Fostering Purpose & Motivation
with Student-Directed Projects in the Humanities

Spring 2017. I'm in the middle of a lecture and I'm sweating. Badly. My students are attentive, diligently taking notes in preparation for an upcoming quiz but something isn't working. Everything (the lecture, the course, the quiz) feels pointless. *An unspoken question hangs in the air:* why do we need to know any of this*?*

The Universal Design for Learning framework views **expert learners** as *purposeful* and *motivated*. For the last two years I have been trying to answer variations on the question "how can I get my students to actually care about what they are learning?"

In this document, I describe some of the challenges I have faced in my ongoing attempts to foster purposeful, motivated, and engaged learning in my courses as well as specific strategies I have developed. This document is a more detailed companion piece to the shorter .pdf which provides an overview of student-directed projects and which contains examples of student work and writing (shared with permission). These documents outline my use of student-directed projects in two of my courses 345-101-MQ (Knowledge) *Thinking in the Humanities* and 345-102-MQ (World Views) *Food, Self, & Society,* both of which I completely redesigned after my pedagogical/existential crisis described above. Course outlines are attached in the appendix.

I quickly realized that "**how can I get my students to actually care about what they are learning?**" is a complicated question.

What they are learning… can refer to the specific course competencies, the topic of the course itself, the specific examples or information (facts) I select and communicate, the broader concepts we explore, or the skills students develop in their attempts to master the competencies or grasp the information and concepts… or all of these combined.

My students… are unique individuals who have different personal, academic, and professional interests and goals, possess different skills and abilities, and face different challenges and barriers to their learning. Most of my students are (perhaps unsurprisingly) uninterested either in continuing to study or in pursuing careers in the humanities…

To *actually* care about… implies *intrinsic motivation* but there is no obvious reason why any student should be *intrinsically* motivated to master the course competencies as set by the government, should be interested in the particular topic of my course, or should care about the examples and information I select and communicate. In fact, from

a competency-based pedagogical perspective, the course topic and specific examples are entirely arbitrary: If students are expected to "apply a logical analytical process to how knowledge is organized and used" or "apply a critical thought process to world views," the particular field of knowledge or world views we investigate can be *anything at all.*

Also, the general context in which humanities courses appear in a student's life can work to frame my courses as meaningless at the outset. My courses are mandatory and fulfill a general education *requirement*; the humanities have been devalued in general in society[1]; and because I teach in Continuing Education, my students are almost always *assigned* my course without having the benefit of knowing the topic in advance, which means they have no choice in the matter, making the specific topic or examples appear *even more arbitrary.*

How can I get… implies I should be the one doing the motivating. But how do I motivate students to care about their learning? I might select or design fun and enjoyable activities, emphasize the relevance of the course topic or concepts (you should really know about x because it will be helpful for y), model enthusiasm for the course topic and content (be energetic and excited as I teach), or rely on extrinsic rewards or punishments (grades). Yet given the diversity I encounter in my classrooms it seems likely that no *single* motivational strategy will be successful across the board.

My 'work-in-progress' and partial answer to the question "how can I get my students to actually care about what they're learning" involved a paradigm shift: Rather than trying to pick a course topic or examples that are somehow intrinsically relevant to a diverse group of students or arguing that the concepts or competencies are somehow universally or transcendentally relevant (e.g. critical thinking) I decided to learn more about who my students are and what they care about and allow them to design their own learning / assessment activity in the form of a student-directed project while providing meaningful guidance and feedback to ensure each unique student-directed project satisfies ministerial objectives (course competencies).

Student-Directed Projects (SDPs)

I ask students in my class to design their own summative assessments with my support, feedback, and guidance. Each project is unique. There is no general template. I work with each student individually to ensure their project topic is appropriate, their research / investigation plan makes sense and is feasible, their project is presented in a reasonable and helpful way (project medium), and to ensure the project (whatever it is) will be able to demonstrate and allow me to assess student mastery of specific course

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[1] A quick google search will bring up many examples both of individuals describing the apparent uselessness of the humanities and others rallying to their defense.

competencies. SDP guidelines are attached in the appendix. Rubrics are available as separate documents.

