**Sara King**

**Assignment Guidelines**

**Research Interests Narrative**

**In a narrative of 3-4 pages, reflect on experiences that have shaped your current academic or professional interests, identifying questions that have motivated and guided you, including one that you would like to pursue for your research project in this class.**

Tell the “story” behind your current academic or professional interests, focusing on experiences that left you with questions that researchers in your field are still trying to answer. You could begin by reflecting on your formal education and how memorable coursework or teachers led to your choice of major or your academic/professional aspirations, but it will be just as important to consider experiences outside the classroom that made you aware of what you wanted to learn and why. Think about the universal questions raised in our assigned readings and ask yourself the same questions in the context of your own academic and professional interests. Remember that your literature review will be an opportunity to get some answers, to find out what experts in your field agree on and why. But more importantly, it will be a chance for you to enter the conversation, to identify gaps in the research, to pose a question that has not been asked or that you feel has not received sufficient attention. A default topic for this essay as well as for your literature review: How could education and training in your field be improved? What do students and professionals need to learn more about before they can address a problem in the field? What kinds of research are needed?

Many graduate school applications (as well as scholarship and internship applications) require an essay about an experience that shaped your academic or professional interests and goals, and an honest, compelling narrative will highlight your potential in a way that other admissions criteria cannot. While this assignment can be (and has been) successfully revised for such a purpose, remember that your goal is not to promote yourself but to bring attention to the importance of the research questions that interest you.

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