

Developing Paper Topics as a Class

In some cases you may wish to give your students the opportunity to write on topics of their own choice. This can have the benefit of allowing their own scholarly interests to develop. It also prepares them to frame their own interests as a step towards the senior project. Here are some steps to generate such topics. I start this 2 weeks before papers are due.

1) As a class: gather title of texts, authors, themes, key quotes, and other important information on board.

2) Focused writing: 10 minutes on possible paper topics.

3) Students suggest topics from their writing, another student or the teacher writes them on the board.

[You will likely see that students come up with similar topics, maybe 5 good distinct questions from 15-20 students. Help them with connections in this regard, sharpening contrasts, etc.]

4) Homework assignment: choose one of the paper topics and a central quote for your paper. Write a one page draft connecting the quote to the topic through close reading / analysis.

If you would like to write on a different topic you are welcome to do with my approval through email or in office hours.

Next week: spend 15 minutes or so hearing from student drafts, then final draft due the following week.