

PART I OF FINAL PROJECT: THE PROPOSAL

The goal of a research proposal is twofold: to present and justify the need to study a research problem and to present the practical ways in which the proposed study should be conducted. The design elements and procedures for conducting research are governed by standards of the predominant discipline in which the problem resides, and, in this case, the instructions given to you by your course facilitator. Research proposals must provide a clear plan for the proposed study. In addition to providing a rationale, a proposal describes the methodology (your exact approaches and sources) for conducting the research consistent with requirements of the professional or academic field (in this case, film) and a statement on anticipated outcomes and/or benefits derived from the study's completion.

Your professor may assign the task of writing a research proposal for the following reasons:

- Develop your skills in thinking about and designing a focused research study;
- Improve your general research and writing skills;
- Practice identifying the logical steps that must be taken to accomplish one's research goals;
- Critically review, examine, and consider the use of different methods for gathering and analyzing data related to the research problem; and,
- Nurture a sense of inquisitiveness within yourself and to help see yourself as an active participant in the process of doing scholarly analysis.

A proposal should contain all the key elements involved in designing a completed research study, with sufficient information that allows readers to assess the validity and usefulness of your proposed study. The only elements missing from a research proposal are the findings of the study and your analysis of those findings. Finally, an effective proposal is judged on the quality of your writing and, therefore, it is important that your proposal is coherent, clear, and compelling. USE GRAMMARLY@EDU until you get zero errors.

Regardless of the research problem you are investigating and the methodology you choose, all research proposals should address the following questions:

- What do you plan to accomplish? Be clear and succinct in defining the research problem and what it is you are proposing to research.
- Why do you want to do the research? BTW, the answer IS NOT "because my instructor assigned it." Don't even try it.
- In addition to detailing your research design, you also must conduct a thorough review of the sources used and provide convincing evidence that it is a topic worthy of in-depth investigation. Be sure to answer the "So What?" question. That means, after reading your thesis, the anticipated reader's question of "Why should I care?" should be answered in some form or fashion.
- How are you going to conduct the research? Be sure that what you propose is doable. If you're having difficulty formulating a research problem to propose investigating, then maybe you need to go back to the drawing board and choose an approach for a film analysis that makes sense to you and a film that adequately "works" with your selected approach.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Failure to be concise. A research proposal must be focused and not be "all over the map" or diverge into unrelated tangents without a clear sense of purpose.
- Failure to reference anything. Nope.
- Failure to cite (or properly cite) what you DO reference. Proposals should be grounded in foundational research that lays a foundation for understanding the development and scope of the issue.
- Failure to delimit the contextual boundaries of your research [e.g., time, place, people, etc.]. As with any analysis paper, your proposed study must inform the reader how and in what ways the study will examine the problem.
- Failure to develop a coherent and persuasive argument for the proposed analysis. This is critical, and someday may be very relevant for either your major or profession. For example, in many workplace settings, the research proposal is intended to argue for why a study should be funded.
- Sloppy or imprecise writing, or poor grammar. Although a research proposal does not represent a completed analysis, there is still an expectation that it is well-written and follows the style and rules of good academic writing. USE GRAMMARLY@EDU until you have zero errors. Use the writing tutors in both the C.A.V.E. and in the library and on Tutor.com. Unlike the discussion forums where I show a little leniency, writing errors on the final project components will not be tolerated. You've been warned!
- Too much detail on minor issues, but not enough detail on the major issues. Your proposal should focus on only a few key research questions in order to support the argument that the research needs to be conducted. Minor issues, even if valid, can be mentioned but they should not dominate the overall narrative.
- Failure to write ONLY in third person. Do not write in either second person or first person. If you are confused about what these terms mean, please look them up (basic college writing prerequisites). Yes, the work should be as objective as possible, so first person would not be appropriate in an analysis assignment such as this. You might use the first and second perspective as if you were talking to a friend or texting someone, but when you speak to a larger, academic audience, in a formal piece of writing, you want to sound as unbiased as possible. Remember, first person ("I," "Me," etc.) is subjective. Second person ("you," "we," "us," "you all," etc.) is also inappropriate for a project such as this. Third person ("Him," "Her," "She," "He," "Them," "They," "Fred," "Sally," etc.) is the most objective choice. A general rule for your journey through academia might be, when in doubt, just always use third person (unless you have an instructor who "specifically" says otherwise).

Now, before you write your proposal for this course's final project, read this information. Then review any instructions given to you already (by your course instructor) to be sure you are gathering the correct number and kind of sources, before you begin brainstorming about topics or writing your paper. Here are the instructions:

Overview: The proposal (for the final paper) will count as one of the "short writing assignments" for this course, and graded accordingly. The final paper itself will count as one of the "long writing assignments."

Part I of the final formal writing assignment of the course will be a proposal for a written analysis on a short primary work unique to the student (i.e., not shared with another student).

The list of available works you can choose from for the final project (you are responsible for finding one that "interests you" beforehand) can be found listed in the course syllabus. The course syllabus is in the "start here" section of this course on D2L.

