

Team Assignment 2: Narrowing and Defining Your Research Topic

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This assignment will assist you in developing and refining a research topic, which is a key part of the research process. Your research is only as good as your ability to clearly focus your topic. I will be looking to see that you can:

- take a broad and undefined topic and narrow it into a more precise and focused research topic
- situate your research topic in relationship to broader, narrower, and related areas of knowledge
- focus on a specific aspect, or aspects, of your topic
- develop research questions that help you focus on the main questions you wish to investigate related to your topic
- develop an argument that advocates a position or solution to your topic
- develop a working thesis statement that succinctly summarizes the main ideas and issues related to your specific research focus
- identify keywords and keyword phrases that will be helpful in locating relevant information
- construct appropriate search strings that incorporate advanced search techniques and logic
- work in collaboration and cooperation with team members to complete all required tasks
- complete all assigned individual tasks
- apply effective communication strategies to accomplish team goals

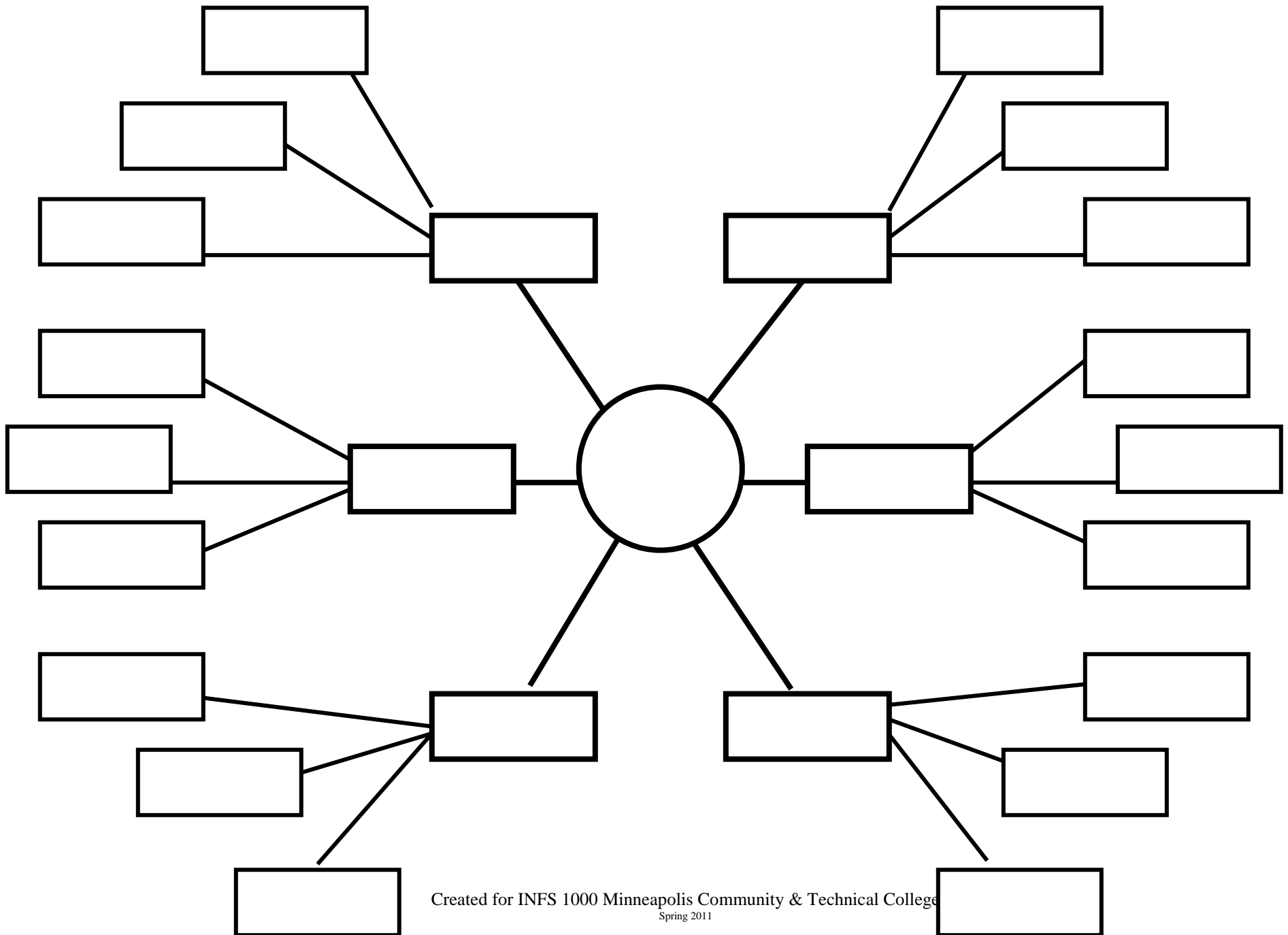
Before you begin the assignment, you should review Badke Chapter 2 “Taking Charge.” You should also review the **Research Process** handout. You will work with your team to complete this assignment. Please see team assignment rubric & teamwork rubric for more detailed criteria of how I will be assessing your work.

