### Selecting a Topic

Begin to think about a topic that you would like to research during the rest of the quarter. The point of your research will be to identify and describe the best information sources that you can for your topic. The standardized descriptions (annotations) that you develop for each of your best information sources will become the heart of your Pathfinder. One of the fundamental things that you should learn from this class is that information and research in the 21st century has few barriers other than the ones we put on ourselves. Obviously, language can be a barrier, but it can be overcome through curiosity and study. The greatest barrier is what I call "willing ignorance," that is, our natural human tendency to live within our own narrow confines and be comfortable with what we "know" and believe.

I encourage you to push beyond what is comfortable and work toward a topic that will take us all out of our everyday routines and into the larger issues. A good way to approach selecting a topic is to think about issues of interest or concern to you, your family or community. Many issues that hit close to home, such as those related to education, health care, and the environment, not only impact you and your community but often have implications on a national or international scale.

Consider your own interests. Note: A topic doesn’t have to be a heavy research topic (like international relations between Pakistan and India, etc.) it can also be creative. For example, if you like art, you can focus on the differences between Japanese and Chinese aesthetics or if you like music, you might want to write about the development of a particular type of global music. You could even research songs, letters, poems, etc. for and by child victims of war or do research on how something from another culture is created, valued, and shared. The point is to choose something ‘uniquely you.’

Are you an expert in something already such as playing guitar, cooking, or gardening? Choose a topic that helps you further your hobby or brings inspiration from other cultures.

Whatever topic you choose, you must be enthusiastic about it. If you are not excited about your topic, the research process can be tedious. Pick a topic that you care about, like to do, see, feel, or experience.

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| Title | **Selecting a Topic Discussion Forum** |
| **Due Date** | **Due Saturday; Responses to two students due by Monday** |
| Where to Post | Click on "New Post" button above and type your response in the space provided below.  Click Save. |
| Subject | Your Name / Global Research Topic |
| Points | 10 |
| Criteria | * Demonstrates that you have done the readings * Includes all required content * Shows thoughtful and substantial responses (50 words minimum each -- 50 word count does *not include comments unrelated to the assignment*) * Is on time, posted in the correct forum, correct subject line. Correct grammar, spelling and usage. |
| Objective | Brainstorm and discuss your global research topic. |

Selecting a Topic: This is the first of two assignments that will help you come up with a great topic for your final project, the Pathfinder. Read the information below on global topics, then follow the steps to choose your topic and reflect on what you know about it already. You will use the thinking you do in this exercise to begin your next assignment, and ultimately create a focused research statement on a topic of global significance.

Global is a term to describe environmental, social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of the whole world. In choosing a global topic, you may take a world-wide issue or examine how something is experienced or shared between nations. You could look at how you as a student in your country, are affected or affect people in another country, or at how an event or cultural phenomenon has affected the world.

#### **Step One: Reading/Preparation**

Please read the following piece on selecting a topic:

**[Researching a "Global" Topic in the Liberal Arts](http://angel.whatcom.ctc.edu/Permalink/Permalink.aspx?permalinkId=42fa18a1-ecfb-438d-930e-b54a0ace1be0&permalinkType=0)**

If you still don't have a good idea for a topic, look through the following websites for lists of possible global topics you might like to research**.** If you do not immediately see something that grabs your interest, identify 2 or 3 issues that might be interesting to you and do a Wikipedia search at <http://www.wikipedia.org/> to read more about them. It is important that you choose a topic you will enjoy learning about. Do a little web surfing to see what kinds of web sites come up and how they treat your topics, or talk with your campus librarian. Read about these issues and choose one of them to explore further.

(Note: Sometimes the website links are blocked by ANGEL software. If so, copy the name of the organization e.g. Asia Society, go to Google.com and paste it in the search box. You will be able to find the website that way.)

