

## Summer Assignments: AP Research

Welcome to AP Research!

I must first and foremost congratulate you on your interest in challenging yourself with the AP Capstone program. The skills that you have and will continue to acquire due to the Capstone program are paramount in your post-high school success. So, to your dedication, I salute you!

The following summer work has been created after much consideration and discussion with other AP Research colleagues. These are some concepts and items that you need to establish for yourself prior to starting AP Research. These are concepts that should be considered while taking long walks on the beach, while sitting in the back of the car on a road trip, while trying to fall asleep at camp, while playing video games, or whatever summer activity enhances your life. Know that you will be asked to dig deep, so please start now. First, please review the document set from Practical Research: Planning and Design. Next, complete the **assignment directions**. Finally, review “Selecting a Topic” below. As you search for sources on your two potential topics, remember to use the RAVEN method to determine if they are credible, scholarly sources. And don’t forget to make use of your free JSTOR account to gain access to millions of peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. **All work will be due on Sunday, August 17, by the end of the day.** *(Please ignore the dates listed in the Assignment directions; that document is from last year and cannot be altered.)* **Only work turned in on time will be accepted.**

I am excited about working with you again in the fall. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the summer assignment, please email me.

Happy researching!

Dr. Macdonald

## Summer Reading and Reflection

### Approximate Time Needed: 4 Hours

Directions: Complete the following reflections prior to the start of AP Research. These reflections are purposefully driven to help you make the jump from AP Seminar to AP Research. Responses should be at minimum a paragraph per question and should exhibit your ability to provide supporting textual and experiential evidence as well as insightful discussion. Complete the reflections electronically to turn in through Canvas and to keep in your PREP folder, a tool required by College Board that will help you stay organized in this year-long process. Please include the question when providing your responses.

Text: Leedy, P.D., Ormrod, J.E. (2019). Practical Research: Planning and Design. (12th ed.). New York: Pearson (excerpted in **Reading Packet**).

| Title of Reading | Pages | Questions for Reflection |
|------------------|-------|--------------------------|
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|                        |       |   |
|------------------------|-------|---|
| “What Research is Not” | 1-2   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What surprised you in this section? Why?</li> <li>• According to this section, how is AP Seminar different from AP Research?</li> <li>• What part of this section interests you? Why?</li> </ul>   |
| “What Research is”     | 2-8   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which of the seven distinct steps of research seems like it will be the most difficult for you in AP Research? Why?</li> <li>• According to this section, how is AP Research an extension of AP Seminar?</li> <li>• Read each subsection (<i>Critical Thinking, Deductive Logic, Inductive Reasoning, Scientific Method, Theory Building, and Collaboration with Other Minds</i>) and using your own words, try your best to summarize each in order to better understand it.</li> </ul> |
| “The Human Mind”       | 19-26 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which subsection are you least familiar with?</li> <li>• Which subsection do you feel is most critical for Research? Why?</li> </ul>   |

***Note: The Selecting a Topic section complements the “Assignment directions.” Read “Selecting a Topic” AFTER you read the “Assignment directions.”***

## Selecting a Topic

The ability to develop a good research topic is an important skill. An instructor may assign you a specific topic, but most often instructors require you to select your own topic of interest. When deciding on a topic, there are a few things that you will need to do:

- brainstorm for ideas
- choose a topic that will enable you to read and understand the literature
- ensure that the topic is manageable and that material is available
- make a list of keywords
- be flexible
- define your topic as a focused research question
- research and read more about your topic
- formulate a thesis statement

Be aware that selecting a good topic may not be easy. It must be narrow and focused enough to be interesting, yet broad enough to find adequate information. Before selecting your topic, make sure you know what your

final project should look like. Each class or instructor will likely require a different format or style of research project.

Use the steps below to guide you through the process of selecting a research topic.

### **Step 1: Brainstorm for ideas**

Choose a topic that interests you. Use the following questions to help generate topic ideas.

- Do you have a strong opinion on a current social or political controversy?
- Did you read or see a news story recently that has piqued your interest or made you angry or anxious?
- Do you have a personal issue, problem or interest that you would like to know more about?
- Do you have a research paper due for a class this semester?
- Is there an aspect of a class that you are interested in learning more about?

If you are interested in exploring themes pertaining to government, politics, the social sciences, or current events, check out publications that seek to remain objective and consider a variety of perspectives, or search for biases by examining both left-leaning media outlets such as MSNBC and right-leaning media outlets such as Fox News. For health and medicine-related topics, check out the National Library of Medicine or the World Health Organization. For arts and culture-related topics, check out the National Endowment for the Humanities or the New York Times.

### **Keywords**

Write down any keywords or concepts that may be of interest to you. Could these terms help be used to form a more focused research topic? Be aware of overused ideas when deciding a topic. You may wish to avoid topics such as abortion, gun control, teen pregnancy, or suicide unless you feel you have a unique approach to the topic. Ask the instructor for ideas if you feel you are stuck or need additional guidance.

### **Step 2: Read General Background Information**

- Tertiary sources such as encyclopedias should not be included in your research because they are not scholarly. However, at the beginning of your research, reading a general encyclopedia article on the top two or three topics you are considering is useful to provide an overview and see how your idea relates to broader, narrower, and related issues. It also provides a great source for finding words commonly used to describe the topic. These keywords may be very useful to your later research. If you can't find an article on your topic, try using broader terms and ask for help from a librarian.
- For example, if you search for your term or keywords on jstor.org, you can see if the topic is broad enough that scholarly sources are available for your research, but also narrow enough so that you can provide a new perspective on the topic.

### **Step 3: Focus on Your Topic**

Keep it manageable

A topic will be very difficult to research if it is too broad or narrow. One way to narrow a broad topic such as "the environment" is to limit your topic.

Some common ways to limit a topic are:

- • by geographical area
  - o Example: What environmental issues are most important in the Southwestern United States?
- • by culture
  - o Example: How does the environment fit into the Navajo worldview?
- • by time frame
  - o Example: What are the most prominent environmental issues of the last 10 years?
- • by discipline
  - o Example: How does environmental awareness affect business practices today?
- • by population group
  - o Example: What are the effects of air pollution on senior citizens?

Remember that a topic may be too difficult to research if it is too:

- locally confined - Topics this specific may only be covered in these (local) newspapers, if at all.

- Example: What sources of pollution affect the Genesee County water supply?

- - recent - If a topic is quite recent, books or journal articles may not be available, but newspaper or magazine articles may. Also, Web sites related to the topic may or may not be available.

- - broadly interdisciplinary - You could be overwhelmed with superficial information.

- - Example: How can the environment contribute to the culture, politics and society of the Western states?

- - popular - You will only find very popular articles about some topics such as sports figures and high-profile celebrities and musicians.

- - If you have any difficulties or questions with focusing your topic, discuss the topic with your instructor, or with a librarian.

#### **Step 4: Make a List of Useful Keywords**

Keep track of the words that are used to describe your topic.

Example: For an environmental topic, your keywords might include climate change, recycling, solar energy, fossil fuels, alternative fuels, waste to energy, EVs, etc.