Topic Brainstorming Worksheet

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Use these prompts to generate raw material. Don't censor yourself—write down everything.
Step 1: Initial Topic Area
Broad Subject I'm interested in or assigned:
Step 2: Free-Association Brain Dump
What are the first 5-10 words, phrases, or questions that come to mind when I think about this subject?
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
Step 3: Question Prompts
Answer these quickly to explore different angles:
Who is involved or affected?
What are the key components, events, or products?
Where does this happen or matter?
When is it relevant (past, present, future)?
Why is this topic important or debated?
How does it work or how is it changing?
Step 4: Perspective Shifts
If I were a novice learning about this, what would confuse or intrigue me?
 If I were an expert, what subtle point would I want to explain?

What's the most controversial or surprising as	What's the most controversial or surprising aspect?					
What's a common misconception about it?	What's a common misconception about it?					
Part 2: Focus & Narrow						
Now, review your ideas from Part 1. Look for patterns, interest.	standout concepts,	or questions the	at spark your			
Step 5: Cluster Similar Ideas Group related items from your brain dump. Give each of	luster a label.					
Cluster A Label: Ideas:						
Cluster B Label: Ideas:						
Cluster C Label: Ideas: Ideas: Ideas: Ideas: Ideas: Ideas: Ideas: Ideas: Ideas:						
Step 6: Develop Potential Topics *Turn your most promising clusters into 2-3 potential equestion.*	essay topics. Phrase	each as a state	ment or			
1						
23						
Part 3: Final Evaluation & Selection						
Step 7: Test Your Top Candidates *Use this quick checklist for your 2-3 potential topics for	om Step 6.*					
Evaluation Criteria	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3			
Is it specific enough? (Could a book be written on it, or an essay?)	r □ Yes □ No	□ Yes □ No	□ Yes □ No			

Evaluation Criteria	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3
Is it interesting to me? (Will I enjoy researching/writing it?)	□ Yes □ No	□ Yes □ No	□ Yes □ No
Is it manageable? (Can I cover it well in the assigned length?)	□ Yes □ No	□ Yes □ No	□ Yes □ No
Can I find examples/evidence?	□ Yes □ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	□ Yes □ No
Will it interest my audience?	□ Yes □ No	□ Yes □ No	□ Yes □ No
Step 8: Make Your Choice			
My selected essay topic is:			
Why I chose it:		_	
	_		

(Save and print this worksheet. Use it whenever you need to move from a broad subject to a clear, focused essay topic.)