

Seminar Paper Research Prospectus: Due Mon 3/12

A prospectus is a fully-developed research plan that will help you pull together your research materials as you think about how to pursue your research question and develop your thesis. It describes your topic, introduces your working thesis, and explains the sources that you plan to use and pursue in building your argument.

The prospectus is worth 5% of your final grade. There's no magic number for sources, as it depends a great deal upon your topic, but I'll be looking for a balance of both primary and secondary sources. Your eventual paper will represent original research, involving not only analysis of primary sources but a command of relevant scholarly literature.

In a Prospectus, You Should....

- Introduce and describe your topic
- State what you already know about it
- State your primary research question
- Propose a tentative claim (that is, your working thesis, or possible answers to your primary research question)
- Outline the primary support (evidence + reasoning about the evidence in relationship to your claim) that you will use to develop your thesis
- Identify the sources containing that evidence and the disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) approaches those sources represent
- Indicate significant counter-arguments to your working thesis (or anomalous pieces of support that you will have to account for)
- Identify the sources that contain these counter-arguments/anomalies
- Explain why your insight into this topic is significant and interesting (how does your thesis pass the "so what?" test?)

Remember that your prospectus is a planning document; while it will provide the foundation for your finished paper, it is not intended to be the paper itself, or to state exactly what your paper will say (that is, it is not an abstract of an essay already written, but an *anticipation* of what will come based on the preliminary research you've done). You will discover as you do further research that you might need to make changes to your initial plan and to your working thesis (sometimes substantial ones).

(see reverse for a checklist)

Be sure to address these questions in any research prospectus

1. Summarize what you already know about the topic.
2. What is your proposed title?
3. Who is your intended audience?
4. What is the purpose of your paper; that is, what will this paper do for the reader? For you? Be specific.
5. What is your proposed thesis?
6. What major question(s) do you hope to answer in this paper that pertain to your purpose?
7. What is your proposed outline or organization (e.g., what will you discuss first, second, third, etc.)?
8. Tentatively, what sources will you be using? Cite those sources, and document them at the end of your prospectus on a Works Cited page (MLA) or as endnotes (Chicago Style)