

STP Research Writing  
Exploratory Essay  
December 2017

The next assignment in the STP process is the exploratory essay, which may serve as the introduction to your research writing. The exploratory essay is a first-person narrative of your intellectual journey so far. While it does not have to proceed in chronological order, it should cover the time period of your thinking about the STP, including any changes in your topic. Some students will find that their journey is relatively short, one that might have started only in February or March of this year. Other students will find that journey is much longer, covering a time period that might go back to childhood.

Regardless of your journey's length, here are some key questions that may be addressed in your exploratory essay:

- How did you first become interested in your subject?
- What role did a teacher, family member, friend, mentor play in sparking your interest in your subject?
- What are some key texts (or authors) that have influenced your thinking about your topic? Besides books and articles, these may include podcasts, interviews, TED talks, and the like.
- What do you like or dislike about your subject?
- What value do you see in studying your subject?
- How did you arrive at your research question?
- What other questions did you consider before settling on your research question? (This is especially important for those of you who started with two-part research questions.)
- What are some obstacles you have had to overcome in studying and researching your topic so far?
- How have sources fallen short of your expectations or hopes?
- Where do you anticipate your thought process about your topic will take you? In other words, what conclusions do you anticipate reaching?

The exploratory essay should be two-to-four pages in length (double-spaced; 12-point Times New Roman) and must be shared with me as a Google doc by the start of class on Monday, December 18 (Day 6), or Tuesday, December 19 (Day 1).