Once you have submitted your proposal, you may begin working on your final, formal, written analysis. However, if you do the proposal incorrectly (e.g., violate any of the previously-stated stipulations), then you will be asked to "re-do" the proposal, meaning any work you might have done on the final project could also be wrong. Error in proposal means error in final project. Your written proposal could be as short as one or two SEE-IT paragraphs clearly stating which primary work you will be using, what approach you will be probably be taking in your analysis, and you will include a formal and correct Works Cited at the end of your proposal. The document will be saved as an MS-Word file and uploaded to the appropriately-labeled dropbox in the "Assignments" tab of our D2L Courses Page.

This assignment will be due by Sunday evening @ 11:59pm EST at the end of this module. *There will be no extensions granted for this assignment (so, please don't ask); just get your work in by the deadline.*

The other components of the final research paper are discussed elsewhere on D2L Courses in forthcoming modules (although you can always take a "sneak-peek" at what's coming up by looking at the Course Syllabus). Only Part I (i.e., "The Proposal") is discussed here.

Your possible primary work options (must be clearly stated in your proposal) from this section of the course are:

- William Carlos Williams's "The Red Wheelbarrow"
- Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz"
- Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*
- Claude McKay, "Outcast"
- Ernesto Quinonez, from "Bodega Dreams"
- T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
- John Hope Franklin, "The Train from Hate"
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
- Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal"
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"
- Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"
- Etheridge Knight, "Hard Rock Returns to Prison from the Hospital for the Criminal Insane"
- Edward Abbey, "Eco-Defense"
- Robert Frost, "Mending Wall"
- Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants"
- Alice Walker, "Everyday Use"
- Nikki Giovanni, "Mothers"
- Seamus Heaney, "Mid-term Break"
- Peter Meineke, "Advice to My Son"
- Adrienne Rich, "Delta"
- Raymond Carver, "Cathedral"
- Linda Pastan, "Ethics"
- John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961"
- Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream"

REMEMBER:

- Choose the one that stirs the most intellectual curiosity in YOU.
- Selecting a work that IS NOT on the list of the provided links will result in a fail.
- I know you can do this. Let's show some integrity and just follow the spirit of the assignment—Please!

Your final product for both this proposal and the final writing assignment will be judged on how well you succeed in producing a well-thought-out, clear example of writing that shows you can both interpret and intelligently discuss the issues you've raised, and how well you can back up your findings with evidence; you need to demonstrate that this is going to happen in your proposal. Your proposal should clearly indicate that these expectations will appear in the final product.

QUESTION: Dr. Hobbs, if I'm to write a proposal in THIS module for the final paper I'll submit at the end of module 7, wouldn't it be helpful to know what the final paper assignment is going to look like first?

ANSWER: You're absolutely right. That information will be made available to you in the next module (module 5), but how about a sneak peek, for now?

Here's a link to the assignment instructions for the final paper, which you'll work on in the NEXT module of this course: [Research Paper Guidelines \(Click Here\)](#). Let this information guide the decisions you'll make in your proposal.

For this assignment, plan to use PROPER MLA FORMAT (8TH EDITION). If you just "make up" your own formatting style (without consulting MLA guidelines, first) or use the guidelines for other styles, such as APA or Chicago Style or Turabian's, for example, then your submission(s) will not pass. If you don't know how to do something, seek help. The campus library and the C.A.V.E. and Tutor.com are great places to start with help on MLA formatting. All can be consulted online. Don't seek help from me on MLA formatting UNTIL YOU HAVE EXHAUSTED THESE RESOURCES, FIRST.

Approach: Neither your proposal nor your final, formal whole film analysis has a chance to be substantive unless you have approved substantive sources. Again, the final project will be about YOUR ANALYSIS. It is NOT only about synthesizing the analyses of other scholars. If you ONLY do that (I put in parenthesis), the assignment will fail. Needless to say, plagiarism of any kind (intentional or unintentional) will fail the assignment, too, so don't let this even cross your mind. If you SUSPECT that something you are writing might be plagiarized, the "penalty-free" period to ask about it is BEFORE the assignment is submitted, not after. *Afterward* is too late.

Yes, you should be integrating quoted passages from BOTH/ALL sources in your final paper (not necessarily the proposal) as hard evidence to back up any/all claims made in your paper. If you make a claim (e.g., "this poem was written in Portugal") then you better have cited evidence to prove that. If you mention a plot point (e.g., "Dorothy actually changed her mind about leaving home") then you better have cited evidence to prove that, *even if you are paraphrasing*. If the text book authors have said that writers need to look at the point of view of others to properly analyze a narrative, and that's the part of your analysis YOU are working on, then, believe me, you better have cited evidence to prove that, *even if you are paraphrasing*. Use page numbers in parentheses for the text. No quoted passages=a fail. Improperly quoted passages (such as floating quotations or failure to list page numbers/time-stamps)=a fail. Don't be a failure. Please follow these assignment instructions.

Below is a template for "the proposal" component of the final assignment that you may follow/borrow. Once "The Proposal" is submitted, I will not accept any final papers that show major changes in either topic or sources, without my prior approval (usually such a change, will require a NEW proposal submitted to me). ANY work that you submit for this course (including discussion board posts) must be your original work, fitting the guidelines for each individual assignment's requirements.