Asia Society: <http://asiasociety.org/education-learning/students/global-topics>

Global Issues: Most of the articles on this site are written by one person, the site’s founder. It may not be the best place to do research but it is a great place to get ideas for a topic. <http://www.globalissues.org/>

World Affairs Council: <http://www.world-affairs.org/>

World Resources Institute: <http://archive.wri.org/wrisites.cfm>

The topics below give you additional suggestions for a beginning idea. Later you will more narrowly define your topic.

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| * Global financial crisis | * Global water shortage |
| * Sea piracy | * Mass extinction of a species |
| * Outsourcing | * Migration |
| * Politics of the Nobel Peace Prize | * International sports competitions |
| * Multinational corporations | * Global warming |
| * Human trafficking | * World music |
| * Gay marriage | * Immigration |
| * Diasporas | * Protection of indigenous peoples |
| * Drinking water | * Disaster relief |
| * Modern day slavery | * Ethnic conflict |
| * Foreign assistance | * Pandemics |
| * Comparative education | * Influence of Japanese art on European |
| * Vietnamese food | * Roma People |
| * Indian literature | * Population control politics |

#### **Step Two: What Do You Know?**

Once you have a topic in mind, reflect on what you already know or don’t know about it by answering the following questions. **You will post your answers in the Discussion Forum box below.**

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| **Topic** | Describe how this topic is global -- who does it affect? Why is it important globally? What are some of the most important issues related to this topic? | Describe how this topic relates to you, your family, or your community? Why is it important to you? |
| **Topic’s relation to other subjects** | What broader topics are associated with your topic: | Some Narrower aspects of this topic (list at least 3). You may or may not include these in your research:    1.    2.    3. |
| [Academic disciplines](http://angel.whatcom.ctc.edu/Permalink/Permalink.aspx?permalinkId=70672a20-4f1d-4dab-9286-b4ba9aa21dec&permalinkType=0)(Click this link to see a list of disciplines.) | What professionals research this topic or do work related to it? | What subject areas (academic disciplines) would contain information on your topic? |

#### **Step Three: Academic Disciplines**

To find more in-depth information about your topic, you'll need to look in the broad subject areas, or academic disciplines, that are most likely to focus on it. Knowing which academic disciplines might cover your topic will help you find reference materials and other books. Disciplines will also help you think about where to search for the best information.

Scholars from the different academic disciplines each use different research methods, terminology, and styles of communication. They may approach the same topic from very different perspectives. If you pursue education in one of these disciplines, you will have to learn much about how research happens in that discipline. For beginning research, you need to be aware that methods and terminology vary depending on the discipline. Also consider which of these perspectives make the most sense for your research project.

The three major categories of disciplines are Science, Social Sciences, and Humanities. A forth category, interdisciplinary fields, includes fields of study that combine content, terminology, and methods from more than one academic discipline. Most colleges and universities use disciplines to categorize their course offerings. If you can major in it, it is probably a discipline.

Disciplines can help you:

§ Understand where to look for information

§ Narrow or broaden your topic

§ Select an appropriate style and format for your paper, including citations

Consider the topic of Intellectual Freedom, a topic that definitely affects everyone. Writers in different disciplines – philosophers, political scientists, educators, psychologists, artists and others –might engage in research and reflection on this broad topic. But each would approach it from the perspective of a particular academic discipline or area of subject expertise. The political scientist might consider how policies that define intellectual freedom are developed and the public debate that surrounds them, while the educator might be more interested in the role of intellectual freedom in teaching and learning.

Now, consider which disciplines might be concerned with your topic. Using the list of disciplines below, decide which disciplines are most relevant to your particular approach to your topic.

**[List of Academic Disciplines](http://angel.whatcom.ctc.edu/Permalink/Permalink.aspx?permalinkId=70672a20-4f1d-4dab-9286-b4ba9aa21dec&permalinkType=0)**

Post your chart outlining what you know about your topic in the Discussion Forum below.

#### **Step Four: Feedback**

Give feedback to two other students about their charts, 50 words each.