Steps to Researching a Successful English Paper

Assignment: Choose an appropriate topic pertaining to an aspect of American Literature (i.e. William Faulkner and Southern Women). Your professor has indicated that this paper should contain references to 5-10 "good" sources (excluding Wikipedia). The culmination of this research will be the completion of a 6 - 10 page term paper properly, cited using the MLA Manual of Style.

Here are the steps to follow:

First, Pick your topic . . . and pick it well! This is a topic you will have to "live with" for the next fifteen weeks. This topic can be identified through preliminary research both within the library and on the internet.

In order to assist with your selection, here are several print books and websites to begin narrowing your choice:

Print Resources: To begin your search, consult some of the following general sources.


Internet Resources: Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.com) and Google (www.google.com) are great places to start initial research. WARNING: As with any internet source, be sure to certify information found on the web with other, more authoritative sources.

Second, Narrow Subject by Interest: Lupton Library catalog is a great place to narrow your topic. "American Literature" is much too broad so narrow it down. For example, in American Literature, I decide to focus on "Southern Writers" (again, much too broad). William Faulkner is my favorite author, but again, too broad for the scope of this paper. In consulting the Lupton Library Catalog, I see a subject heading “William Faulkner and Women.” Bingo! There's my topic!

American Literature
  | Southern Writers
  |  | William Faulkner
  |  |  | William Faulkner & Southern Women

Broad
  ↓
Narrow
Third, Conduct your in-depth research on your topic through primary and secondary resources: Primary resources are those sources written by someone or are original documents (i.e. diaries, letters, documents, etc). Secondary resources are books, articles, etc., which are written about a person or subject.

**Primary sources:** Don’t overlook: Primary sources can include printed books containing reprints of primary source material (i.e. The Correspondence of Shelby Foote and Walker Percy).

**Secondary Sources:** Books and articles can be identified by through searching through Lupton Library catalog and through the databases to which UTC subscribes.

**Databases:** Lupton Library contains both general and specific databases to outline articles (both full-text and citations): Choose either the General Search or English Databases option under find articles to search databases with terms. The following databases are recommended:

**General Databases:** InfoTrac, Encyclopedia Britannica, etc.

**English Databases:** Search for appropriate terms in MLA International, Literature Resource Center, Reader’s Guide Full Text, and Humanities & Social Sciences (to name a few).

Results will either provide full text articles through online journals through Textfinder or citations for either retrieval from the Lupton Periodical stacks or through Interlibrary Loan.

**Internet:** Google Scholar is a great source.

**Next, Get Creative:** Google Images can provide nice pictures/images to dress up your paper! Merely do a keyword search and click on Google images.

**Lastly, Cite it Right!** Be sure to give credit for information used in your paper. Guidance in citing references in MLA format may be found on the Lupton Library catalog under “Citing Your Sources.”

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Good LUCK!

For further assistance, feel free to contact me!
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