
Center for Urban and Global Studies Summer Research Program

Info session
October 19, 2023

Urban and global summer research

- Conduct research for approximately 100 hours over the summer at home or abroad
 - Meet as a cohort for a pre-research planning meeting and post-research debrief meeting
 - Receive logistical support for research and planning
 - Meet with an advisor for research support
 - Receive financial support for your research in the form of a stipend or coverage of travel expenses
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Funding for this program

- Tanaka Fund for International Research
 - Grossman Global Studies Fund
 - Kelter Urban Studies Fund
 - China Urban Studies Summer Program Fund
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Timelines

- 100 hours full-time or part-time
 - Full-time is about 33 hours/week for 3 weeks
 - Hybrid example
 - Spend 25 hours conducting background research and a literature review
 - Travel for fieldwork for two weeks and spend 25 hours/week each week working on research
 - Return home and spend 25 hours reviewing field notes, synthesizing findings, and preparing your presentation
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Role of the advisor

Students work with their faculty advisor to:

- Develop a feasible research proposal.
 - Find and understand relevant academic literature.
 - Select the appropriate methodology for the research question.
 - Understand how to conduct research ethically and responsibly, working with the student to submit the project to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if needed.
 - Talk through next steps for the research project beyond the summer (if applicable).
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Approaching an advisor

- Ideally a faculty member you've worked with in the past who is familiar with the topic you will research
 - Meet with them early on to discuss your idea
 - After discussing your idea with them, show them the advisor form and ask if they would be willing to serve as your advisor for the project
 - If they agree, set up another meeting with them to review a draft proposal
 - Contact Gabby Nelson, gabriell.nelson@trincoll.edu, if you need help identifying an advisor
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Past project examples



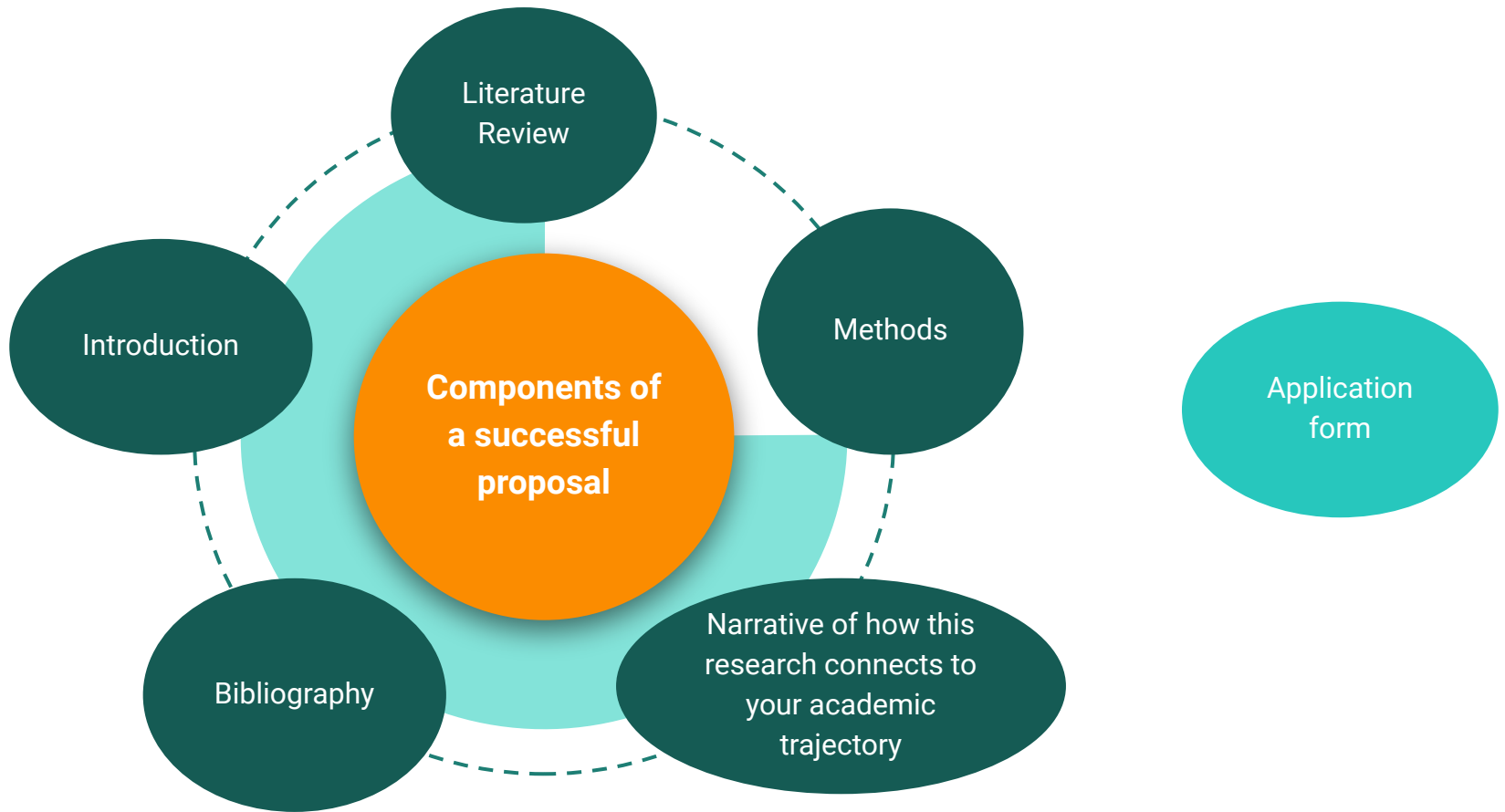
- Adyanna Odom '23 studied B-girls (breakdancing women) in Houston after identifying a gap in the literature - men were featured prominently, but there was little written about women
 - Wrote a thesis based on a comparative analysis of breakdancing culture in Houston and Paris
 - Aiden Chisholm '23 stayed for a few weeks after studying away in Granada to study orientalism in Andalusian tourist shops
 - He became interested in the topic based on his observations in Granada and his final paper in Professor Antrim's class "Global 1,001 nights"
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What is the point of a research proposal?

