



First things first

- Decide on your topic.
- Make your decision based on the previous course readings.
- One strategy is to assemble your course materials and decide on your topic at the library, while engaged in the research process.



Strategies

- Plan your library trip.
- Bring all the course readings.
- You don't want to pursue a topic over which little scholarship has been written, nor do you want a topic if OSU holdings are sparse.
- Begin with a broad sweep.



The Broad Sweep

- Choose 3 possible topics.
- If a course reading has something to do with bison, then brainstorm keywords about the topic and the argument.
- For example: bison; conservation; buffalo, etc.



More on the broad sweep

- Do a search using different keywords and determine how many articles & books are available on the topic.
- Repeat this process for all 3 possible topics and make an informed decision on what you will ultimately choose



More on the broad sweep

- Once you have made your decision, stick with it.
- Research is a time-consuming process, and although switching topics is sometimes necessary, it also wastes valuable time.
- Once you've decided, then it's time to pull articles and mine bibliographies.



Mining Bibliographies

- The bibliography pages of a book or article is a gold mine of resources.
- If an article you have pulled speaks to your topic, then chances are that the author cites articles that speak to your topic as well.



More on mining bibliographies

- Read the titles of articles on the bibliography page and decide which ones seem relevant to your topic.
- Search for them and see if they are available.
- Those articles too have bibliographies. And so on...And so on...



More on mining bibliographies

- Also, pay attention to the names of the author's. Are you seeing the same names on the bibliography pages of different articles?
- If so, you have just discovered who the heavy hitters are.



The Heavy Hitters

- The heavy hitters are the scholars who are widely recognized as experts on your topic.
- What does it say about the level of scholarship and research that *you* generate if you do not include the most prestigious experts in your field of study?
- It says that your research is weak.



More on the heavy hitters

- Once you know the heavy hitters, then do a search for articles by that author.
- Print out that list and search OSU availability for those articles.
- Don't be too heavy-handed about including heavy hitters. One or two articles is enough.
- You want to make sure your research demonstrates diversity too.



Diversity of Research

- Make sure you present opposing arguments.
- Not all scholars agree, or there would be no debate.
- Try and include one or two scholars who disagree with you, then refute their argument with your own argument and with the arguments of scholars in your camp.



Bringing it all together

- Remember that if you need, for example, 10 sources, then you should start with about 20.
- Doing so allows you to choose the best articles in terms of the scholarship, and in terms of how well they relate to your own argument.
- And use current research.



Current Research

- The best research demonstrates an awareness of the *current* conversation among scholars.
- While a 10 year old article may be very informative, it is also true that since that time the debate has taken new directions.
- The best procedure is to stay with articles no more than three to five years old.



The Recap

- Plan your library trip.
- Use a broad sweep.
- Mine bibliographies.
- Discover the heavy hitters.
- Diversity of articles.
- Use current research.
- Work smart by starting early.