Take a few moments to gather your current materials...

What is your research assignment?
Hi. I'm Brain W/ a Pencil.

You may remember me from previous workshops, such as: “Reading for Research”.

Today’s Workshop:

Initial Research Strategies

- From Topic to Question
- Specifying Re/search Terms
Example:

“I’m thinking about writing something about how immigration policy affects migrant children...”

Or maybe

About why the Ethiopian Soccer Team has such devoted fans even though they’re not winning?”

We want to get something more specific because it gives you a concrete object of analysis/exhibit

& because the question is motivated by knowledgeable ignorance (true curiosity), your research will yield new knowledge

In relation to that ignorance/curiosity you’ll be in a position to ask newer more sophisticated questions you couldn’t have thought of yet, and that’s point of this whole enterprise.
How a research question develops:

**Topic**: A broad area of interest.

(Often people get stuck at the topic level and don’t know how to go deeper.)

**Opening question**: A constructive beginning.

(Following research based on your opening question, will lead to your Inquiry Question.)

**Inquiry Question**: begins to define a specific projects and stands to create new knowledge.
today we want to help you move forward in the research process and toward a more articulated question.
Exercise:

moving from **TOPIC** to **OPENING QUESTION**
What are the parameters given to you by the professor or the assignment?

**What is the prompt?**
- Is there a seed text?
- If yes, what is the role of the seed text (as described by your professor for UW P3)?

**What lenses does the assignment imply?**
- What is the class name/department?
- What are class themes?
- What broad topics does the assignment proscribe or imply?
What do YOU bring: Interest Inventory

- List areas or things in which you feel you have particular expertise, specific knowledge—
  What qualifies? Imagine a novice needing to know or be taught about a thing, what could you teach a novice about

- List your fandoms—
  What qualifies? Anything you’re a fan of, that you appreciate in ways more devotedly or deeply than others

- Imagine conversations that occur amongst the experts who share your expertise. What do they talk about?
  Imagine the conversations that occur amongst the fans you share passionate interests with. What do they talk about?

- Name the most important topics, events, or anythings that concern these groups.

- Is there a current debate or controversy that demands attention within your field of expertise or fandom?
  What would motivate you or others to participate in a conversation on such matters?

- What question needs to be asked most in relation to your field(s) of interest?

- Imagine the kinds of disciplines that might make interesting contributions to the inquiries you’ve named.
  Why would we need to hear from those kinds of experts in relation to your inquiry? What would we stand to gain by bringing those voices into conversation?
You get from broad to specific by COMBINING SEARCH TERMS

First, take what you know from the parameters of the assignment/class itself

- Think of your topic as an **umbrella term**. What other terms does it contain?
- Who would you be interested in hearing from. **Disciplines**?
- Consider multiple ways to capture similar ideas. Generate **synonyms** for search terms.

Second, combine these topic-level terms with search terms from your Interest Inventory.
let’s visualize this simply:
Connecting Search Terms

Look for connections, mash-ups, overlaps:

Ask a question about your interest(s) in relation to the broader topic.

“But does climate change affect dogs?”
now for a more complex illustration:
Umbrella terms getting narrower:

- Climate Change
- Sea level rise
- Coastal erosion
- Threats to my vacation home
- Coast erosion due to sea level rise in the Outer Banks of North Carolina
- Local Government’s response to sea level rise in the Outer Banks of North Carolina

How does my motivation or interest factor in?

What synonyms can you generate?
- Global Warming
- Ocean level increase
- Flooding

What disciplines do you want to bring to this focus?
- Economists, Political Scientists, Marine Biologists, etc.
Beach Nourishment is a common solution approved of by many coastal communities.

WHAT DON’T WE KNOW ABOUT THIS PRACTICE?

WHAT TO WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PRACTICE?
Our Research now yields more interesting results.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT CONVERSATION ABOUT THIS PRACTICE?
HOW CAN YOUR INQUIRY MAKE A MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTION?
Let's look at these narrowing criteria (& there are others!) in relation to our example project. We moved from the broad topic of “climate change” to the potential questions to be asked of “beach nourishment”.

If we narrow down to a particular instance or case, we’d have a better chance of developing a targeted inquiry & giving ourselves more concrete sites of analysis.
**Example:**

“About why the Ethiopian Soccer Team has such devoted fans even though they’re not winning?”

The exhibit ended up being a video of particular parade thrown for the soccer team. This narrowed time and story and place. Psychologists contributed insight about fan behavior and what binds fans to a team. While doing research, subclaims emerged and the question itself became more refined.

So, this turned out to be a good **opening question**.
Refining your research question is a layered process!!

DISCOVERING
ELIMINATING
CONFIRMING
REVISING
Includes materials from...


- Wakuma Yebasse's Progression 3 Essay Questions