This means that you should probably review the Academic Honor Code for Saint Leo University; if this isn't in your student handbook, then consider it a pre-research assignment (it's online). If you can't find it with a simple google search, then the library should be able to help you. The good news is that most students do their own work, and this isn't usually a problem. However, for anyone tempted to pass off someone else's work as his or her own, I am a sophisticated enough user of the Internet and can easily spot papers gotten from paper mills, Internet or otherwise. If I don't spot it, then Turnitin.com will. Please do not jeopardize your college career or your final grade in this class by turning in work that is not both conceived and written by you. Cite any sources you consult to cover all your bases (Remember, only two are allowed, anyway).

Sample Proposal Template

[The information shown between the brackets [] is to guide you.]

Date in MLA Format:

To: Dr. B. Lee Hobbs

From: [name and email address]

Subject (i.e., the selected work) of my final, formal analysis: [The subject is the broad topic; extrapolate from the area of the chapter you are focusing on]

My reasons for selecting this work: [If you are not vested in your topic, chances are your incentive to write about the subject will be weak. If you are interested in the topic you will probably write a better paper.]

My claim/position/thesis/statement: [In other words, what are you trying to prove?] The thesis is generally a complex sentence, which comes after the set-up material in your analysis's introduction paragraph, and states/summarizes each of the points you will use in your paper to prove your primary claim. The thinking process behind a good thesis statement is always a question, but the actual thesis statement itself is NOT a question; it is a statement. Statement ≠ question. If you ask a question, even if rhetorical, then you answer it; If your subject is Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* and "gratuitous violence," for example, then your claim/position/thesis might be "The violence used in Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* was not, in fact, gratuitous, but necessary to express the director's vision, show the reality of the seedy underworld of the illicit drug trade, and provide an homage to the genre for which this film belongs." See that last part that I put in parenthesis? That's the roadmap/blueprint component of your thesis statement. Thesis statements are required to have this roadmap/blueprint component (a summary of the "provable" reasons your main claim is true). Don't leave this part off of your thesis.] Look it up if you need more information.

Approach to the subject of my final, formal analysis: [Try to envision a logical way in which to present your material. In what order will you present your material to best address the issues? Will you have to define any terms? If so, which ones? Will you have to clarify terms and concepts? Do you think that inserting anecdotal evidence, for example, similar scenes from other films studied for the course (which you'll need to cite also, if used), will help your reader understand your paper? Will you show opposing viewpoints? Will you discuss the pluses and minuses of different approaches that perform similar functions? Will you be comparing and contrasting? Will you be showing cause and effect? Will you be categorizing some information? Perhaps you will be using a number of these approaches in your paper. In "The Proposal," let your reading audience (i.e., me) where you think you are headed. This is the part of the proposal where that information goes.]

Intended audience: [Your readers for this course are students who have taken ENG 121 and are currently taking ENG 122 in the general education program, and are now familiar with the terms used by James and Merickel in their textbook. Don't make up your own terms. Use the ones we've learned in this course; this is the language you are not only permitted but required to use. Don't avoid doing this. Assume that your readers have, in general, your same level of education and have all been paying close attention to the course. Even so, you will still need to define any terms used and explain any concepts used (always citing EXACTLY where that information can be found in the text). The specific audience that will "benefit" from your work will be other students who are either currently taking this course or those who have already taken this course (or, one similar to it). Keep that in mind as you write.]

Documentation Style: [MLA 8th edition is required, no questions asked. On-line style guides are abundant, ubiquitous, and free; you have no one to blame but yourself if you don't seek out this information. You might start with Purdue's OWL (online writing lab). Our own library has information on this, too.]

Kinds of sources I will use and why they will benefit my final, formal analysis: [Do you have both a primary work and a chapter or chapters from the course textbook? Will you be using scholarly sources? Will you be using other works (only ones assigned for this course) as a way to show other works that use the concepts you describe, explain, and apply in this formal analysis? What strengths will they lend to the analysis? How will they help clarify points you want to make? Do not use NON-SCHOLARLY sources or unapproved sources.]

Tentative List of References: What work are you using? Simply listing the title of the work and/or the author isn't enough. PROPERLY CITE IT. LOOK IT UP. Use proper MLA 8th edition format (don't even think about using the 7th edition). In the analysis itself, this information should be on a separate page called Works Cited. For the proposal, it can appear here. Abide by all of the MLA 8th edition format guidelines for the reference page. You might have more than two sources (see elsewhere in these instructions) but show me that you know how to find and can analyze data from these sources. Do not list a source that you do not plan to use and/or quote from. If the source appears in the Works Cited, it means it was used for a specific reason and was referenced. Again, do not put any sources in your Works Cited that you have not used in your paper. It is possible for some of your sources to change as you become more deeply involved in writing your paper. Advise your instructor, before the formal analysis assignment deadline, of any changes in your Works Cited.]

This assignment will be due by Sunday evening @ 11:59pm EST at the end of this module. This component will count as one of the several short writing assignments required for this course. There will be no extensions granted for this assignment (so, please don't ask); just get your work in by the deadline.