

Hampshire in Havana

Some tips for creating a preliminary research proposal

When you start thinking about your idea for a project, your topic may be very broad and general. In order to complete the application for the Havana program, you should spend some time making your topic more specific and dynamic.

Starting topic: women in Cuba

Slightly narrowed topic: “I want to study women of the Revolution during Fidel’s rise to power.”

You can get even more specific! Use these questions to get you started.

Questioning your topic:

- What do you want to know about this topic?
 - Are you interested in women’s daily lives?
 - Are you interested in women’s political roles and contributions?
 - Could you be more specific about what demographic of women interest you?
 - Are you interested in the way women have been represented in art and literature? (Or are you interested in women who make art and literature?)
- What is your scope, in terms of time period and geographical area?
 - The “Revolution” is a good start. However, are you interested in the period just after the Revolution? The Special Period? Another timeframe?
 - Are you interested mostly in women in Havana? Elsewhere?
- How will you study this topic?
 - What kinds of texts, primary and secondary, will you read? In what languages?
 - Will you conduct interviews? Gather film footage? Take photographs?
 - Will you pursue training or take classes?
- Why do you want to pursue this topic?
 - What are your goals?
 - How do these goals relate to the work you’re doing in Division II?
- What will your final project *look* like?
 - A long paper?
 - A play? Fictional stories? A film?
 - A collection of photographs?
 - Some combination of these?
- Who is your intended audience?
 - An academic readership?
 - A theatrical audience?
 - Etc.?

Rewrite your topic:

There are three steps:

- 1. Name your topic
 - *I am studying/working on* _____
- 2. Add an indirect question
 - *Because I want to find out* _____
- 3. Answer *So What?* By motivating your question
 - *In order to help my reader understand* _____