**Essay Proposal Mind Map Guidelines**

A **mind map** is mode of brainstorming that allows you to organize your thoughts and ideas in a visual manner. Mind maps are part of a *curating process* where you gather information and take note of your ideas about a topic in order to start to recognize relationships between a subject and an idea. The following are general guidelines for your mind-mapping process. You can make this assignment as informal or formal as you choose – write your mind map by hand, draw it on a computer, use colours, post-it notes, or stickers. I leave it to you choose how to map your topic, but my hope is that it allows you to narrow your topic, organize your ideas, and jump start your essay writing process!

1. **At the center of your paper,** **write a question that frames your topic as a problem.**

* Remember, the essay topics I have provided you with are broad and non-specific, so it is your job to narrow your focus. Start by turning your topic into a question.
* What interests you about the topic, specifically?
* Try turning your topic into a how, why, or what question.

1. **Next, draw four lines radiating from the center idea and label them accordingly: 1) Issues 2) Key concepts 3) Patterns 4) Textual Evidence. Identify the following under each branch:**
2. *Issues*: identify the issues that interest you about the topic in relation to the text. What observations can you make about the topic? Identifying which issues interest you about the topic/text, specifically, will continue to help you narrow the focus of your essay.
3. *Key Concepts*: state the key concepts that relate to your topic. What are the key concepts you need to define and contextualize in order to understand the topic? You may want to think about what connotations you have with these concepts, as well.
4. *Patterns*: describe any patterns that occur in the text in relation to your topic. Do you notice an image, a word, or a concept that is repeated? Or is there a tone, a character, a plot element, or a setting feature that is associated repeatedly with your topic?
5. *Textual Evidence*: finally, provide some specific examples from the text (page numbers included). Where can you locate specific examples of concepts, issues, or patterns in the text?
6. Next, go through and circle, highlight, or draw arrows to connect any patterns you see across these four categories – some new insight may emerge that you didn’t consider before!
7. **On the back of your page, construct a tentative thesis statement.**

* Remember, this is a working thesis statement; it doesn’t have to be perfect! You may want to look at the Thesis Handout worksheet to help test your statement.

1. **Below your thesis statement, consider the significance of your argument, or the “so what?”**

* Why does your argument matter in relation to this particular topic? This may be something you can only answer after writing your paper, but it’s never too early to start thinking about why your argument matters.