In Team Assignment 1, you located several Reference articles that will provide you with background information on your topic. It is now time to put your topic into context, narrow the focus of your topic, formulate research questions, and write a preliminary argumentative thesis statement. **Your team must agree on two (2) reference resources to closely review before moving ahead with this assignment.** Discuss which two (2) articles you would like to select to move forward and provide MLA citations for the two (2) reference resources you choose here:

MLA citation of 1 st reference resource	
MLA citation of 2nd reference resource	

Before narrowing the focus of your topic, it is important to brainstorm various points of view on the topic as well as broader and related issues. You can do this a variety of ways, but one recommended approach is concept mapping. Here is a link to a sample [Concept Map](http://www.minneapolis.edu/library/courses/inf1000/files/Handouts/Concept%20Maps.pdf) <http://www.minneapolis.edu/library/courses/inf1000/files/Handouts/Concept%20Maps.pdf> . You can easily find numerous other examples with a simple web search for “concept maps”. Create a concept map for your topic using the template below. Place the original/main topic in the center of the map, and then, with the help of your reference resources, brainstorm broader, narrower and related concepts. Fill as many boxes as you deem appropriate for your topic.

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After you put your topic into context, you can begin considering how to narrow the focus. You will want to consider the academic disciplines (humanities, social sciences, and science) and subject areas (ethics, philosophy, history, sociology, biology, etc.) your topic falls under.

Proposed narrowed topic focus	Example: How pollution affects marine life in the ocean
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Academic disciplines and subject areas you will focus on	Example: oceanography, environmental science
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Once you have started narrowing the focus and have identified the relevant academic disciplines and subject areas, it is helpful to write some research questions you would like to answer during the research process. Research questions are not the same as fact-finding questions, but rather are complex questions that, when answered, help strengthen the position you take on your topic and the argument you make in your argumentative thesis statement. Review Badke Chapter Two and Appendix One for more details and examples of good and bad research questions. Each team member should contribute 1 research question.

Use the checklist below to be sure the research question meets the following criteria:

- ✓ It is open-ended (cannot be answered with a simple yes or no)
- ✓ It addresses an issue or controversy and/or solves a problem
 - ✓ It is something that you can take a stand on

Research questions [include the name of the team member who wrote the question in the space provided]	<p style="text-align: center;">Example: what are the sources of oil polluting the ocean?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Name of team member who wrote Question 1: 2. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Name of team member who wrote Question 2: 3. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Name of team member who wrote Question 3: 4. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Name of team member who wrote Question 4: 5. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Name of team member who wrote Question 5:
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Collaboratively draft an Argumentative Thesis Statement. One approach would be: 1-2 team members present a draft to the rest of team for feedback/revisions.

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Conventions of argumentative thesis statement construction: Your first sentence should briefly describe the main issues that you wish to focus on related to your topic. Your second sentence should make a statement, claim or argument—take a position on your topic. Your third sentence should propose a solution or a call to action.