How It Works

1. Informal Writing: Student Profile (Week 1)

I ask students to outline what they are interested in academically and personally in journal entries (or in a writing exercise in my course on food) in the first week of class. I respond to each student in writing with suggestions as to how they might develop a project that connects to these interests and fits with the course competencies. I also ask my students to describe strengths and challenges they face academically and respond with suggestions concerning possible research / investigation plans or project media that might highlight student strengths and mitigate challenges.

2. Proposals (Weeks 5 and 6)

Throughout each course, I encourage students to think about topics or questions for their SDPs. In my knowledge course, I ask students to propose specific areas of interest, questions, or topics in subsequent journal entries. In both courses, we spend the fifth week of class working together on student proposals. Typically, students meet in small groups to pitch their ideas and receive feedback from other students before they meet with me individually to outline their project topic, research plan, and describe their project medium. This year, I met with students individually over Zoom.

While each project must contain formal academic research and writing, each student's topic will suggest particular research strategies and project media. For instance, if a student is interested in considering the links between video games and cognition that student might opt to use particular video games as primary sources to analyze; if a student is interested in gender roles in romance novels, that student might produce a piece of fiction as one component of their larger project.

After students speak with one another about their project topics and speak with me individually, they submit their proposals. I provide each student with detailed individual spoken and written feedback in which I suggest ways to refine their topics, research plan, or project medium as needed. Proposal guidelines are attached in the appendix.

3. More Informal Writing (Knowledge Weeks 2-14)

As the course progresses, students in my knowledge class submit weekly journals in which they answer specific questions related to the course but are also invited to write about whatever they like. I also ask project-specific questions to 'check-in' on student progress and to address any concerns or issues that might arise.

4. Projects (Knowledge Week 13 / World Views Week 15)

Each project is unique. While some students opt to write formal essays, most projects involve a mix of research and investigation strategies and involve multiple means of expression. Project excerpts (shared with permission) are included in the shorter .pdf document.

5. Learning Self-Assessment (Knowledge Week 15)

In my knowledge course, I ask students to reflect on their SDPs and their overall learning in a final assignment. Often, students submit variations on their original proposed projects. Sometimes these variations involve expanding research or including additional component and sometimes the original proposed project proves too time-consuming or difficult. This assignment gives them an opportunity to explain any changes to their proposed work and also to engage in self-reflection.

Universal Design for Learning

Student-directed projects target two main UDL areas: affective networks (the "**why**" of learning) and strategic networks (the "**how**" of learning).

1. Affective Networks

The UDL framework divides the "why" of learning into three areas: providing options and opportunities for recruiting interest, sustaining effort and persistence, and for self-regulation.

Recruiting Interest

Because students not only pick their respective SDP topics or questions but also pitch their own unique project media, SDPs work to *optimize individual student choice and autonomy*. *Relevance, value, and authenticity* are highlighted in the proposal process since students are asked to justify why their chosen project topics are relevant both personally and more generally. *Threats and distractions* are minimized as students are encouraged to select topics that actually interest them and about which they actually want to learn.

Sustaining Effort and Perseverance

The *salience of goals and objectives* are heightened not only because students set their own unique overall goal (their topic or question) but also because interim goals (completing specific research, reaching milestones in the project) are (ideally) more

relevant given student-directed projects. Students are able to *challenge* themselves in ways that fit with their strengths or address particular abilities (research, expression etc.) on which they want to focus. Often, students design projects that are not only interesting given their chosen topic but that also allow them to develop non-course-specific skills (writing, design) or knowledge (e.g. cinema if they want to pursue film studies, biomedical ethics if they want to study nursing). *Collaboration and community* are fostered in the proposal process (peer feedback) but also if students opt to create a group SDP. I model *mastery-oriented feedback* in the feedback I provide but students are also asked to provide feedback to other students during the proposal process.

