

• **Guide to the Research Project**

There are several things that we must consider before heading into our research:

- What is your **dissonance**? In other words, let's say that a conversation is happening about X (for example Internet Neutrality, Public Intoxication Laws, Eating Disorders on College Campuses, etc.). You may notice that there's a gap in this conversation – something that those conversing haven't mentioned, but is still very important to talk about. That is your dissonance.
- Related to this, what is your **rhetorical situation**? What is prompting you into the conversation? For example, the arguments over the legalization of marijuana are a well argued debate. Almost nothing new can be produced about this topic. But, with several states attempting to “legalize it,” the rhetorical situation has, in a sense, been renewed. This new event gives the rhetor a “window” through which to enter the conversation. Of course, sometimes one's dissonance is enough of a “situation” to be prompted to enter the discourse.
- Who is your **audience**? The “general public” is not a specific enough audience. You should select an audience of whom you are fairly familiar. Picture faces, specific demographics.
- Of course, whether an audience is familiar to you or not, you will have to consider your **ethos**. What credibility do you have? Why should your audience listen to you? Sometimes, when you feel your ethos might be lacking, it becomes important to confess your biases. Admit your limited perspective on the issue, but stress why you are invested. The bottom line is if your ethos isn't “high profile,” you're going to want to get your audience to trust you.
- One reliable way to get your audience to trust you is through your **research**. Good research requires inquiry. Here, I must stress that you don't want to ask a research question on which you're not willing to “budge.” Sometimes inquiry changes our own ideas about what we once thought we “knew.” In these projects, you will be asked to gather research, which reflects various genres and opinions. Sticking to one type of source or one opinion isn't inquiry. Inquiry means looking and looking again.
- Given your ethos, your dissonance, and your audience, what **form/genre** will you choose? You will want to choose a form/genre that will engage your audience, but also highlight the point you're trying to make.
- **What will your topic do?** Remember, it isn't enough just to talk about an issue. Your rhetoric should prompt action. How will you do this? What solutions/suggestions will you offer to your audience?

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