

# Programme of Research

Speaker 1: 00:00 I dunno if you have any advice on how to think about it so I'm, I'm not seeing it as kind of the next project stealing time away from the first project. I just feel like mentally I'm not, I'm not moving, I haven't moved on from that first project yet, but it seems like you need to learn to, um, work on multiple projects at once. But I'm just wondering how to do that in a way that feels, uh, right? I guess? I don't know.

JoVE: 00:26 So when I was working at SSHRC, there was this language about a program of research and a lot of people, even a lot of really senior people particularly in the humanities, had a really hard time with that language. And actually I do remember one day when the, the then president of SSHRC was, I don't know, it was a hallway conversation, but he made some throwaway thing about not really getting this idea of program of research that's like for the scientists or something. And I was like, Oh, don't be ridiculous. Like I actually find it a really helpful thing.

JoVE: 01:01 So, um, humanities people in my experience tend to like when you say, what's your research on, they will respond with, I'm writing a book about this. (laughing) It's like the book is the research. (All right?) So I think the key thing is to switch in your head that the book is one output from your research, right? And that it's not like you do one piece of research for your PhD and then you do something completely different next and something completely right ... that there's a sort of thread that goes through it, right? There's a set of questions. Now sometimes you do make big shifts but that there's a set of questions that kind of relate to each other and that sort of follow you through. And this sort of idea not only helps you think about how your current project and your next project fit together and how, you know, how your grant might be just part of carrying you along this program. Um, but it also helps you when you come to apply for your promotion and your tenure.

JoVE: 02:11 Because one of the things that you probably haven't noticed, because people don't really notice it until they actually read the rules when they're about to do it, is that what most academic institutions care about in making decisions about promotions is your trajectory. Okay. So the one thing I wish somebody had told me like the first year I started as an academic rather than when I got turned down from the promotion, is we're looking for a trajectory in your research. So it's not just we want you to publish this many things, but there's sort of a sense of, you know,

of some kind of coherence to it. Um, and so this idea of a program of research actually helps you, um, helps you with that narrative, right? So it's not like you're sort of necessarily anticipating, anticipating the thing, but it helps you make decisions about what to say yes to what to say no to and what to prioritize because you have a sense of, well, this is the kind of big questions I'm really interested in and here's how these smaller questions relate to that.

JoVE: 03:18 Okay. So if you think about, well the project I started with, right, for your Phd, which you're now doing things for a book, right? I'm assuming it's based on your PhD research, maybe PhD plus, but that that's, that is like one thing. But if you can identify what the bigger overarching questions you're interested in and then be able to say, so that project looked at this piece and raised these other questions and here's this other bit that's going to go, right. And really overall this whole thing is held together by the fact that I'm interested in these questions. Okay.

JoVE: 03:59 Now there's a couple of advantages to that. One, it helps you feel less like everything's competing with each other, right? And the second thing is that it helps you write that promotion and tenure document because you then have like a narrative thread to make it all make sense. And if you have a trajectory that means people are not just looking at what you've published in the past, but because you can tell that narrative that has that overarching question and you can connect these things together, they can sort of imagine it continuing. Right? So one thing that gets people turned down for promotion when it happens is that people think, Oh, you've done all that because we've required you to, but if we give you tenure, you're just going to stop writing. Um, so right. If they want you to keep writing, it's helpful to have that little narrative that just gives them, you know, where they feel like they kind of could guess that you have more questions to ask. Right. And that you're kind of internally motivated. So that's that.

JoVE: 04:59 But the other thing is it helps your SSHRC grant, here's how it helps your SSHRC grant, because you can use that bigger overarching question as kind of the first line in your objectives. Right? Right. My, my program of research is focused on huge question you couldn't possibly answer except in your entire career, maybe not even then. In this particular, you know, the research I propose for this grant will specifically deal with this, this and this. But what it does is it means whatever the small thing is that you're looking at it relates immediately to this bigger set of questions. Right? And then when you write the sort of context section, you're kind of talking about, oh, so here's like the field in which the big question and the

smaller questions, right? This is, this is how what I'm doing fits into this broader conversation going on in my field, right? Here's the field. Here's what I'm going to do to be able to do these things that I want to do in this project, right? To achieve these contributions to this conversation. Here are the things I'm actually going to do, I'm gonna look at these sources, I'm gonna analyze them in this way, and then I'm going to produce, right? And then you're going to have that knowledge mobilization plan where you're like, okay, and I'm going to publish this kind of thing for these kinds of audiences. And right. And that all kind of lines up because you've got a really clear sense of these are the big questions that are driving this.

JoVE: 06:31 Um, does that, does that, does that make sense?

Speaker 1: 06:36 Yes. Oh my gosh, that's so helpful. I mean, I mean everybody says that about like having a kind of thread for a research program and making sure things kind of aligned. But uh, for me it's always been a kind of emergent thing. But you're right,

JoVE: 06:52 I think it is for a lot of people. I think it is for a lot of people. So that's one of the things you might want to do early in the summer, right? In terms of preparing yourself in terms of the grant is really spend like ... give yourself a day to really sort of journal and think and make notes and mind maps and whatever about and just dream big about where you could take this.

Speaker 1: 07:16 Yeah. Well, well what I like about how you laid it out though is it's actually like a clear, useful, systematic approach. Like, you know, it often feels like haphazard and like the dream phase, but you're actually supposed to do that and here's how it all fits together. So yeah, no, that's really, really helpful.

JoVE: 07:31 The other thing, I will just say briefly though, is if you would like help figuring out that bigger picture and how things might fit into it, that's what the Wayfinding service that I offer does. Okay. So, um, so like if you think, oh, it will be helpful. And so what I do is, um, I can send you some questions to help guide some of your reflections and then you can have a conversation with me about it. So it can, it can give some structure to that sort of big thinking part and help you get down to a kind of, okay, this is what I need to do. This is what this grant is going to be about. Here's how it fits with my book and that might help. Right? So if that would be helpful. Um, and you've, you know, especially if you've got some professional development funds or something that you could throw at it then. So that's just, if you

think that would be helpful. But that's generally the orientation, right? That kind of big, if you've got that, then that kinda then can derive a whole set of questions.