Self-Regulation

During the proposal process, I speak individually with students to ensure their SDP is not only appropriate (it will successfully demonstrate a mastery of course competencies) but also feasible (it seems to match the student's expectations and abilities) which works to *promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation*. Ongoing feedback from myself and other students coupled with journal entries in my knowledge course help to *facilitate personal coping skills and strategies*. *Self-assessment and reflection* are an integral component of the learning self-assessment assignment in my knowledge course and are implicit in the proposal process as well.

2. Strategic Networks

Expression and Communication

The value and use of *multiple media for communication* are stressed in both courses. In order to show students what kinds of media might be appropriate for their own SDPs, we engage with knowledge in a variety of formats (formal non-fiction texts, informal non-fiction texts, fictional texts, documentary and fictional audio/visual materials etc.). Students are encouraged to consider a range of possible project media and are asked to justify why a proposed medium is appropriate given their topic or question. The structure of the SDP process (brainstorming, narrowing down a topic, pitching a specific project, research plan, and medium, responding to targeted individual feedback) helps to *build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance*.

Executive Functions

The SDP process also provides me with an opportunity to work one-on-one with students to *guide appropriate goal-setting*, *support planning and strategy development*, and *facilitate managing information and resources*. The informal check-ins and learning self-assessment in my knowledge course also help to enhance student capacity for *monitoring progress* and learning.

Challenges

Overall, SDPs are excellent tools for fostering purpose, motivation, and engagement and for fostering strategic and goal-directed thought and work. However, I have noticed two challenging areas in my use of SDPs. The first concerns challenges faced by my students and the second concerns challenges I face in implementing SDPs.

1. Lack of Specific Guidelines

Encouraging a first-year student to develop a project from scratch is *asking a lot*. While many students are excited to focus on topics or questions that fit with their personal, academic, or career goals some find the lack of clear and specific guidelines (write an essay in this way, include this research, format your work according to this style guide) overwhelming. Since I first introduced SDPs, I have refined my written and spoken explanations to address this issue. The most helpful tool (which has been a component of SDPs in my courses since the beginning) is one-on-one discussion with each individual student. Speaking to each student separately takes time but it allows me to measure and assess stress or confusion, to reassure students who may be feeling overwhelmed, and to provide specific guidance (answers to specific questions about formatting, say) to students who require or request these. I also explain to students that I realize I am asking a lot from them. Journals are also helpful tools to gauge student stress or confusion and to answer questions in an informal way as these arise.

2. Necessity of Detailed Individual Feedback

It would be impossible to implement SDPs without the detailed, targeted, and timely feedback I provide to my students. Unless I provide this level of feedback when reading the profiles students submit in the first week, students will have difficulty imagining a project that fits with their interests and goals while also fitting with the course competencies. If students share concerns or ideas with me in their journals, I feel it is necessary for me to respond as fully as possible. The proposal process also requires me to take time to speak with each student (or group) individually and to provide meaningful and targeted feedback.

But because I typically teach between 150 and 200 students each semester and scaffold the SDPs with so many formal and informal writing exercises (profile, proposal, journals), I need to carefully read and also provide meaningful feedback to 150-400 assignments *every week*. I also assign content-specific assignments that are not related to the SDPs. Over the course of a typical semester therefore, I provide detailed comments on about 5000 student assignments. Providing these comments and thinking with my students about their interests, lives, challenges, and SDPs is extremely

rewarding. It is also absolutely necessary for the SDPs. But providing this feedback takes a lot of time, effort, and attention and so can be sometimes be exhausting. Still, given the extraordinary thought and work my students typically produce, the results seem worth the effort.

