

Department of History

Guidelines for Writing the Thesis/Project Proposal for the History Masters Programs

The primary goal of the thesis/project proposal is to clearly answer several basic questions regarding the project a student plans to complete as a thesis or project. These questions include:

- 1) **What is the problem or question to be addressed?**
- 2) **Why is this an interesting or important problem/question?**
- 3) **How will your thesis research help to solve or answer this problem/question?**

The proposal is typically written after consultation with advisors and a review of the pertinent literature. There are no specific length requirements; but in practice, a reasonable length might be about 7-10 pages, excluding bibliography. The proposal should be well organized into sections (see suggested outline below), and be written with fully developed paragraphs and complete sentences. Referencing may be done in any format consistent with current historical literature. Much of the proposal can be used directly in the body of the final thesis, so writing a well crafted proposal serves dual purposes and is essentially a draft of parts of your thesis.

Suggested Outline

Abstract:

A concisely written summary (1 page max) of the project including background information, objectives and methods of the proposed research, and the significance of the study.

Introduction:

General discussion of the background and objectives of the study. This is where you catch the attention of the reader - tell them about the significance of the question(s) to be addressed and the impact your proposed work will have on these questions. In some cases, you might then include a very short statement about how the rest of the proposal is organized to set the expectations of the reviewer.

Project Description:

Includes more detailed discussions of the historiography. This section should convince the reader that more research is necessary. It should include a detailed discussion of the specific goals. The objectives section is one of the most important section of the proposal, because listing specific goals helps the author focus on what data will be important to the study.

Work Plan:

This timetable predicts the duration of each step and the overall project. The purpose of the work plan is to show that you have thought carefully through what needs to be done, how it can be done, and when it can be done. In practice, you will almost certainly need to modify the plan as the work proceeds, but establishing a plan from the outset can help you foresee and avoid potential difficulties. If you anticipate trouble-spots or issues, include them so your committee might help you trouble-shoot.

Budget and Justification:

As with the work plan, the budget may need to evolve as the project progresses. Nevertheless, it is important to think through what resources will be necessary to accomplish the proposed research and to identify potential sources of those resources.

References:

Include a bibliography of work related to your research subject and which will inform your approach to the topic.

Criteria for Evaluation of a Thesis Proposal

- 1) The merit of the proposed research
- 2) How well the proposed research is placed within the context of existing knowledge about subject of study.
- 3) How clearly and concisely the proposal is written