**How to Propose a Research Topic**

**I. Begin with a subject that interests you. Narrow it down. For ex:**

I am interested in ancient medicine (VERY broad)

I am interested in ancient healing practices involving the mind and/or imagination (narrower, but still broad)

I am interested in Incubation and Dream Interpretation in the Asclepian sanctuaries in Ancient Greece (Sufficiently Specific)

**II. What are some angles that you might pursue in relation to your topic? (These are just some examples of MANY possible…)**

* Philological analysis of “Regimen 4” in the Hippocratic Corpus (“About Dreams”)
* Examining literary and epigraphal evidence, examine types of “cures” prescribed by physicians after incubation
* Comparison of the practices of incubation at Epidaurus, Saqqâra (Egypt), and Syria
* Anthropological comparison between incubation therapy in ancient Greece and incubation therapies (or other shamanic practices) in other cultures
* How/when/where/why did incubation emerge, and how did the practice change over time and place?
* Dreams and “medicine” in Homeric literature
* Treatment process during incubation at the sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidaurus

**III. Choose one of the above as your topic’s FOCUS. That’s not to say that you may not address related topics in your research project; but, any forays into related areas should have a very strong relationship to your chosen focus.**

* Anthropological comparison between incubation therapy in ancient Greece and incubation therapies (or other shamanic practices) in other cultures

**IV. What kinds of EVIDENCE and SUPPORT will I need?**

* literary, material and epigraphical evidence about incubation in ancient Greece
* critical studies about Asclepian healing techniques in ancient Greece
* anthropological studies of other cultures that practice incubation
  + literary, material, or epigraphical evidence referenced by these studies
* general studies about Dreams, symbols, and the use of the imagination in healing practices (works of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Mircea Eliade, Branislaw Maninowski, etc.)

**V. Do a little research: are there sources available?** YES!! A very preliminary bibliography after a good day’s work:

**Aesclepian Incubation as a Shamanic Practice?**

Charlesworth, James H. 2010. *The Good and Evil Serpent: How a Universal Symbol Became Christianized.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Edelstein, Emma Jeanette Levy and Ludwig Edelstein. 1945, 1998. *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*, vols. 1 and 2. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Eliade, Mircea. 1984. “Cosmogonic Myth and ‘Sacred History,’” in Alan Dundes (ed.), *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myt*h. Berkeley: University of California Press, 137-151.

----------. 1964. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy.* Bollingen Series LXXVI Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gawlinski, Laura. 2007. “The Athenian Calendar of Sacrifices: A New Fragment from the Athenian Agora.” *Hesperia* 76.1: 37-55.

Holowchak, M. Andrew. 2001. “Interpreting Dreams for Corrective Regimen: Diagnostic Dreams in Greco-Roman Medicine.” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences.* 56: 382-99.

Hunink, Vincent. 1996. “Apuleius and the ‘Asclepius’” *Vigiliae Christianae* 50.3: 288-308

Kadletz, Edward. 1978. “The Cult of Apollo Deiradiotes.” *TAPA* 108: 93-101

Kirk, G. S. 1984. “On Defining Myths,” in Alan Dundes (ed.), *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myt*h. Berkeley: University of California Press, 53-61.

MacDermot, Violet. 1971. *The Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East: A Contribution to Current Research on Hallucinations Drawn from Coptic and Other Texts.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1984. “The Role of Myth in Life,” in Alan Dundes (ed.), *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myt*h. Berkeley: University of California Press, 193-206.

Patton, Kimberly. 2004. ““A Great and Strange Correction”: Intentionality, Locality, and Epiphany in the Category of Dream Incubation.” *History of Religions.* 43.3: 194-223.

Pettis, Jeffrey B. 2006. “Earth, Dream, and Healing: The Integration of *Materia* and Psyche in the Ancient World.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 45.1: 113-129.

Renberg, Gil H. 2010. “Incubation at Saqqâra.” *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology.* Ann Arbor, MI. 649-662.

Salaman, Clement. 2007. *Asclepius: The Perfect Discourse of Hermes Trismegistus*. London: Duckworth.

Ustinova, Yulia. 2009. *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind: Descending Underground in the Search for Ultimate Truth*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

**VI. Develop your ideas into a specific, thoughtful question that your entire project will address.**  You might think of the “topic” as the mission statement of your paper. Every paragraph should align with your mission “question”.

Which of these is a better guiding topic and why?

1. How does incubation therapy at Asclepian sanctuaries in ancient Greece compare with the incubation practices of other cultures?

2. Numerous anthropological studies have indicated that shamans in a variety of cultures employ nightime ritual in conjunction with dream incubation to induce healing during altered states of consciousness. To what extent does incubation therapy at Asclepian sanctuaries in ancient Greece “count” or “not count” as a shamanic practice?

3. Numerous anthropological studies have indicated that shamans in a variety of cultures employ nightime ritual in conjunction with dream incubation to induce healing during altered states of consciousness. What elements of incubation therapy as practiced at the Asclepian sanctuary at Epidaurus in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE resemble or differ from those practiced by shamans of other cultures?