

# Research Methods

“Research is an important tool  
to inform the creative process”

—David Canaan

Making new associations from  
unrelated elements

Willingness to pursue idea you  
know you'll reject

Tolerance for ambiguity over time

To begin developing your thesis topic, and thinking about designing around it, you need to have a deep and well-rounded understanding of your subject matter.

*(ie. not your own assumptions, opinions, and ideas)*

# Qualitative vs. Quantitative

**Qualitative** methodology that examines the *why* and *how* of decision making, not just what, where, when, or “who”, and have a strong basis in the field of sociology to understand government and social programs.

**Quantitative** systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques.

# Qualitative

Focus groups

- interviews
- dyads/triads
- online discussions

Ethnography

Participatory

# Quantitative

statistics

Things to consider when  
choosing resources



# Things to consider when choosing resources

Provenance      What are the author's credentials?

Are the author's arguments supported by evidence (e.g. primary historical material, case studies, narratives, statistics, recent scientific findings)?

# Things to consider when choosing resources

Objectivity      Is the author's perspective even-handed or prejudicial?

Is contrary data considered or is certain pertinent information ignored to prove the author's point?

# Things to consider when choosing resources

Persuasiveness

Which of the author's theses are most/least convincing?

# Things to consider when choosing resources

Value

Are the author's arguments and conclusions convincing?

Does the work ultimately contribute in any significant way to an understanding of the subject?

# Research tips

# 1. Clearly define your area of study

Be specific. Does it focus on a specific field? Is it cross-disciplinary?

Start on Wikipedia and click through the sources, references, and encyclopedias.

## **2. Skim, scan, and pull relevant excerpts or quotations**

You will never be able to read everything on your subject — you don't need to read it all. Look at abstracts, quotes, reviews, etc.

### **3. Keep everything organized and constantly make connections**

Use software like Evernote, Are.na, Pinterest, etc.

Make categories, sub-themes, etc.



“Rather than the particular book, it is the connections and correlations that should be the focus of research, must like a railroad switchman should focus on the relations between trains rather than the contents of any specific convoy.”

— Pierre Bayard

*How To Talk About Books You Haven't Read*

# Literature Review

# What is a literature review?

A survey and discussion of the literature organized chronologically or thematically. You will present and analyze, in a critical manner, the relevant published literature to justify your research question and demonstrate a detailed knowledge of your area of interest.

# Process

1. Select sources
2. Written responses
3. Design responses
4. Written survey

# 1. Select sources

What are the 20 most relevant resources on your thesis topic?

*Things to consider:*

What are the author's credentials?

Are the author's arguments supported by evidence?

Is the author's perspective even-handed or prejudicial?

Is contrary data considered or is certain pertinent information ignored to prove the author's point?

Which of the author's theses are most/least convincing?

Are the author's arguments and conclusions convincing?

Does the work ultimately contribute in any significant way to an understanding of the subject?

## 2. Written Response

Select the 5 most relevant among those 20 and write a 500 word response (due each week)

*Things to include:*

Identify the author's purpose.

Ask yourself, what theme or central idea did the author want to communicate? We call this central idea an 'argument'.

What is the argument of this text?

How is the argument build?

How does the author prove their point?

Which discussion, evidence, and cases are presented?

### 3. Design Response

Each week, you will design a response to each of the five primary sources.

*Weekly framework, presented each week to the class:*

Feb 22: Typographic

March 1: Material Exploration

March 8: Interactive

March 22: Speculative Design

March 29: Performance

*Your media should be chosen to embody your argument.*

## **4. Write a narrative to connect the different pieces**

Concurrently, you will write a longer text that connects all of your research

*A maximum of 2000 words:*

Combine all the texts and your design responses in one chapter by connecting and relating them to each other. How can this list of text and responses be edited to describe a landscape of the literature on your subject matter in a unified way? It can be chronological, argumentative, oppositional, conceptual, etc.



# Next week...

1. Begin research and building your library of 20 sources

2. Select one source and write 500 word response

3. Design a typographic 'response' to that source, that will be presented and critiqued in class.

The response should use typography and composition to communicate your the points you made in the text. It must be printed, size choices should be made appropriately for your design. It could be a poster, a photographic composition, a folio, a digital composition, a collage, a book.