

MMW 13 Topic Exploration Guide

As you search for and develop your topic, consider the following:

- Your interests: major, hobbies, professional aspirations, passions, desires to know
- Your professor's interests, as shown in the course syllabus and readings: What are the course themes according to the syllabus? What kinds of questions does the professor ask? What recurring themes does the professor emphasize in lecture? What do these themes mean to you? To your classmates? To your TA?
- Your discussions in section: What kinds of questions does the TA ask? What do you and your peers want to know? What kinds of debates or issues or confusions or agreements come up?

Once you have a general sense of what your resources are and the themes the professor will be exploring, then you can determine a topic that interests you and is workable for the course.

To narrow your topic, ask questions about how one subject area relates to another.

You may narrow your topic by considering any of the times, texts, geographical regions, religions, political structures, people, groups, societies, cultures, and events covered in the course and how they affect one another.

Here is a formula for refining your topic:

(Conceptual category) + (geographical region) + (activity/event) + (time period) + (person/group/society/culture) + (primary text/s) + (secondary text/s)

Below are some very broad categories you may explore to help you find a topic to narrow down for your MMW 13 essay project. If you are interested in areas not on this list, please discuss them with your TA to see if they are workable. Before you get too attached to a topic, remember to look at your course readings and syllabus to see if you will have enough sources from course materials for your topic.

Asceticism and monasticism

Agriculture

Architecture

Art

Augustine, Doctor of the Church

Barbarians

Biography (first-person accounts of a life)

Buddhism (Mahayana, Medieval, Chinese, Japanese, Korean)

Cartography (maps)

Centralized vs. decentralized power

Chinese (dynasties, court life, reunification, bureaucracy, scholars and merchants)

Christianity (creation of, Roman responses to, development of church)

Cities (urbanization)

Commerce

Confucianism
Conquest
Cosmology
Cross-cultural exchange/adaptation/resistance
Crusades
Daoism
Economics
Education
Empires, Emperors, Empresses
Environment; climate
European civilization (feudalism, institutional government, Roman law)
Family structures
Festivals
Food
Foreign contacts
Foreign policy
Gender (conceptions, roles, and relations)
Golden Ages (qualities, rise, decline)
Greek and Arabic science and reason
Health
Hinduism (gods; dharma, varna, karma; Guptas)
History (creation of historical accounts)
Human rights
Identity (conceptions of)
Ideology
Indigenous adaptations, resistance
Islam (origins, message, arguments, Abbasid dynasty, reason & faith, sectarian divides, civilization)
Japanese (mythology and Shinto ethics, Heian and Medieval Japanese Sensibility, Samurai ethic)
Jesus (sacred biography; the Jew)
Language
Law
Leisure
Literature (drama, poetry, narrative, manuals, scriptures)
Liturgy
Love and Sex and the Good Life
Markets and merchants
Marriage (conceptions of)
Martyrdom
Mathematics
Medicine; medical practices
Migration (forced; voluntary)
Military institutions
Mothers and Fathers (roles/status)
Muhammad (revelation, succession)
Music

Mysticism
Natural disasters
Natural resources
National identity (conceptions of)
Persian culture (classical and post-classical)
Political structures, ideas, and systems
Qu'ran (teachings, interpretation)
Oral traditions and written texts
Rebellion
Religion
Religion and Empire
Religion and Politics
Religious conversions
Roman Empire
Royal families
Sinicization
Slavery
Social class
Social organization and family life
Sorcery; magic alchemy
Southernization
Sports
Syncretism
Technology
Theater
Theocracy
Trade
Transportation; travel
Warfare; military strategy; weapons technology