Mapping Your Research Topic or Question

Research is a creative process, involving both analysis, in which you take things apart, and synthesis, in which you put things together. Your unique product will be the result of your individual thinking and ways of understanding and communicating about your topic.

Once you have an idea for a research project, a good way to begin working with it is to make a concept map. This will help you generate specific questions for you to focus on in your research. Here is a generic example of one way to organize a concept map:

Start your concept map like this (on a big piece of paper, if possible):

```
global warming
```

Brainstorm ideas or issues or concepts related to global warming and add them to the map:
Now add another layer of ideas related to these:

- storms
- sea level changes
- media bias
- meteorology
- global warming
- media studies
- psychology
- economics
- political science
- anthropology
- policy making
- developed & developing countries
- individual action or inaction
- oral histories

Keep brainstorming and adding layers until you’ve listed everything you can think of. It’s okay to cross things out or change the way they are linked.

Once you have a pretty complete map of your ideas, you can decide how much to include based on the scope of your project. Use your final map to generate a list of questions or areas where you need to find more information for your project. Try to think of questions that will inform your disciplinary perspective(s).