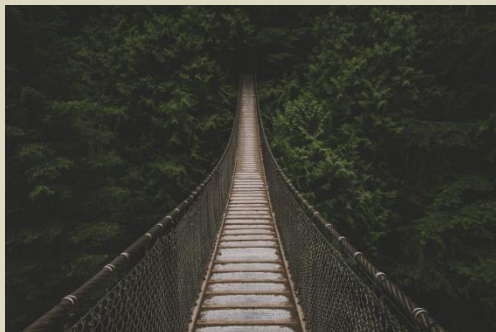# Choosing A Topic

Writing 2101
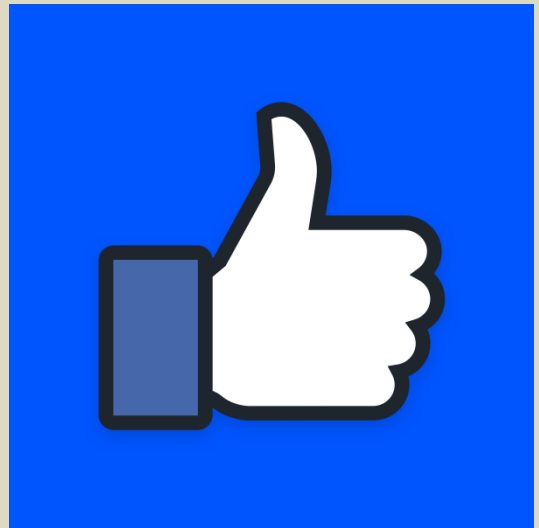
Dr. Andrew Chater

Week 3

Good Research Questions

- Narrow (in that it is a question one can answer in eight pages)

- Specific (in that who, what, when and where is clear)

- Controversial (in that the question could provoke debate or disagreement)

Research Questions

- These are examples of good research questions:
  - Should Canada's Federal Government reform its electoral system?
  - For the average Canadian, is the "sugar detox" diet a safe way to lose weight?
  - How can governments in Canada act to reduce the number of people who vape?
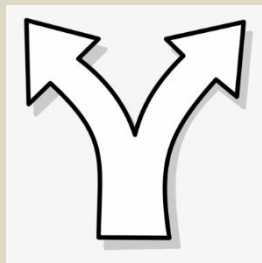
Research Questions

- These are examples of research questions that require some revision:
  - What are the pros and cons of every electoral system the government of Canada could adopt at the Federal level?
  - What is the healthiest diet?
  - Is smoking more than 10 cigarettes a day safe?

What's wrong with these ideas?

Choosing A Question

1. Choose a topic related to your major that can help you in your studies.
2. Choose a topic related to your career goal that can help you in the future.
3. Choose a topic based on your personal interests or hobbies, completely unrelated to your major.
4. Choose a question stemming from an experience in your personal life.
5. Choose a question based on something from the news.
6. Choose a question based on something that you read recently.
7. Think about a major debate in academic literature that you may have encountered in the past.
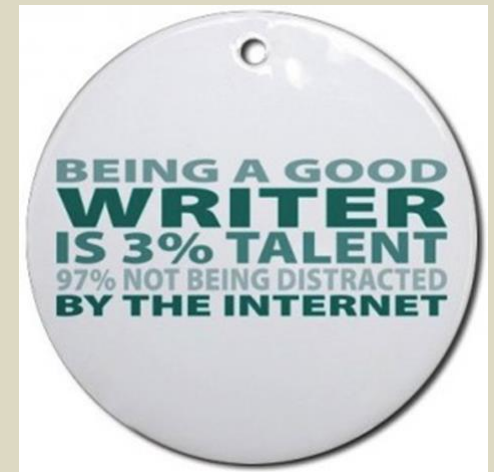
Choosing A Question

- Do not choose a question:
  - That is the same or extremely similar to an essay you are writing for another class
  - That is the same or extremely similar to an essay you wrote in the past

Choosing A Question

- Are these research questions good, or will the writer have problems?
    - Is voter turnout in Canada declining over time?
    - What can the government of Canada do to increase voter turnout in federal elections?
    - Do citizens living in a democracy have a moral obligation to vote?
    - Why would the American people elect somebody with brain damage as President of the United States, as was the case in the election of Donald Trump?

BEING A GOOD
WRITER
IS 3% TALENT
97% NOT BEING DISTRACTED
BY THE INTERNET

Conclusion

- Good writing is logical, explicit, interesting and supported.

- A good essay topic is narrow, specific and controversial.

What is your essay topic?

HOW TO WRITE GOOD

1. Avoid Alliteration. Always.

2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.

3. Avoid cliches like the plague. They're old hat.

4. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.

5. Be more or less specific.

6. Writers should never generalize.

Seven: Be consistent!

8. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.

9. Who needs rhetorical questions?

10. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.