Appendix

1. Course Outline (Knowledge)
2. SDP Guidelines (Knowledge)
3. SDP Proposal Guidelines (Knowledge)
4. Learning Self-Assessment (Knowledge)
5. Course Outline (World Views)
6. SDP Guidelines (World Views)
7. SDP Proposal Guidelines (World Views)

DAWSON COLLEGE
HUMANITIES 345-101-MQ, KNOWLEDGE, Sections 03006, 03008, 03009

COURSE TITLE:	Thinking in the Humanities
EFFECTIVE DATE:	Fall 2020
WORKLOAD (per week):	3-1-3
INSTRUCTOR'S NAME:	Ian Alexander Cuthbertson
TELEPHONE LOCAL:	Please use MIO
OFFICE NUMBER:	3D.15
OFFICE HOURS:	Tuesday 10:30-12:30
E-MAIL OR OTHER:	icuthbertson@dawsoncollege.qc.ca
RESPONSE TIME:	24 hours, excluding weekends

STATEMENT OF THE COMPETENCY
Learning Outcome: To apply a logical analytical process to how knowledge is organized and used.
ELEMENTS OF THE COMPETENCY
(General Instructional Objectives Common to all Knowledge Courses)
Students who successfully complete the Knowledge course in Humanities should be able to:
1. Recognize the basic elements of a field of knowledge.
2. Define the modes of organization and utilization of a field of knowledge.
3. Situate a field of knowledge within its historical context.
4. Organize the main components into coherent patterns.
5. Produce a synthesis of the main components.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND CONTENT:
Humans depend on their ability to ask significant questions and construct meaningful answers. While the questions we ask are often mundane (will it rain today?) or practical (how can I repair my car?), thinkers working in the Humanities often engage with "big" questions concerning the meaning and purpose of human life. This course will provide students with an introduction to the kinds of questions posed in the Humanities along with the various ways knowledge is constructed and communicated in this field.

REQUIRED OR RECOMMENDED TEXT(S) OR READING(S):
All required readings will be distributed by the instructor.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS:
This course will involve weekly lectures, readings, and written responses to course activities, topics, and themes. The course will also involve a student-directed final project.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF COURSE CONTENT:
In the first section of the course we will examine how knowledge is obtained or constructed, the kinds of questions typically posed in the Humanities, and how thinkers working in the humanities communicate the answers they develop. Next, we will engage with specific questions and analyze pertinent texts (essays, excerpts from literature, philosophical treatises, artworks, films etc.) that seek to answer 'big' questions on the topics of **self**, **love**, **freedom** and **happiness**. In the final section of the course, students will work individually or in groups to develop their own significant question, develop a methodology for answering their question, and create a final project that demonstrates their mastery of the course competencies.

EVALUATION TOOLS/ASSIGNMENTS:

Type	Due date	% of final mark
Writing Exercises (5 x 250-500 words each)	Weeks 3,5,7,9,11	25%
Weekly Journal Entries (10 x min 100 words each)	Weeks 1-5; 7-11	20%
Midterm Project Proposal	Week 6	15%
Summative Assessment: Final Project (1500-2000 words)	Week 12	30%
Learning Self-Assessment	Week 14	10%

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY:
Assignments that are more than one week late will generally not be accepted unless the student can show that serious extenuating circumstances prevented her/him/them from submitting the assignment on time. Students are asked to notify the instructor beforehand if they anticipate submitting late work.

PASSING GRADE POLICY:
Students must obtain a total grade of at least 60% in order to pass the course.

DEPARTMENTAL LITERACY STANDARD:
Students enrolled in Humanities courses are expected to have college-level English reading skills and to demonstrate college-level English writing skills.

COURSE LITERACY POLICY:
Serious spelling, punctuation, or grammar problems that impede the instructor's ability to understand and evaluate assignments will negatively affect assignment grades.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:
According to ISEP, the teacher is required to report to the Sector Dean all cases of cheating and plagiarism affecting a student's grade. (Section V-C). Students who plagiarize will receive a zero on the assignment in question.

