

## Developing a Research Question

- From topic to research question
- Motivate your research question

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## From Topic to Research Question

- Get a working knowledge of the topic through reference sources.
  - Until you can talk about it for 1 minute.
  - Dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks in that discipline.
  - Ask who, what, when, where, why, how?
  - See “Some Reference Works for Working Knowledge.”

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## From Topic to Research Question

- Select one aspect of your topic.
  - Parts and whole.
  - Categories.
  - History of the topic.
  - What is it good for?
  - Subdivisions in dictionary/encyclopedia articles.
  - Tables of contents in books.

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## From Topic to Research Question

- Identify controversies or open questions.
  - What don't you know that you need to know?
  - How much has been written about the topic?
  - Has something in your reading bothered you?
  - Anything unclear? Different schools of thought?
  - What can you add to the discussion?
  - Periodical indexes: Religion Index I, ATLA(S).
  - End of books or articles; review of research.

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## From Topic to Research Question

- Formulate a question.
  - Think of "how" or "why" questions.
  - One that you find interesting and important.
  - One research question per research project.
  - Put it in question form.
  - Open ended, not yes or no.

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## Motivate Your Question

- Try using a 3-part statement (Booth et al.):
  - What you are writing about (topic).
  - What you want to know about it (question).
  - Why you want to know it (beginning rationale).
  - I am studying [topic] because I want to find out [research question] in order to understand [rationale].
  - I am studying Paul's view of election because I want to find out whether election is conditional or unconditional in order to understand whether Calvinism or Arminianism is more biblical on this point.

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## Motivate Your Question

- Moving from a question to a problem.
  - A question whose answer will matter to people besides you.
  - The significance of your study.
- Why should people care about your study?
  - Costs of not answering the question.
  - Benefits of answering the question.
- Always ask “so what?”

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## Motivate Your Question

- Be sure your research question is feasible.
  - Is it narrow enough to cover in the space I have?
  - Do I have the necessary resources?
  - Am I qualified to do the research?
  - Do I have enough time?
  - Do I have the financial resources?

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