How to formulate research questions
for a topic for a College Research Paper

Choose a topic (scholarly is best) relating to the class you are currently taking, and need for a paper due in a class.

Focusing Your Topic

1. State your topic as a question
   - Consider questions that focus on how a particular discipline would intersect with your topic, such as the environmental impact, social policy, economic impacts, political aspects, etc.…
   - The keywords contained in these statements may serve as search terms.

2. Ask questions
   - Where does your topic relate geographically? E.g. Where is the deforestation in Brazil occurring and how does it relate to population centers?
   - When did this event or issue become important? What is the time span? E.g. When did the stock market start to go out of control in the 1920’s and why right then?
   - Who are the people involved? Consider by gender, age group, ethnicity, profession, or other characteristic or prominent name of someone involved. E.g. Who is Pope Francis and what about his life made him who he is?
   - Why is the topic important, and to whom is it important? E.g. Why would the rise of China’s economy affect the United States blue-collar workforce?
   - What is the impact on different groups by this topic? What is the effect of an ADHD diagnosis in one child on the rest of the family?
   - How do aspects of your topic impact other people/things/processes? Some research may focus on explaining processes. E.g. How does a doctor diagnose Parkinson’s disease in what steps? How does ALS impact the family economically or emotionally? How does gender impact migraines?

Think of all the ways the topic can be impacted, influenced, affected by every different area of life, environmental, legal, economic, political, emotional, behavioral, etc.… and choose one or two to ask about.
Enter your Topic and at least 3 Research Questions about the topic into Discussion Board (on blackboard.sau.edu)