

Developing a Research Agenda

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Overview

- **Goal of this lecture: discuss strategies that will help you plan and draft a Research Agenda**

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- **Explain what a Research Agenda should accomplish**
- **Identify questions you should ask yourself while writing**

Overview

- **Clarification: this lecture will treat a “Research Agenda” as a standalone document**
- **This lecture will help you craft a 1-2 page document that outlines the goals and context of your research**

Context

- **Research Agendas are often used in application materials**

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- **Applying for an academic job or research-based position**
- **Applying for a grant or fellowship**

Context

- **Main goals of a Research Agenda: demonstrate your ability to undertake productive scholarship if given the proper support**

Context

- **Main goals of a Research Agenda: demonstrate your ability to undertake productive scholarship if given the proper support**
- **Explain how your prior experiences conducting research has shaped your approach to new undertakings**

Developing a Research Agenda

- **"Agenda" implies forward-looking speculation**

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- **Yes, a Research Agenda is a type of “road map” for moving ahead**

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- **"Agenda" implies forward-looking speculation**
- **Yes, a Research Agenda is a type of “road map” for moving ahead**
- **However, drafting a Research Agenda starts with looking back at all the work you've done (previous publications, grants, seminar papers, etc.)**

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- **Assumption for this lecture is you've already conducted preliminary research**

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- **Assumption for this lecture is you've already conducted preliminary research**
- **Will discuss five steps to help you structure a Research Agenda**
- **These steps require you to reflect upon prior research experiences**

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- **Clarification: these steps are not an “instruction set” for writing a perfect Research Agenda every time**

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- **Clarification: these steps are not an “instruction set” for writing a perfect Research Agenda every time**
- **These steps are a general structure that can help you focus your ideas**
- **As is often the case with academic writing, finding models in your field can help you write/revise**

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- **First: locate your position within a larger discipline**

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- **First: locate your position within a larger discipline**
- **What specific sub-field of research are you operating within?**
- **What specific idea or issue do you want to explore?**

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- **Second: narrate your own approach to this research interest**

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- **Second: narrate your own approach to this research interest**
- **What do you prioritize or value when conducting research?**
- **What methods do you use when gathering and analyzing data?**

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- **Reflecting upon previous research is useful**

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- **Reflecting upon previous research is useful**
- **Try to locate the common methodology that is used in your previous work**
- **Topics and data may change but methods are a bit more consistent and transferable**

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- **Third: summarize how current scholarship syncs up with your research interest and priorities**
- **This step a bit more substantial, so let's discuss it in a bit more detail**

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- **What have other researchers said about your interest and methodology?**
- **Are there recurring ideas that keep re-appearing throughout this research?**

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- A recurring idea can be:

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- **A recurring idea can be:**
- **An analytical process used by researchers**
- **A limitation researchers must negotiate**
- **An issue/problem that researchers want to solve**
- **An opportunity that researchers want to build upon**
- **A keystone author or text in a given field**

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- **It can be daunting to summarize broad trends**

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- **It can be daunting to summarize broad trends**
- **Keep it straightforward. Try to isolate 1-3 recurring ideas or key terms that are central to contemporary research**
- **Focus on a handful of ideas or key terms as opposed to speaking to an entire field**

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- **Fourth: explain how you plan to build upon the ideas, concepts, or key terms you identified in Step Three**

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- **Fourth: explain how you plan to build upon the ideas, concepts, or key terms you identified in Step Three**
- **What specific projects do you plan to undertake?**
- **How can these projects contribute to the trends you've identified?**

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- **A Research Agenda demonstrates your ability to be a peer and participant within a field-of-study**

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- **A Research Agenda demonstrates your ability to be a peer and participant within a field-of-study**
- **Advanced research is iterative and on-going**
- **Show how your research can evolve ideas and concepts**

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- **Fifth: clarify the benefits of undertaking this research**

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- **Fifth: clarify the benefits of undertaking this research**
- **What do you hope to accomplish?**
- **What do we gain from undertaking your research?**
- **What field(s) would benefit from your research?**

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- **Let's recap**

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- **First: locate your disciplinary position and interest**
- **Second: narrate your own approach and methods**
- **Third: summarize how current scholarship syncs up with your research interest and priorities**
- **Fourth: explain how you plan to build upon the ideas, concepts, or key terms you identified in Step Three**
- **Fifth: clarify the benefits of undertaking this research**

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- **Things to avoid**

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- **Avoid empty praise towards others (and yourself)**

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- **Avoid empty praise towards others (and yourself)**
- **Acknowledge the contributions of others but no need to use excessive modifiers (wonderful, excellent, etc.)**
- **If you already have publications or grants, explain how the ideas contained within these documents add to your research agenda**

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- **Avoid unproductive criticism towards others (and yourself)**

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- **Avoid unproductive criticism towards others (and yourself)**
- **Avoid language of “right” vs “wrong” when discussing other research**
- **You can acknowledge expected difficulties when undertaking your research. Use this as an opportunity to clarify your methods for overcoming these difficulties**

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- **Lastly, avoid over-generalizations, vague statements, and universal claims**

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- **Lastly, avoid over-generalizations, vague statements, and universal claims**
- **Don't claim that you plan to change everything or that everyone can benefit from your work**
- **Once again, advanced research is iterative and on-going**

Conclusion

- **Remember, the steps outlined in this lecture are meant to be transferable**
- **Knowing what each section of a Research Agenda should accomplish will help focus your ideas**
- **It is also useful to find samples that you can model**

Conclusion

- **The ORS Lab has consultants to help with both quantitative and qualitative research questions**
- **Webinars that discuss writing strategies**
- **Resources to help authors draft writing at every stage**