The function of this proposal is to persuade or convince a committee of professors that your project is worth funding!

People are reading your proposal looking for the answers to these questions:

- What are we going to learn as the result of the proposed project that we do not know now?
 - Why is it worth knowing?
 - How will we know that the conclusions are valid?
 - How meaningful/feasible is this project for the student?
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Introduction

In the introduction, state the problem, your purpose, and the significance of your proposed research.

Provide enough background information so the reader can fully grasp the significance of your project.

Include a strong research question. This is the heart of your proposal!

Literature review

The literature review provides an overview of the most significant studies in your field.

Draw your reader's attention to existing research, identify gaps in existing studies, and make your reader understand how your proposal will contribute to already existing research.

Think of this as a sharply focused view of the specific body or bodies of knowledge to which you will add.

Methodology

Specify the methods that will be used to conduct your study, outlining *how* you will answer the question that you have proposed.

This can include:

- Specification of data sources: What research approach will your study take? Will it be quantitative or qualitative? Where will you be conducting the study? What type of data will you need to answer your research question?
 - Methods of data collection: How will you collect the data?
 - Description of data analysis: What strategies or tools will you use to analyze the data you collect?
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Methodology

A methodology is not just a list of research tasks but an argument as to why these tasks add up to the best attack on the problem.

When planning your methods, make sure to pay attention to the scope of your project. In this case, you have to show your reader that you can start and complete your research within the constraints of a summer (100 hours of work) and the max budget.

Narrative of how the research connects to your academics

Explain how this project fits within your trajectory at and beyond Trinity. How is this project connected to your academic, professional, and/or political commitments?

Specify your objectives: what is the final product of the project and how does it connect to your academic goals?

Outline your preparedness as an application: What qualifications do you have to do this research?

Bibliography

It is essential that the proposal summarize the current state of knowledge and provide an up-to-date, comprehensive bibliography.

A good bibliography testifies that the author did enough preparatory work to make sure the project will complement and not duplicate other people's efforts.

The bibliography is exempt from the word count.

