

Focusing a Topic Worksheet

PART ONE -WHAT IS YOUR GENERAL IDEA FOR YOUR RESEARCH PAPER?

PART TWO - FOCUS YOUR TOPIC

WHAT? Which aspects of this topic most interest you?

WHY?

Why is your topic important? Why are you writing about it? How does your topic relate to existing scholarship?

WHO? Who are the people/groups/major players that are involved with your topic?

WHEN?

Is there a specific period of time or era that interests you?

WHERE?

Where do these events occur or where is the issue relevant? (e.g. the United States, Pennsylvania, schools, etc.).

PART THREE - Develop a research question

What specific question do you want to answer with your research?

Focusing a Topic Worksheet

Brainstorm various specific aspects of your topic that you might explore further. List at least 3 ideas, and think of various synonyms or related terms for each concept that you can use as search terms (e.g., Islam or Muslim; women or girls or females).

As you search in the catalog and databases, note other relevant terms that show up in titles, abstracts, or keyword/subject/descriptor lists.

1)

2)

3)

PART FOUR – Researching your topic.

What CLASS READINGS might relate to your topic? Check their bibliographies for potential sources.

Which library RESEARCH GUIDES will be useful for researching your topic?

Which library DATABASES will be useful for researching your topic?

Primary Sources – Brainstorm the types of primary sources you might find on your topic, whether they be available in archives, in published form, or on the Web: