

Arak Journal, Selecting A Topic

Describe your process of selecting a research topic.

I'm a Political Science major and it's, and it's funny, I was actually really motivated to *not* do something related to politics. I was kind of looking forward to, like, doing something different just because I knew I was going to be spending the next four years, like, talking about politics, researching it. I was like, I'm gonna do something different; I'm gonna do something fun. And then, kind of the election buzz started picking up and all the stuff was happening. And the social media thing kind of came about because I spent so much time, you know, following tweets and looking at different things that were being posted. And I was like, "I have to read about it." A couple weeks into the process I was like, "Yeah, I'm glad I ended up going this way," but at first it was definitely kind of like, "Oh, I don't know, like everyone's gonna be writing about this, everyone's gonna be doing this. I don't know if I want to also." But I think it worked out.

My interest in the topic is kind of...reaches back pretty far. I started it in high school when I participated in the YMCA's Youth In Government program. Senior year, I wrote my own bill as a mock legislator, and I really wanted to tackle a big issue in Delaware that happened to be the rape kit backlog. Once I started digging into, "Well, what are the the big problems I see in my state?" And then when I got to my E110 class and they said here is a book about fixing things - make an essay with this. I said, "Well, I know something we still need to fix that hadn't been fixed." The research was a lot, like I said, technical detail. It was finding out what's in a rape kit? What happens during one of the forensic exams? This also meant I had to research personal accounts. It couldn't just be any more the you know, X, Y, Z and things like that.

I guess the very first piece of information was my first job was a Shoprite cashier. So for me that sparked my interest. I just always remember wondering how people could spend so much money in just a single transaction. Like oftentimes it was more than my paycheck. So, for me, that was just wild. You know it was my first job and I just had that those observations. And I guess the second half of it is that I'm a business major. So I'm pretty interested in just like understanding how things work operationally. And you know like, what's the back end of the supermarket and like what that all looks like. So I guess together, the research...the research paper is just kind of a natural fit between that intellectual curiosity and then my own observations at my job.

So as for the interest to the topic, I guess that ties a bit into where I'm from. I was born in the Philippines. I grew up a little bit there. And then I moved to America. And growing up in the Philippines, you know, you see that first-hand experience of not everybody can always get to eat at night. Not everybody is well-off, well-to-do. And that's what you get when you live in when you're born in a third-world country. And imagine my surprise that when I come here to America, sure some place is a bit better off. But this was supposed to be the "land of milk and honey," and yet people are still hungry here, too.

My E110 class was with Dr. Frank Hilson. And his class was centered around the idea of taste. Of food and cuisine. How it how it affects cultures and how itself...it itself is affected by society and culture. And we explored many different topics, until finally towards the end of the semester he said, "As long as it has to do with food, research a topic that you're interested in." And I guess somehow that question that I've had about poverty and hunger, about food insecurity, was in the back of my mind and suddenly made itself forefront and said, "Hey! You've been thinking about this for a while, how about you think about it with a pen in your hand?"