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# What Is Research?

INFO 4940: Advanced NLP for Humanities Research

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# Research is what a field does

Isn't that kind of ... circular?

**Yes**, but the point is the *doing*.

Coursework is not research. Even undergrad research involvement usually isn't research.

**Research entails joining a community of practice.** If you aren't a member of the community at the end of the process, you haven't done research (in that field).

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# You know a field by reading its work

We'll have more to say about this in a week or two ...

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# Features of research

Research is **novel**. If someone else has done it already, it's not research (it's a lab exercise or a problem set or engineering).

Research is **important**. Research matters to some part of the relevant community. If no one cares, it's a hobby.

Research is **evidence based**. Work that doesn't involve evidence is philosophy or opinion.

**Many valuable things are *not* research.** But we care about research in this class.

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# Mind the gap

Successful research identifies a clear problem **area**, maps the state of **knowledge**, finds an important **gap** in that knowledge, and designs experiments to **fill** that gap.

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**Motivation,  
motivation,  
motivation**