



Assignment Sheet: Brainstorming Audit

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1. BACKGROUND

The readings and discussions you have done should have gotten you thinking about possible questions or problems you might want to research. For this assignment, you will choose one issue to research and document what led you to that choice. **Please note: this assignment is not binding, and you may refine or revise your decision as time goes on.** However, it is designed to force you to think through the feasibility of—and your interest level in—a potential direction for your research.

2. PURPOSE

To ensure you have thoroughly considered the subject you would like to research, you will create a collaborative document¹ of at least 1,000 words that shows you can do the following:

- (1) Identify topic/problem your group wants to research. Make sure it is something that a) you are concerned about; b) comes from your own experiences or observations; and c) relates to reading, writing, language, or literacy. Begin your document with a review of the issue, explaining what it is and why it's important for people to know about. Name specific groups. Is it important for college students to know about it? People going on the job market? College admissions offices? Teachers? Start thinking about an audience that needs to know about your findings. This part of the document discusses the overall topic and should be created collaboratively, not by only one person.
- (2) Determine how and why you are interested in this problem, keeping in mind that your interest is likely based on how the issue relates to your past experiences. Include an anecdote about a single noteworthy experience, or identify several related experiences or observations that prompt your interest.
- (3) Specify, as a group, the kinds of things researchers should/could learn about this problem/topic/issue². Why is this a compelling area of research? What's the benefit?

¹This is a group assignment, where everyone involved is expected to contribute equally to the final product. Rest assured: this is the only actual group assignment you'll have in this course.

²You may want to use a kind of mind map like that listed on page 2 of the Research Question Worksheet from Laurier Library at the U of Waterloo.

- (4) Document the authors from your readings who relate to your problem/topic. What do they already say about this issue that makes your group want to learn more? Cite and document that relationship by using an appropriate citation style (such as MLA or APA). This means your document will have a Works Cited or References page at the end of your document.

It is important to note what this document does *not* do. It is *not* a summary of the readings or the responses you already created. Those documents were your brainstorming process. This assignment is to identify what you have concluded from that process and provide more in-depth thinking about the problem or question your group would like to research.

3. EVALUATION

This assignment exists primarily to create a starting point for your research project. It is not a final paper, so it need not have the feel of a research report. Instead, it should illustrate that you have thought carefully about material from this course so far. Focus your efforts on helping me see how your group views the topic and understand the thinking your group has already done. Evaluation will be based on the rubric shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Evaluation of Brainstorming Audit

	DEPTH OF THOUGHT	RATIONALE	QUESTION OR PROBLEM	READINGS
Excellent	Shows clear, considered thinking about research topic and goals	Combination of personal interest and thinking show natural choice of issue	Clearly identifies topic as a provoking question or pressing problem to be studied	Problem/question shown to build naturally from class readings
Adequate	Shows developing thinking about issue or goals	Provides explanation for choice of issue; questionable curiosity	Identifies the valid topic, but may be too broad or closed to investigation	Shows relation of issue to readings from class
Poor	Presents topic/goals as list, not the result of thinking	Does not include valid or logical reasons for interest in issue	Fails to state subject as a question to be answered or problem to be solved	Fails to cite related authors or relate issue to readings