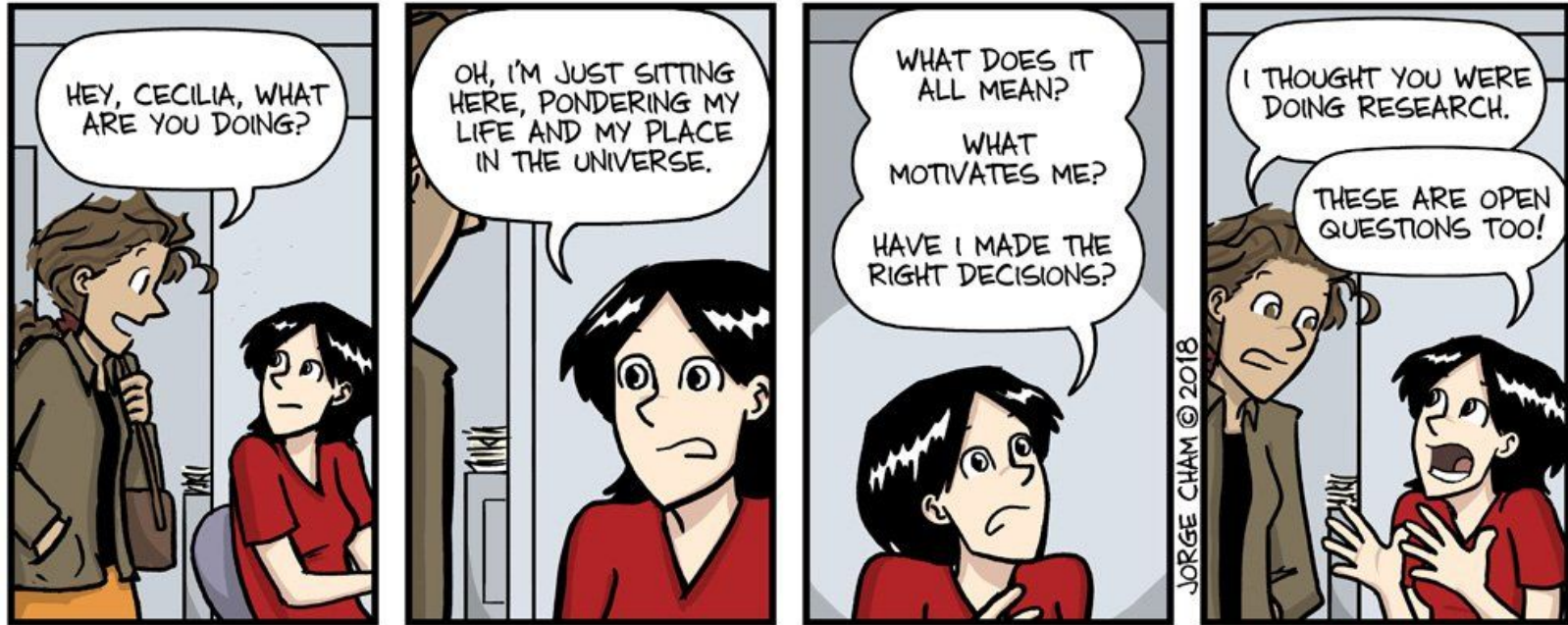
Application form

- Applicant information
 - Faculty advisor information
 - Title of research project
 - Project timeline: How will you organize your 100 hours of research over the summer?
 - Budget form: What services, supplies, and/or stipend are you requesting to support the project?
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Tips for crafting your proposal

- Leave the reader with something to remember in the opening paragraph. You need a hook!
 - Surprises, puzzles, and apparent contradictions can powerfully persuade the reviewer.
 - Aim for clarity in your writing.
 - Start early. A good proposal takes a long time to craft!
 - Seek multiple forms of feedback.
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Developing a Research Question





The Importance of Questions

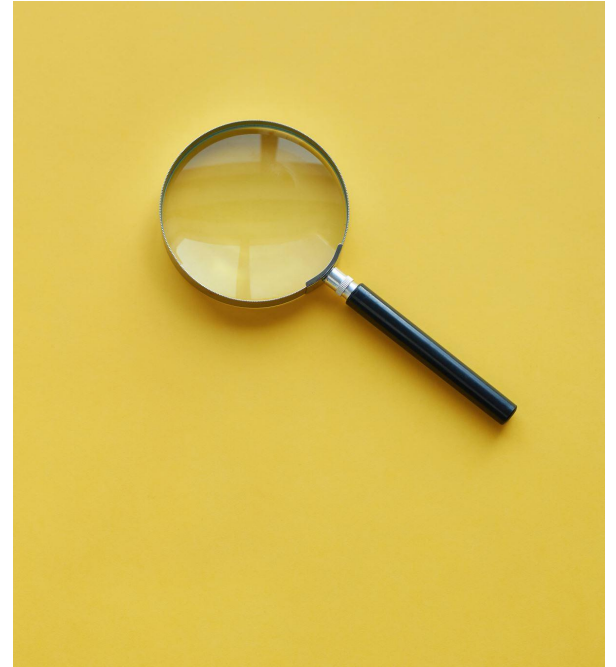
- Help to define (and limit) the scope of inquiry
- Allow you to evaluate existing knowledge, find gaps in areas where your contribution will make a difference.
- Drive and direct the *process* of conducting research.
- Helps you communicate your intentions to an audience (be it a funder, readers, participants in the study, even oneself)

Identifying a Topic

- What do *you* care about?
- What current events, or recent events spark your curiosity.
- What are you reading in your classes?

