

Thesis Prospectus

M.A. in History/M.A. Interdisciplinary Studies-Concentration in History

Purpose:

The thesis prospectus should define a worthy and manageable research project for both the student and the student's thesis committee chair. The research project proposed in the prospectus should make a valuable and original contribution to the literature on the subject of the study. Additionally, the proposed project should be realistically viable given constraints on time, student preparation, faculty specializations, access to the necessary research archives, etc. In short, the prospectus should demonstrate that the project is *worth doing*, and *can be done* in an appropriate amount of time. In this regard a thesis prospectus performs the same function as a grant application, serving both as a justification for the work and a feasibility study.

Contents:

A thesis prospectus must include

1. An abstract (1 page)
2. A review of the relevant literature (4 - 6 pages)
3. The project proposal (3 – 5 pages)
4. A chapter outline (1 – 2 pages)
5. An annotated bibliography.

The Abstract: The abstract is a succinct summary, running no more than a single page, which clearly defines the research question the thesis will address and explains how the student will answer the research question.

Literature Review: The prospectus itself begins with a review on the relevant secondary literature on the topic the research question addresses. This review should run no longer than five pages, and should provide a strong historiographical overview of the subject.

The Project Proposal: The critical section of the prospectus, in the proposal section the student defines the research question, postulates a coherent thesis statement, and

places the proposed research project in an historiographical context. This discussion should make clear how the proposed thesis will make a valuable contribution to the literature on this topic. Additionally, in this section the student explains the methodology that will be used in the study, including a detailed discussion of the nature and availability of the primary source material that the thesis will draw from. This section should run no longer than five pages.

Chapter Outline: This section explains how the student will organize and present the material incorporated into the thesis.

Annotated Bibliography: The prospectus concludes with a list of the major works relevant to the thesis project, including but not limited to the secondary works discussed in the Literature Review section of the prospectus. The bibliography should also include citations for the primary sources; the primary and secondary sources should be listed separately. The student must briefly describe these sources and indicate how they will contribute to the research project.

Process:

In consultation with the History Graduate Advisor, the student should pick a tentative thesis committee chair from among the History Graduate Faculty. As per University policy, a thesis committee chair should be a Full Member of the Graduate Faculty.

If the Graduate Faculty member provisionally agrees to chair the student's thesis, the student will work with the committee chair to develop the thesis prospectus, while enrolling in HIST 7300. At the end of the term the student turns in the final draft of the thesis prospectus to the thesis committee chair, with a copy submitted to the History Graduate Advisor. The committee chair turns in a HIST 7300 grade for the student, based on the quality of the final version of the proposal. The provisional chair also will inform the History Graduate Advisor whether or not he/she will be willing to continue to serve as the thesis committee chair. The Graduate Advisor, the thesis committee chair and the student will work together to agree upon the other members of the thesis committee.