Preliminary Argumentative thesis statement	
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Review your thesis, your research questions & your reference articles & collectively identify possible keywords & keyword phrases you might use to search for additional resources. Combine the keywords and/or keyword phrases with Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT), truncation (*), nesting (()) or other advanced search logic to create possible search strings. Each member of the team should contribute their own ideas for keywords and keyword phrases and assist in constructing possible search strings. Don't forget to include keyword variations and/or synonyms.

Keywords (single terms)	Example: ocean ➤ ➤ ➤ ➤ ➤ ➤ ➤
Keyword phrases	Example: marine life ➤ ➤ ➤ ➤
Possible search strings	Example: (ocean OR "marine life") AND oil AND pollut* ➤ ➤ ➤ ➤

You can earn up to 10 points for this assignment.

Up to 5 pts for Assignment

Up to 5 pts for Teamwork

I will use the Team Assignment Rubric to assess your team's final product.

I will use the Teamwork Rubric to assess your individual contributions to the group effort.

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Team Assignment Rubric

Requirement	Insufficient 0 - 3	Emerging 3	Satisfactory (B level) 4	Superior (A level) 5
Uses background information to brainstorm broader, narrower, and related ideas	Did not brainstorm broader, narrower, or related ideas demonstrating a lack of understanding of the broad topic gleaned from the reference sources	Brainstormed only a few broader, narrower, or related ideas demonstrating a basic understanding of the broad topic gleaned from the reference sources	Brainstormed several broader, narrower, or related ideas demonstrating a good understanding of the broad topic gleaned from the reference sources	Brainstormed multiple broader, narrower, or related ideas demonstrating an in-depth understanding of the broad topic gleaned from the reference sources
Specifies the dimensions of the topic appropriately	Topic has an imprecise or unclear focus or focus needs to be narrowed or clarified	Topic has a discernable focus but lacks precision	Clear focus on the topic that is adequately precise	Very clear focus on the topic that is precise, appropriately narrow, and well articulated
Develops a suitable working thesis	Thesis statement does not clearly state a focused topic, lacks precision and does not clearly lay out the main ideas and issues	Thesis statement addresses the topic but needs a clearer focus and more precision	Thesis statement is clear and focused and adequately precise	Thesis statement is very clear, well focused and concise
Has a clear argument and proposed solution	There is no argument and/or conventions of argumentative thesis statement construction are not followed	There is an argument but it needs to be more clearly stated and/or conventions of argumentative thesis statement construction are followed but with errors	The argument is adequately stated and precise and conventions of argumentative thesis statement construction are followed with few errors	The argument is clear, focused and well stated and conventions of argumentative thesis statement construction are followed with no errors
Has clear, focused and complementary research questions	Research questions are too broad or vague and do not adequately focus the topic. The research questions do not complement each other and do not work together to focus the topic	Research questions address the topic but need more focus and precision	Clear, focused and adequately precise research questions	Very clear, concise and well focused research questions

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<p>Identifies appropriate keywords and keyword phrases and constructs accurate potential search strings</p>	<p>Keywords and keyword phrases are too broad or vague and do not accurately reflect the focused topic</p> <p>Potential search strings are constructed, but with significant errors and/or misapplication of advanced search techniques</p>	<p>Keywords and keyword phrases address the topic but need more focus and precision</p> <p>Potential search strings are constructed with few errors and/or misapplication of advanced search techniques</p>	<p>Clear, focused and adequately precise keywords and keyword phrases</p> <p>Potential search strings are well constructed with few errors with appropriate application advanced search techniques</p>	<p>Very clear and well focused keywords and keyword phrases</p> <p>Potential search strings are very well constructed with no errors and incorporate accurate application of advanced search techniques</p>
<p>Organization, clarity, and completion</p>	<p>Assignment is very disorganized and difficult to follow/read</p> <p>Did not follow directions</p> <p>Assignment is less than 70% complete</p>	<p>Assignment is mostly organized</p> <p>Most directions were followed with no more than 2 errors</p> <p>Assignment is more than 70% completed</p>	<p>Assignment is organized</p> <p>All directions were followed with no more than 1 error</p> <p>Assignment is 90% complete</p>	<p>Assignment is organized well and is easy to follow</p> <p>All directions were followed with no errors</p> <p>Assignment is 100% complete</p>