

# The Research Process

Soup to nuts

# Start with a topic

- If the topic you have is broad or you don't have a good sense of what you want to do with it, start with a general resource:
- Wikipedia
- Encyclopedias
- [Your Topic] for Dummies

# Notice anything about those sources?

- They are not (generally) scholarly and should not appear as resources for your paper
- They should only be used to gain background knowledge to inform the rest of the search process
- Learn basic terminology and common themes/questions in that field

# Now you have a basic idea...

Start with books- searching for them will give you more of an ideas about:

- More targeted keywords
- Specific subject headings
- Prominent authors in the field
- Ways to craft and direct your research

# Time to dig deeper...

- Now we need to look for articles from scholarly sources.
- These are organized by subject terms, which you found in the last step
- Articles are more narrow in focus, and may have more current data

# Are you taking notes about what you find?

- Use RefWorks to keep track of your sources
- Keep a research log in necessary
- These steps are not linear- keep going back over them again and again until you think you have enough to start organizing your paper
- Consider an annotated bibliography

# Esoteric places to look

- Dissertations and theses
  - People writing these have done the research for you
  - You might be surprised at what you find...
- Web of Science
  - If you have an article, this database can see if others have used it as a reference- think of this as a forward-driven bibliography

# Last resort

- Internet
  - I know, anyone can post stuff there
- But now you have done all that background work, use it
- Limit by domain: [site:census.gov]
- Use the same search strategy to find what you need, not simply what appears first



# Now what?

- After all that information gathering, start to write.
- Visit the Writing Center for help with this
- ...if you haven't been doing that all along, that is. That's what they're here for- to help with this whole research process