

Research Exercises Guide

Exercise #1: Topic Proposal (approx. 2 pages; due in SS Assignments by the start of class on Day 5)

Your first task in the research paper process is to choose a space that you will “occupy” throughout the quarter. Some options might include spaces in nature, bodies, domestic spaces, theater spaces, religious spaces, scientific spaces, educational spaces, marginal spaces, etc. Use the space below to record the possibilities from our in-class brainstorm:

Although the space you choose will serve as the pivot for your research and writing, you will also need to consider how you will refine/narrow your topic to engage a question or concern specific to the space. This topic proposal is designed to help you discover what issues regarding your space might be worth examining further.

Part One: Begin by discussing your chosen space, and consider the following questions:

- What interests you about this space? Why do you think it’s worth researching and writing about?
- What do you already know about this space? What do you expect to find when conducting your research?
- How might you narrow your topic to focus on the space’s relation to a specific question or issue?
- What primary source materials (literary and archival) are you thinking of examining? Why?

Part Two: Now conduct some background research on your space in early modern English contexts. Choose a database (see the “Database User’s Guide” in SS Resources) and input your topic into the search boxes. Keeping in mind the questions below, skim through your results using the strategies we discussed in class (see also “Working With Research” on SS). Return to your proposal and report your findings.

- What kinds of critical conversations surround your chosen space? What questions or issues do scholars explore in relation to your space? Do you notice any disagreements or points of contention?
- What primary (literary and archival) texts do critics discuss regarding the space?
- What do you notice about how people interact with your space, or about how people perceive the space from outside of it?
- How might you *historicize* your space? That is, how is the space’s early modern function or meaning similar to or different from its function/meaning in contemporary contexts?
- How does this background research relate to your responses in Part I of the proposal? Were your ideas about the space confirmed? How has this basic research opened areas of inquiry that you had not considered?

Please note that you are not tied to the space/topic you isolate in this topic proposal. Some of you will discover through writing the proposal that you want to focus on another space. If you find yourself in this position at the end of your proposal, discuss this, and provide ideas for other spaces/topics on which you might focus your scholarship.

Exercise #2: EEBO Archival Text Research (approx. 2 pages; *due in SS Assignments by the start of class on Day 8*)

For this exercise, you will search the EEBO (Early English Books Online) database to find a Renaissance text that you could incorporate into your final paper.

- 1.) Generate a list of search terms. These might include variations on your chosen space or words related to the space. In some instances, you may need to determine if there are terms for your space that early moderns employed but that are no longer in use (refer to your background research).
- 2.) Access the Early English Books Online (EEBO) database. If you are off campus, make sure to go through the VPN on the UCD Library homepage.
- 3.) Input your terms into the appropriate search boxes in EEBO. Make sure to click the box that says, “Check this box to include typographical variants.” Set the search date range from 1480-1660. (See “Searching & Downloading in EEBO” (SS) for screen shots detailing these steps.)
- 4.) Explore your search results, and select a short, readable text that you can connect (directly or indirectly) to your chosen space. (See “Searching & Downloading in EEBO” (SS) for directions on downloading full texts.)
- 5.) In your 2-page write-up,
 - a. Provide a brief summary of your text: Who wrote it? To what genre does the text belong? For what purpose was it composed?
 - b. Discuss how you might incorporate it into your final paper: What strikes you about this text, especially regarding the research you have done so far? How might the text fit in to the larger conversations/concerns surrounding your chosen space?
 - c. If applicable, discuss any impediments to your understanding of the text. This could include indecipherable writing or fonts, contextual questions that require more information, lacking footnotes, unfamiliar syntax or vocabulary, etc.

Exercise #3: Close Reading (approx. 2 pages; *due in SS Assignments by class time on Day 11*)

Before conducting formal critical research on your space, you will first close read a passage in a literary text that you plan to discuss in your final paper. Since in this exercise you will be engaging in the kind of literary analysis required for your final paper, the passage you analyze should relate to your chosen topic/space. In many instances, you will be able to revise and adapt this close reading for your final paper. (See “Close Reading Worksheet” on SS for guidance.)

Exercise #4: Abstract (optional—extra credit; ½-1 page; *upload to SS Assignments along with your final paper*)

An abstract provides an overview of your paper, giving readers an idea of what to expect. This exercise challenges you to summarize your argument, methods, scope, and critical interventions in a way that entices readers to continue. Abstract models can be found in SS Resources.