

TEMPLATE for GRADUATE PROJECT PROPOSAL

You will be submitting a prospectus for approval by the graduate committee. This is not some draconian method of weeding out grad students -- it is our way of helping define your idea and guide you to the right advisors.

A prospectus is a **design** of a project – whether for formal research, directed reading, a public history project, or a curriculum unit. In each case, the proposal should cover 3 things:

- *identification of the subject matter;*
- *a statement of an initial main point, working thesis, or purpose; and*
- *a list of sources.*

The clearer and fuller a design you have at this early stage, the easier it will be to complete work in the longer run. Your proposal for the Teaching and Generalist (Exam) Option may look a bit different than that of the Public History and Thesis. Use your judgment when filling out the Graduate Project Proposal, and feel free to check in with faculty who could help guide you in making this plan.

The following are the formal parts of a research proposal:

1. **YOUR NAME**
2. **YOUR CAPSTONE OPTION** (Generalist, U. Thesis, Teaching, or Public History)
3. **NAMES OF YOUR PROPOSED GRADUATE COMMITTEE** (If you have someone in mind to be your advisor, wonderful. Check in with them. You can also make suggestion for a reader, and/or the graduate committee will assign one. Both names are subject to approval by the Graduate Coordinator, who can keep in mind issues of workload and suitability of expertise.)
4. **EXPECTED DEGREE DATE**
5. **TITLE:** Provide a *working* title for your project. The title should reflect the subject and optionally the working thesis of your project (see #'s 6 & 7 below). The title will likely change by the time you've completed your work.
6. **SUBJECT:** In a paragraph or two, elaborate on the subject of your project. The subject itself should include 3 main items: *the topic, the time frame, the geographical setting*, and any *subtopics* so far.
7. **WORKING THESIS:** In a few sentences, explain your *main point, purpose, or working thesis*, based on preliminary reading or investigations. Your thesis is most easily understood as *the answer to the most important question you want to ask about your subject*. It may be an original point, or a reassessment of other historians' ideas, or a re-evaluation of the significance of your

subject, or a focal point for a course design or public history project, among many possibilities. Determining your main point or purpose is the most intellectually challenging aspect of your project, so it is often the most interesting (although it may take to the end of the project to settle on your final version of same).

8. **BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Conclude the prospectus with a working list of sources composed of 2 parts: *a list of key secondary sources* and *an initial list of primary sources*. The lists of sources should include more than books: such as other published items like journal articles; one-of-a-kind sources like manuscript or typed letters; graphical work or other artifacts not appearing in books or articles. [For HIST 692, provide only secondary sources.]

Re: secondary sources:

This section of the bibliography should be a preliminary list of main *secondary* sources, no less than 5 sources. If your list shows signs of being too long, this is a good indication that your subject is too broad, so you'll want to narrow the scope.

Conversely, if the list is too short, you'll want to broaden the scope to include secondary readings on related or similar subjects.

Re: primary sources:

This section should list a *preliminary set of primary* sources. Preliminary primary sources can be culled from secondary works, published bibliographies on your subject, library online catalogs, websites, among other possibilities. This does not have to be a long list, but should show that you've thought about the sources. If you have difficulty drawing up this list, this is a good indication that the sources are not adequate for the project: so you'll want to re-conceive the project based on what you know is available for the project.

Re: format:

For your bibliography of sources, use the proper bibliographical form set out in Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, most recent edition.

Remember this is a proposal, not a contract sealed with blood. The faculty are here to help your ideas evolve!