Initial Research Questions Prompt

Submit in Canvas by class time
Format: Microsoft Word document. Although the assignment is short, please use the appropriate
MLA or APA headings (e.g., name, instructor, course number, date etc.)
3 points.

The purpose of this scaffolding assignment is to help you start to articulating questions to build toward the mini-papers and final assignments in this course. Thus, your **main task** in this assignment is to articulate a specific research question for the upcoming assignment (YouTube mini-paper, Twitter mini-paper, and Final paper) and to give me a brief overview of the context around that question.

The assignment will have two parts.

1. The Question

The question can be as long or as short as it needs to be to be **specific**. Although you will likely still be learning the opportunities and limitations of the tools that we will use, think about what questions you can feasibly answer. For instance, unless we interview or survey people, we do not know their motivations, so questions about motivation are infeasible for this course in most cases.

> o   I highly suggest picking a research question that addresses an issue with which you have familiarity, or a community of which you are a part. To make sense of your data later, you will need context, and we cannot speak for other communities.

For ease, use the format:

- "My research question for [X] Mini-Paper/Final Paper is: [insert specific question]"

2. The Context and significance

Research questions and digital practices are always situated and specific. However, I do not know all the digital communities, practices, or issues in which you are interested. So, please provide a 2-4 sentence summary of the background and context of the research question. You should also start to articulate how this topic relates to larger concerns and themes in your field or digital studies more generally. Think about sentences like: "This is important because communications scholars/marketing practitioners/…"

Steps:

1. You should begin this assignment by first looking at the major assignment for which you are writing the question! What is the assignment asking you to do? How will you meet those requirements?
2. Given those parameters, think about what interests you, or what you can use in your future! Are you interested in citizen journalists who use YouTube or Twitter? What kinds of questions are pertinent or relevant for them? Are you interested in how information

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about some particular type of media (e.g. movie, music, art gallery, play, etc.) spread or circulate online? What questions are pertinent for finding out about that?

3. Next, select a current case study that will allow you to explore those topics. For instance, if you are interested in how reporting operates online, what is a current news story that you are interested in (and how does that fit into thematic trends)? If you are interested in how information about a media event spreads or circulates, think about current events, like the Emmys, Oscars, or an upcoming movie.

4. Think about the specifics of the case study that you are looking at to help you develop questions that are specific to your case study. I suggest using the research questions handout from class to help you develop a research question. Make sure to use specific question words that go beyond simple yes/no answers. Although yes/no answers can be a helpful place to start, you will need to expand beyond those answers significantly. I suggest using "Who," "Where," and "When," are great. "How," "What (exactly)," and "Why" are even better, although some of those questions will be difficult to answer with our tools this semester (e.g., you cannot answer why someone does something without talking to them.)

5. Type out any context that I need to fully understand that research question.

Rubric

Please note: I have included this rubric here for clarity and transparency about my expectations. However, all of these criteria are linked to each other and cannot be separated.

	Excellent	Developing
Research Question **1.5 points**	The research question is specific and within the scope of the types of questions we can answer with big data (e.g., not interview or survey data types of questions). At this point, it is okay if the research question does not entirely match the types of data we can answer with our tools yet, since you have not learned all of the tools yet.	The research question is not specific or within the scope of the types of questions we can answer with big data (e.g., not interview or survey data types of questions).
Context and significance **1.5 points**	The author provides relevant background information for readers and considers why this question is important for people in their field.	The author does not provide enough relevant background information for readers and/or they do not consider why this question is important for people in their field.

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