Semester Project - List of potential communities

Submission: Please upload your responses to Moodle before class on Friday Sept 15th. Also, please bring a digital or physical copy of your responses to class on Friday Sept 15th.

Recall that the objective for our semester project is to explore and communicate the ecology and environmental challenges of a focal ecological community.

The goal for this week's assignment is to help you identify potential ecological communities, or if you already have settled on a system to focus on, to start learning about its ecology.

If you have not yet decided on a focal system, please answer the following questions:

1. What are two-four potential communities, ecosystems, or places that you might like to focus on for your semester project? What appeals to you about each possibility?

2. For each possible system, do a general Google search (or on your favorite search engine) about the ecology, climate, and/or environmental challenges. Please use your judgement and stick to reputable sources; avoid propaganda and/or tourism websites. What are some intriguing things you learned about each system? What sources did you use to get this information?

3. Use Google Scholar to search for primary ecological research articles about each system. For example, if I wanted to focus on the Everglades as my focal system, I might simply start with the search term "Everglades ecology". After exploring promising search results, report back on some of the following questions:

   a. What are some things you notice about the types of articles you are getting back from this search? For example, is there more literature or less literature than you expected? What are the types of journals in which the papers are published?

   b. If it seems that your search is too broad, what are some ways you can refine your idea to narrow in on a more tractable question? If your search term seems to narrow, what are some things you can do to cast a wider net?

4. After conducting this initial exploration of potential systems, do you feel that you have a top choice that rises above others? What makes it most compelling to you? If you still feel like you are deciding between options, what would help you narrow down your focus?

If you feel you have already identified the system you wish to focus on, proceed to the next page.

If you feel you have already identified the system you wish to focus on, please answer the following questions. *My assumption is that if you have already decided on what system to focus on, that you either have a fair amount of knowledge/personal experience of this system.* *If this is not the case,* start by conducting a general Google search (or on your favorite search engine) about the ecology, climate, and/or environmental challenges. Please use your judgement and stick to reputable sources; avoid propaganda and/or tourism websites.

1. What is the system that you want to focus on for your project? Why does this appeal to you? What are some ecological/environmental characteristics of this system that you want to explore in your project?

2. Use Google Scholar to search for primary ecological research articles For example, if I wanted to focus on the Everglades as my focal system, I might simply start with the search term "Everglades ecology".
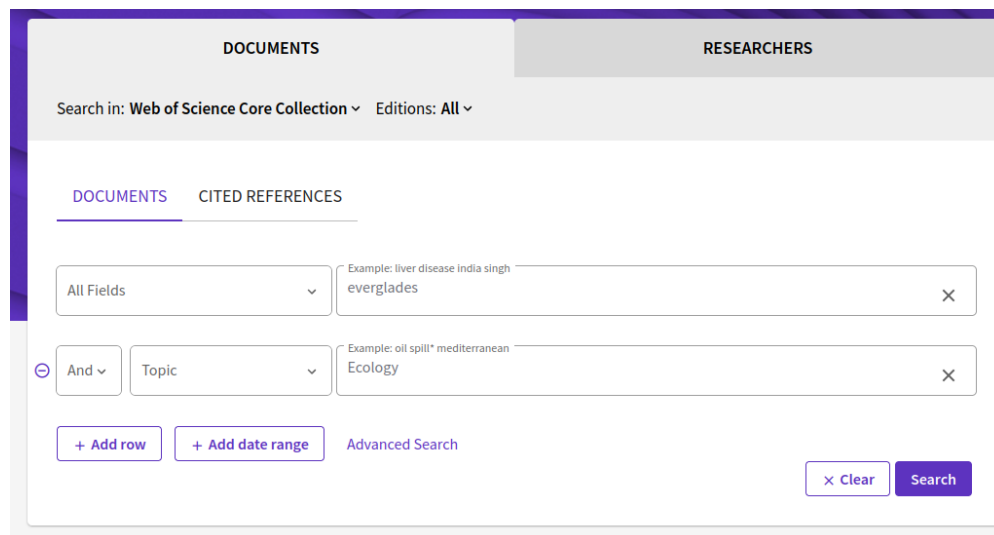   After exploring promising search results, report back on some of the following questions:

   a. What are some things you notice about the types of articles you are getting back from this search? For example, is there more literature or less literature than you expected?

   b. What are the types of journals in which the papers are published? If it seems that your search is too broad, what are some ways you can refine your idea to narrow in on a more tractable question? If your search term seems to narrow, what are some things you can do to cast a wider net?

3. While Google Scholar can be a useful starting point to search for primary literature, it is not always comprehensive and might miss important articles. Another excellent database is Web of Science, which you can access through LSU's library following the instructions at this link.
   Use Web of Science to search for primary ecological research about your focal communities. Unlike Google Scholar, you can use Web of Science to search to search for terms in specific fields. For example, if I was doing a project about the Everglades, I might start with a search for "Everglades" in all fields, and "Ecology" as the topic:

Based on your search, address some of the following questions:

a. What terms did you search for, and what are some things you notice about your Web of Science search results? It is the same set of papers as you saw in Google Scholar?

b. Using the "quick filters" on Web of Science, limit your search results to Review Articles and read through the Abstracts a few potential sources that you can explore in depth to shape your project. What papers are you choosing, and why?

4. After conducting this initial exploration of your chosen system, do you feel that you will be able to develop a semester project around its ecology and environmental challenges? If there is an overwhelming list of potential topics, how do you think you can narrow down your focus? If you struggled to find good sources, how can you broaden your scope?