NARROWING YOUR PAPER TOPIC
First Things First

Unpack the assignment

What does your instructor expect you to produce?

Example: A 3-4 page paper requiring the use of scholarly resources

Plan on having the same number of resources as pages you intend to write. (4 articles for a 4-page paper.)

Unpack the topic

What topic are you writing about?

Example: PTSD (This is a broad topic that you could take in many directions.)
Tips for Narrowing Topics

Use the library databases for initial research

Search using your initial topic to see how scholars manage broad subjects.

Scan article titles and subjects

Key words are often located on the search results page - use them as a guide to locate a specified direction for your paper.

Example: PTSD AND alcohol use

Read abstracts, if available

Like subject terms, abstracts provide the vocabulary you might find helpful.
Is This REALLY Necessary

Sometimes
Narrowing down a topic to fit the scope of your assignment will save you time on research, writing, and especially editing.

When is this necessary?

When you are unfamiliar enough with a topic that you cannot narrow the focus without preliminary research.

When the confines of the assignment require you to focus on a subject that you only have broad knowledge about.

When you are overwhelmed by the prospect of writing a paper for a class.
Need Help?

www.library.brenau.edu

Ask a Librarian widget
Request a research appointment

Contact your friendly neighborhood librarian

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