



Investigating Religion & Power

## Developing Research Topics and Questions

As you begin your research, you should have the following questions in mind.<sup>1</sup>

### Topic: What are you writing about?

*I am studying* \_\_\_\_\_ . . .

### Question: What don't you know about it?

. . . *because I want to find out what/why/how* \_\_\_\_\_ . . .

### Significance: Why do you want your audience to know/care about it?

. . . *in order to help my reader understand* \_\_\_\_\_.

1. **Be in Conversation:** Try to develop your research question through conversation. Once you have a general topic, seek out people who have interests in that same topic. Try to find people from different fields and industries.
2. **Build New Relationships:** When conducting your research, don't only rely on your existing contacts. Be willing to find and reach out to people you haven't met. Reach out to them and set up a time to meet. (We have provided a template for an introduction email in our tool-kit.) Whether you have dialogue partners from the community to help you find a research question or you speak to experts who can help you with resources, you should expand your community network.
3. **Be Interdisciplinary:** Try to gather information and insights from various fields of study (including the fields you might not expect to find relevant information). For example, if your topic is primarily anthropological, try searching journals in the fields of business, psychology, and history.
4. **Diversify Your Resources:** Research is a political activity. We need to be intentional about whose work we engage. When building new relationships and finding resources, try to seek out work done by people from marginalized demographics. It is helpful to include a Citation Diversity Statement as part of your reference section.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These questions are taken directly from: [Booth, Wayne C., et al. \*The Craft of Research\*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Zurn, Perry, et al. "The Citation Diversity Statement: A Practice of Transparency. A Way of Life." \*Scientific Life\*, Vol. 24.9. 669-672.](#)