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Research Methodology
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Winter Assignment

The winter assignment for this class is to come up with an idea for research that you actually will carry out. The goal of this workshop type class is to get students ready to do their MA thesis, or to publish an article from a research project. This assignment comprises the first step in that process.

Essentially, the assignment is simple. Students taking this course in the spring need to come up with a clear idea of what they want to research, why they want to do that and how they will do it. Designing a research project, especially when it is one's first such effort, is like trying to find a needle in a haystack. There is a mind-numbing array of possibilities and also variables associated with any given possibility. Research requires all-around clarity. This assignment centers on that search for clarity. The essential questions in any research project are what (What precisely is being investigated?), why (Why is this being investigated?), and how (How is this being investigated?).

Finding clear answers to these questions, particularly when one is doing something new, is not a linear process. One can generally not find the answer to the what question and then confidently move on to the how and why forgetting about the what. Research is a spiral of action where these three concerns all affect each other as one moves deeper into the process. Crucially, they all need to align in a very clear manner.

So, this assignment is about the search for clarity. It can relate to the topic (the beginning of the what), or the methodology (the how), or the why. That is up for the individual student to decide. But no matter the specific focus the procedure is the same – read! Clarity, both for the researcher and for the eventual readers of the research, is to be found in what is already out there. That means reading and gathering as many resources as possible. Thus, the main aspect of this assignment is to establish a focus in the research project and read around that focus.

A short informal write up or 1,200 words reflecting on what you did to search for clarity in your research project is the formal part of this assignment.

The written aspect of this assignment is due for our Week 1 class. That is, please have this loaded up in Snowboard prior to or shortly after our Week 1 class on Wednesday, March 4. Also, be sure to have a copy you bring to class. Each student will be explaining what they did over the winter to find greater clarity in their research for this semester.

I hope this will be fun and fruitful and provide a helpful step in the class and the processes of research.