Suggested schedule for researching and focusing your research interests (1/1/13)

Over the course of the quarter, reflect on and begin to address the following: How can you think about the questions and experiences that brought you here in particularly theological terms (what theological questions are you beginning to articulate)? What academic disciplines are having productive and stimulating conversations about the topic(s) that interests you? What resources, conversations partners, forums, etc can you find to help you deepen, broaden, and focus your questions and interests? How can you relate your academic learning to contemporary issues and questions, particularly those relevant to your own professional practices and personal life? And practically speaking, where do you want to focus your energy, attention, and research in the thesis? What fields/disciplines do you want to work across? What faculty members might you begin to develop relationships with as you develop your project and being to think about a faculty advisor? What topics can you begin to identify as needing to be addressed from a particular angle or with a particular method or combination of method and theories?

Weeks 1 and 2: Research questions

Draft 5-6 of your driving questions for your course of study at Iliff.

Identify arenas, disciplines (including interdisciplinary endeavors), etc. in which conversations relevant to your questions are taking place.

Week 3: Identifying parallel conversations, Part I.

Do a Google search! (be sure to check books.google.com, googlescholar, ATLA databases, Oxford databases, etc.) Figure out who is talking about your questions and in what fields. What conversations are appealing and why? What are some of the drawbacks and difficulties conversing in some of these fields pose?

Journal snapshot #1 due (driving questions, revised fin light of work done in weeks 2 and 3)

Week 4: Identifying parallel conversations, Part II

Go to an academic library – an actual physical building! - and research your question(s). Talk with a research librarian. Leaf through actual books. Continue trying to figure out who is talking and in what fields. What conversations are appealing and why? What are some of the drawbacks and difficulties conversing in some of these fields pose?

Week 5: Read Booth, Colomb, and Williams, *The Craft of Research* (University Of Chicago Press, 2008), pp 35-50 (read this section carefully and **do the exercises in section 3.3** **and 3.4**). You might also skim pp 1-34 (reading will be posted)

Write up some brainstorming notes based on the four categories and related questions in *Craft*, 3.3.1-5

Week 6: Conduct an INTERVIEW with an expert

* + 1. Identify a person who you think will be able to help you understand the shape of the field/discipline you wish to incorporate into your study. I HIGHLY recommend choosing an Iliff faculty member (only ‘ranked’ faculty – not adjuncts - can serve as thesis readers)
    2. After scheduling your meeting, prepare your interview questions.
    3. Write up your interview (in whatever form you choose : in bullets, as a narrative, in outline form) and present the salient and interesting points in class.

Week 7: Identifying texts and methods.

What texts are important for you to engage? What texts are less important? How will you work with these texts (what methods will you employ?)?

In Week 7, journal snapshot # 2 is due (identify a topic/area of research)

Week 8-9: Do a preliminary lit review

Week 9-10: Articulate a research problem and why it matters

Given your provisional research idea:

1. Formulate your research problem in one sentence
2. List 3-5 key research questions

To identify the key questions, ask yourself what specific

questions you need to answer in order to answer the main

question

1. Articulate the ‘so-what’

When you have a research idea in mind, you need to begin

the process of refining it into a focused research problem. The

process of refining the research idea into a research problem

is challenging. Mouton (2001:149) observes that students

seldom have difficulty identifying potential research ideas.

“The real challenge, however, is to take that idea and

transform it into a research problem or research question…”