Tips:

- Talk to people!!! You will need an advisor so think strategically about how your interests align with faculty in a position to work with you.
- Be flexible. Topics and questions change. Be open to this happening.



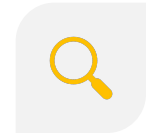
Preliminary Research



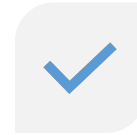
LEARN THE
BASICS



GET INTO THE
LITERATURE



EVALUATE
YOUR
SOURCES



TRACK
CITATIONS



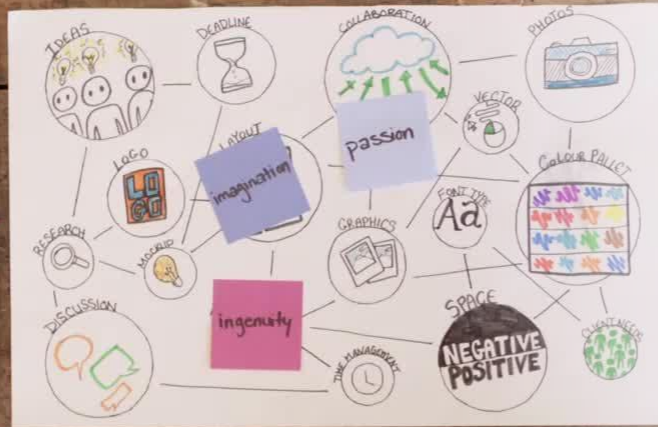
TAKE NOTES!

Asking Reasonable Questions

- **Analytical questions** are the heart of research. They uncover relationships, patterns, or causes: "how," "why," or "what are the implications of." Examples: "How does climate change impact urban biodiversity?" "Why do some communities experience higher rates of poverty than others?"
- **Descriptive Questions** are important for background: "what," "who," "where," or "when." Examples: "What is the average monthly rent for slum dwellers?" or "Who are the key figures in local politics?"
- **Yes/no questions** are the simplest but least useful for this kind of research. They typically yield binary answers and do not foster in-depth exploration. Examples: "Is climate change real?" or "Did the Industrial Revolution impact urbanization?"

How will you answer the question(s)?

- Choose methods that align with your research question and objectives.
- You may be limited by your training, but that's ok.
- As these grants involve fieldwork, you already know that your methods are likely to be qualitative and immersive.
- The explanation of a research design and justification for those methods are important components of a successful proposal!





Is it doable?

- How long it will take to collect and analyze data. Factor in potential delays, ethical considerations, and any necessary approvals. A well-structured timeline is incredibly useful.
- Assessing the available resources. Will the funds cover your stay? What's a reasonable budget?
- Feasibility is critical. Ask yourself if your research question is realistically achievable within your constraints. If not, consider modifying your question or limiting the scope further.

Narrowing the Scope

Use specific language: Replace vague or general terms in your question with more precise ones. For example, change "How does governance impact planning?" to "What is the influence of X policy on community engagement?"

Limit the geographic or temporal scope: Specify a particular location or time period if relevant to your research. For instance, instead of studying "global climate change," you could narrow it down to "the impact of climate change initiatives on Singapore."

Consider a specific population or demographic: Define the specific group you're interested in. For example, "How does urban redevelopment affect the elderly in this community?" is narrower than "How does urban redevelopment affect people?"

Research Question Example #1

“Over the past several decades, the government has found itself in a standstill, unable to carry out...desired gentrification. How has the government, both ward and city, addressed and continue to address this? How have the people of Sanya reacted to the governmental response? In turn, how has the government responded to non-governmental initiatives at conflict resolution?”

- Rio Smith, Tanaka Recipient '23

Example # 2

“The research aims to examine the social, political, cultural transformations that have taken place in the lives of the inhabitants of rural communities because of the community enlargement reform and [its] impact on...political participation within the unified administrative body. This in turn can be useful in explaining the electoral success of candidates nominated by villages to the council of the enlarged Dilijan municipality. The study focuses on how political attitudes are currently being shaped in at-large communities, especially given the role of rural social identity.”

- Albert Ananyan, Grossman Recipient '22

Example # 3

“In what ways—structural and practical—are Japanese Shintō and Inca religions similar, and how are these similarities relevant for our modern understanding of their respective civilizations and their corresponding contemporary nations?”

- Paz Daniela Ortiz Santa María, Tanaka Recipient '23

Wrap up