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Lesson Plan: Characteristics of Effective Research Questions

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Lesson Plan: Characteristics of Effective Research Questions

Introduction to Writing a Research Question (15 min.)

What's the difference between an opinion and a judgment?

Judgment is supported by facts and verifiable data, where an opinion is not. In your final outline you will present a judgment – the answer to the question you develop today is a judgment. So, yes, I am asking for your opinion and that is subjective, but your process of finding and evaluating sources means that you are providing a judgment based on research and other relevant sources.

Evaluating effective research questions:

- ***Is your research question easily answered?***
 - Can I just look up the answer?
 - Can I just quote a source?
 - *Example:* How many violent crimes are committed in Colorado each year?
 - *Takeaway:* Your research question requires research to reach an answer.

- ***Could no one could feasibly disprove the answer to your research question because it seems self-evident?***
 - Is the answer 'very'?
 - Would people respond with 'duh' to your answer?
 - *Example:* How important are police officers to public safety?
 - *Takeaway:* You should be able to develop a good argument (based in evidence) for your research question.

- ***Can your research question be answered with factual evidence?***
 - Do relevant facts exist to answer my question?
 - Is the answer subjective or biased?
 - *Example:* Is it better to be a correctional officer in a state-run or private prison?
 - *Takeaway:* Research questions should avoid speculation or bias.

- ***Are there too many sources on your research question?***
 - Are there so many sources that you could not feasibly look at most of them?
 - *Example:* Why is addressing recidivism important?
 - *Takeaway:* Your research question should be narrow and focused on a specific issue or theme.

Bad Research Question Activity (put characteristics PP on screens) (15-20 min.)

- Give pairs research questions – give pair sitting next to them same question
- I'm going to give each group a research question. I want you to decide if it is effective. If it isn't effective be able to discuss why it isn't effective. Work as a group to rewrite the question into an effective question. Be prepared to discuss.
- After 5-10 minutes have groups pair up with group with the same question and compare answers and new question.
- After 5 minutes (gauge the class) ask people to share re-written RQ (10 min)

Why are social networking sites harmful?

Does the United States have a good educational system?

What is the effect on the environment from global warming?

Should gun laws be tougher?

Should campus safety be a concern for college students?

Assignment: Draft a Focused Research Question

1. Brainstorm questions about your topic with your partners and write them below. Focus on how, why, and what if questions. See the Turabian reading if you need help thinking about questions.

2. Evaluate Your Questions

- Can it be answered too easily?
- Can it be disproved or is it self-evident?
- Can it be supported with factual evidence?
- Are there too many sources on this topic?

3. Write your 2 best questions below and bring this to the next class.