowing a Potential Topic”

What are two reasons given in the text that you should spend time exploring your topic prior to committing to it? Can you think of any other reasons?

Choose one of the two activities in the gray section titled “Use the Internet to Explore a Possible Topic”. Write down a summary of what you discover, come up with, or realize from this activity.

Reflection Writing: Read the section titled “How Can I Make a Topic Manageable?” on page 45. Respond to each of the questions below:

1.

2.

3.

***“Focus Your Research Topic” page 46 – Class Activity on a separate sheet of paper.***

“Developing a Research Question”

A research question should be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and provide

the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of your

research.

Why should you avoid “yes” or “no” questions in this part of the process?

“Write a Research Question” – page 47 Answer the questions in the text.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Think of two examples in your life where you have conducted research where you were “invested” in the process and in finding out the answer to your research questions.

Explain the term “bias” as it is presented in this text. What bias do you need to be aware of in the possible research of the topic you have been considering?

The following two sections will be completed during class on separate paper.

Write a ten minute reflection response to the section on page 48 titled “What is the Writer’s Place in the Rhetorical Situation?”

Write a ten minute reflection response to the section on page 49 titled “Take Inventory of What You Know”.