**Activity 2: Narrowing a Research Question**

**Purpose of this assignment:** The goal of this activity is to lead you to understand the constraints inherent to research and the importance of defining a specific question as part of the research process. You will learn to determine an appropriate scope of investigation and deal with complex research by breaking it into simple questions, limiting the scope of investigation.

**How does it fit within the entire project?** This activity will help you learn to focus your research question by taking a broad, complex question and breaking it down into a more manageable question.

**Tasks required:** Complete the activity below.

**Deliverable:** Completed version of this handout uploaded to [LMS] by [deadline] (one per person).

**Estimated time:** [to determine based on the initial question provided to the students]

**Group work or individual work?** Group work.

**Notes to instructor:**

* This activity was modified from an activity developed by [Jane Hammons](https://library.osu.edu/people/hammons.73).
* Provide students with a sample research question—this should be a complex question (perhaps multi-part) that would require a lengthy publication or even a set of publications to adequately answer.
* This activity was designed to take place in class.

**Step-by-step:**

1. On your won, consider the research question presented to you. Break it down into less complex questions that would be appropriate. You have 10 minutes to brainstorm as many sub-questions as you can think of related to the main question. It may help you to think about the following ways to narrow a broad research question [these should be edited based on the initial question]:
   1. specific population or group
   2. more limited date range
   3. geographical area
   4. specific events
2. Consider the limitations of time, access to data and equipment, and other constraints on research undertaken as part of this class. Associate appropriate levels of concerns with each of your sub-questions.
3. Share your more focused research questions with your group members. Together, narrow down your list of combined questions to three or four you find particularly interesting. Make sure to associate with each their list of concerns. Write the list of questions on the whiteboard [or shared document].
4. Turn your attention to the list of questions of another group. Discuss which of the questions would be manageable, given the requirements of the course. Rank the questions from most (1) to least (3-4) interesting.