Don't let the academic language of research intimidate you. Here are some commonly used words in research assignments that basically mean the same thing:

explore X  critique X  
discuss X  investigate X  
analyze X  compare X with Y  
explain X  discuss X in light of Y  

But these phrases describe only the first step in the research process. An assignment to discuss X really means something more like this:

Find an issue in X that raises a question about a specific aspect of X, whose answer will help us understand some larger theme, feature, or quality of X.