DEPARTMENTAL CONTINUING EDUCATION STATEMENT:
While Continuing Education teachers are committed to supporting their students, most of them are not paid to respond to MIO/email nor to hold office hours despite requests having been made to the College to pay all Continuing Education teachers to provide such support. Consequently, for the vast majority of Continuing Education courses, there are no associated office hours and the teacher has no obligation to respond to student messages. If you would like to express your views on this matter, you are encouraged to contact: Isabelle Carrier (Sector Dean), Lola Ronald (Continuing Education Coordinator), Johanne Rocheleau (Dean of Continuing Education and Community Services), and Diane Gauvin (Academic Dean).

STUDENT CONDUCT:
Everyone has the right to a safe and non-violent environment. Students are obliged to conduct themselves as stated in the Student Code of Conduct and in the ISEP section on the roles and responsibilities of students. (ISEP Section II-D)

ATTENDANCE:
Students should refer to ISEP (Section IV-C) regarding attendance. Regular attendance and active participation are expected and multiple absences will negatively affect student grades.

INTENSIVE COURSE CONFLICTS:
If a student is attending an intensive course, the student must inform the teacher, within the first two (2) weeks of class, of the specific dates of any anticipated absences.

POLICY ON RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES:
Students observing religious holidays must inform their teachers, in writing, as prescribed in the ISEP policy on Religious Observances, no later than the end of the second week of the impacted semester or term. This applies both to the semester or term, as well as to any final examination period (ISEP section IV-D).

ISEP:
The Institutional Student Evaluation Policy (ISEP) is designed to promote equitable and effective evaluation of student learning and is therefore a crucial policy to read and understand. The policy describes the rights and obligations of students, faculty, departments, programs, and the College administration with regard to evaluation in all your courses, including grade reviews and resolution of academic grievance. The ISEP is available on the Dawson website.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING:
This course is organized according to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Our goal in this course is to work together to create an original final project that fits with your own individual learning style(s), learning goals, and interests. Throughout the course, I will strive to present material in diverse and accessible ways. Students are encouraged to contact me at any time should they encounter difficulties, have questions, or have suggestions for improving this course. Students who have read the entire course outline are invited to inform me via MIO before our second class to receive a special prize.

Student-Directed Project

The Basics: The Student-Directed Project (SDP) provides students with an opportunity to explore a topic or to attempt to answer a question that interests them. This topic or question constitutes a 'field of knowledge' each student will explore in this course.

Topic: In the sixth week of class, each student will submit a project proposal in which they 'pitch' a topic to the instructor. *Topics can be anything at all.* There are only two requirements: 1. the proposed topic must be relevant to the humanities (it must be connected to human experience and values); and 2. the topic must be relevant to the student in question (the student should *actually care* about the topic). A project proposal template will be distributed and students will have class time to discuss potential topics with the instructor.

Research and Investigation: Each student must engage in research or investigation in order to explore their chosen topic or answer their question. The exact nature of student research or investigation is negotiable *but every project should include some form of academic research* (i.e. consulting peer-reviewed publications or reliable websites). Students may also opt to analyze primary sources (e.g. philosophical texts, literature, poetry, films, artworks, video games, etc.). Other appropriate forms of investigation include self-reflection (e.g. journaling), informal interviews (e.g. speaking with friends or family), and participant observation (keeping notes of lived experiences).

Medium: SDPs are to be submitted as digital files over Léa. Students can express their research, investigation, thinking, and conclusions *however they like.* Every SDP must include between 1500 and 2000 words but these words can be written or spoken. Students who wish to write traditional essays may do so, however in addition to the written or spoken component, SDPs may also involve other means of expressing student thought and conclusions such as: poetry, fiction, song, dance, artworks (painting, drawing, sculpture, textile…), film etc., as long as these can be communicated digitally (i.e. as recordings or images). The project medium should fit with the proposed topic and students will be asked to justify their proposed medium in their proposals.

Evaluation: All SDPs will be evaluated according to the project rubric (attached). The important thing is for students to *think carefully* about their proposed topic or question and to demonstrate their careful thought and analysis in their projects.

Student-Directed Project Proposal

Students are asked develop a question or explore a topic that is relevant to the Humanities (i.e. a question concerned with human experience and/or values); propose an appropriate method for answering their chosen question/topic; and propose a means for communicating the question, their thought process, and conclusions to the professor. **See SDP guidelines for more information**.

