

Finding the Question

Dr. Frances Clynes

Dissertation Seminar

Friday 7th February 2025



DISSERTATION

Only place where you get to choose what you will work on

Longest module

Final piece of work

- The end is in sight

Getting the right question is crucial

Sequence of Events



You complete four modules

- eMail Frances to confirm this
 - Dissertation page on Moodle
- Exam board approves your marks
 - University writes to you
 - Enrol on Dissertation module on MyTSD
- Forum
 - Post your ideas – can be broad and unshaped
 - Feedback from tutors
 - When topic is chosen a supervisor is assigned
 - Work with the supervisor on your proposal
 - eMail proposal to Frances

Forums for Research Ideas

The MA Dissertation Process - making a start!

PLEASE LOOK AT THIS - a brief Power Point on an approach to finding your dissertation topic

MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology Forum for your research ideas

This forum is for you to begin to shape your ideas and receive feedback from the academic staff. You are not expected to have a fully formed proposal at this point; the purpose of the forum is to get you there. Even if your ideas are rough and broad, please post and start a discussion with the MA tutors.

Please note: Feedback to student should come from MA Tutors only. Students should not attempt to give feedback to other students or comment on their ideas.

MA in Ecology & Spirituality Forum for your research ideas

This forum is for you to begin to shape your ideas and receive feedback from the academic staff. You are not expected to have a fully formed proposal at this point; the purpose of the forum is to get you there. Even if your ideas are rough and broad, please post and start a discussion with the MA tutors.

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Choose your Topic

Related to the MA on
which you are enrolled

- Astronomy, astrology, cosmology
- Ecology, spirituality

Original research

Completed within the
time limit

Completed within the word count



Choose your Topic

Two Stages:

- Choosing the general area
- Identifying the question you wish to answer



Topic of interest

-

Choosing the General Area

Review the material
on the Moodle pages:

- For the module
- Module reading lists
- MA CAA Online Library

Search JSTOR/online
databases/online
resources



How much do you know of the area?

- [illegible]

Have I access to the required sources:

- [illegible]

Identifying the Question

Existing scholarship

- Is there existing scholarship?
- Is there a gap in it?
 - Are you sure?
- Can you add to it?
- Can you extend it?
- Can you approach existing research from a different angle?



What is the question?

- ## Be specific

Academic rationale



Example Dissertation:

How do astrologers view their relationship with the night sky?

How do astrologers view their relationship with the night sky?

Nick Campion

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of a Master of Arts in
Cultural Astronomy

University of Wales Trinity Saint David
2026

Primary Sources

- **Astrologers**

- What are astrologers saying about the night sky?
- Text books, articles in astrology journals, blogs, social media

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How do astrologers view their relationship with the night sky?

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Secondary Sources

- Wide range of sources
- Who are the recognised authors in the field?
- What are the current debates?
- Have there been recent developments?

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Secondary Sources

- JSTOR
- Online Databases
- Academic Texts
- Online Journals
 - *Culture and Cosmos*
- PhDs
- Perhaps none?

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Identifying the Question

- What are astrologers saying about the night sky?
 - Very little?
 - Why?
- Do astrologers look at the night sky and, if not, why not?
 - What astrologers?
 - What do you mean by astrologer?
 - What do you mean by the night sky?

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Identifying the Question

- Who exactly will be your primary sources?
 - Professional astrologers?
 - Amateurs with a qualification?
 - People who post on astrology Facebook pages?
- How will you access them?
 - Conference or astrological event?
 - Via Facebook?
 - Interviews via Zoom?

Example Dissertation:

How do astrologers view their relationship with the night sky?

Do professional modern western astrologers, attending the 2025 Astrological Association Conference, consider it necessary to observe the night sky?

Nick Campion

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of a Master of Arts in
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University of Wales Trinity Saint David
2026

The Question

- Do professional modern western astrologers, attending the 2025 Astrological Association Conference, consider it necessary to observe the night sky?

✚ Forums for Research Ideas ✎

Edit ▼



The MA Dissertation Process - making a start! ✎

Edit ▼



Edit ▼



PLEASE LOOK AT THIS - a brief Power Point on an approach to finding your dissertation topic ✎

Edit ▼



READ THIS BEFORE YOU POST TO YOUR FORUM ✎

Edit ▼



Edit ▼



MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology Forum for your research ideas ✎

Edit ▼



MA in Ecology & Spirituality Forum for your research ideas ✎

Edit ▼



Edit ▼



Post Graduate Skills ✎

Edit ▼

This is a link to the library's guide to working and thinking as a post graduate student. Do take 30 minutes to go through this material.

Moodle Page



Dr. Garry Phillipson

Forum

Post your ideas

- General area
- Question
- Academic rationale
- Approach

Supervisor assigned

Dissertation Module Seminars 2024-2025

All seminars begin at 4pm UK Time

Seminar	Date
1	Thursday 10 th October 2024
2	Thursday 7 th November 2024
3	Thursday 5 th December 2024
4	Friday 7 th February 2025
5	Friday 28 th March 2025
6	Friday 2 nd May 2025
7	Friday 20 th June 2025

Dissertation Seminars

Short presentation

Feedback and suggestions

Tutors

Students

Proposal

Background information on the area

Existing scholarship

Academic rationale

Aim of the research

- Objectives

Your approach

Proposed methodology



Proposal

Work with your supervisor to shape the proposal

Send it to
f.clynes@uwtsd.ac.uk

Proposal approved



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Next Seminar

FRIDAY 28TH MARCH
2025

4PM GMT