The topics and format of student-directed projects are *open*. Students are expected to discuss their ideas with the professor during class (week 5) and as needed after their proposals have been assessed.

Projects can be completed alone or, if appropriate, in small groups.

In this proposal you will 'pitch' an idea to me. The proposal is <u>not an outline</u> for your project. It is an explanation of what you want to do for your SDP and how you want to do it.

Proposals must contain the following information:

Student name or names of group members

1. **A question or topic that is relevant to the Humanities** (what will you be investigating? How does this relate to human experience and/or values. Be specific.)

2. **An indication of why this question is significant for the student in question and more broadly** (why do you care about this question? Why should anyone else care?)

3. **A description of a research program or plan** (how will you investigate your chosen topic? **N.B.** <u>Proposals should Include references or links to at least three academic sources</u>. See SDP guidelines for other appropriate methods of research / investigation.

4. **A description of the proposed medium for expressing your thinking and/or conclusions** (how will you show the professor what you have learned?)

5. **A justification of the proposed medium** (why is this format interesting or worthwhile? If applicable, why should this project be done in a group?)

Learning Self-Assessment

The learning self-assessment (LSA) provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their work and learning in the course. Students are asked to reflect on their learning process throughout the course as well as on their completed final projects.

Format: LSAs should be typed and submitted as a .doc or .pdf file over Léa. Please number each answer.

Self-assessments must contain answers to the following questions:

Learning Process

1. What did you find most challenging about this course? Provide specific details.

2. What *specific* steps did you take to overcome or address the challenge(s)?

3. What did you find most enjoyable about this course? Provide specific details.

4. What is the most important thing you learned in this course? Why is it important?

5. Did you discover anything about yourself *as a learner* in this course? Explain.

Project

1. How fully did you apply yourself to complete your final project?

2. What are you most proud of accomplishing in your project?

3. What would you change about your project? Why would you change this?

4. *Consult the grading rubric*. What numerical grade would you give your project? Why do you think your project deserves this grade? Provide specific justifications.

DAWSON COLLEGE
HUMANITIES 345-102-MQ, WORLD VIEWS, Section 29

COURSE TITLE:	Food, Self, and Society
EFFECTIVE DATE:	Fall 2020
WORKLOAD (per week):	3-0-3
PREREQUISITE:	345-101-MQ
INSTRUCTOR'S NAME:	Ian Alexander Cuthbertson
TELEPHONE LOCAL:	Please use MIO
OFFICE NUMBER:	3D.15
OFFICE HOURS:	Tuesday 10:30-12:30
E-MAIL OR OTHER:	icuthbertson@dawsoncollege.qc.ca
RESPONSE TIME:	24 hours, excluding weekends

STATEMENT OF THE COMPETENCY
Learning Outcome: To apply a critical thought process to world views.
ELEMENTS OF THE COMPETENCY
(General Instructional Objectives Common to all World Views Courses)
Students who successfully complete the <u>World Views</u> course in Humanities should be able to:
1. Describe world views.
2. Explain the major ideas, values, and implications of a world view.
3. Organize the ideas, values and experiences of a world view into coherent patterns.
4. Compare world views.
5. Convey the ideas, attitudes, and experiences of the societies or groups studied.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND CONTENT:
Because everyone needs to eat, food is an integral feature of human culture. Despite this universality, humans have disagreed for millennia concerning what counts as edible or appropriate food, how food ought to be prepared, and when and with whom food ought to be eaten. In this course we will explore how seemingly mundane decisions (i.e. food choices) are affected by world views and vice versa. We will also explore how social factors including culture, tradition, religious commitments, education etc., shape not only how we understand the world but also what and how we eat.

REQUIRED OR RECOMMENDED TEXT(S) OR READING(S):
All required readings will be distributed by the instructor.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS:
This course will involve lectures, weekly readings, and written responses to course activities, topics, and themes. The course will also involve a student-directed final project.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF COURSE CONTENT:
We will explore the following key concepts as they relate to food:
1. Social Norms
2. Class and Habitus
3. Identity
4. Authenticity
5. Emotion and Affect
6. Space and Place
7. Gender
8. Justice
9. Power and Authority

EVALUATION TOOLS/ASSIGNMENTS:

Type	Due date	% of final mark
Reflections (min. 100 words each)	Weeks 1-3,5; 7,8	25%
Questions on Assigned Readings (min. 500 words each)	Weeks 9-12	30%
Midterm Project Proposal	Week 6	15%
Summative Assessment: Final Project (1500-2000 words)	Week 14	30%

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PASSING GRADE POLICY:
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ATTENDANCE:
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Student-Directed Project

The Basics: The Student-Directed Project (SDP) provides students with an opportunity to explore a topic or to attempt to answer a question related to course content that interests them.

Topic: In the sixth week of class, each student will submit a project proposal in which they 'pitch' a topic to the instructor. *Topics can be anything at all.* There are only two requirements: 1. the proposed topic must be relevant to the course (it must relate to one or more of the nine course themes listed below); and 2. the topic must be relevant to the student in question (the student should *actually care* about the topic). A project proposal template will be distributed and students will have class time to discuss potential topics with the instructor. Ideally, SDP topics will connect to the overall course theme (food) but students may propose non-food-related topics as well.

Research and Investigation: Each student must engage in research or investigation in order to explore their chosen topic or answer their question. The exact nature of student research or investigation is negotiable *but every project should include some form of academic research* (i.e. consulting peer-reviewed publications or reliable websites). Students may also opt to analyze primary sources (e.g. philosophical texts, literature, films, artworks, video games, etc.). Other appropriate forms of investigation include self-reflection (e.g. journaling), informal interviews (e.g. speaking with friends or family), and participant observation (keeping notes of lived experiences).

Medium: SDPs are to be submitted as digital files over Léa. Students can express their research, investigation, thinking, and conclusions *however they like*. Every SDP must include between 1500 and 2000 words but these words can be written or spoken. Students who wish to write traditional essays may do so, however in addition to the written or spoken component, SDPs may also involve other means of expressing student thought and conclusions such as: poetry, fiction, song, dance, artworks (painting, drawing, sculpture, textile…), film etc., as long as these can be communicated digitally (i.e. as recordings or images). The project medium should fit with the proposed topic and students will be asked to justify their proposed medium in their proposals.

Evaluation: All SDPs will be evaluated according to the project rubric (attached). The important thing is for students to *think carefully* about their proposed topic or question and to demonstrate their careful thought and analysis in their projects.
 (e.g. speaking with friends or family), and participant observation (keeping notes of lived experiences).

Student-Directed Project Proposal

Each student is asked to distill a question or topic related to course competencies and themes; explain why this question or topic is significant for themselves and for others; propose a research program or means of investigating their chosen question or topic, and propose a medium for presenting their thinking on this subject to the professor.

Course competencies and concepts are listed on the course outline. See SDP description and rubric for additional information. In this proposal you will 'pitch' an idea to me. The proposal is <u>not an outline</u> for your project. It is an explanation of what you want to do for your SDP and how you want to do it.

Proposals must contain the following information:

> **Student name or names of group members**

6. **A relevant question, research topic, or issue.** (what will you be investigating?)

7. **An indication of how this question, topic, or issue connects to course competencies and specific course concepts** (why is this relevant to the course?)

8. **An explanation of why this question, topic, or issue is significant for the student in question and more broadly** (why do you care about this topic? Why should the professor care? Why should others care?)

9. **A description of a research program or plan** (how will you investigate your chosen topic? Why is this method appropriate? Be specific.)

10. **A description of the proposed medium for expressing your thinking and/or conclusions** (how will you show the professor what you have learned?)

11. **A justification of the proposed medium** (why is this format interesting or worthwhile? If proposing group work, why should this project be done in a group?)