

## Research Proposal Assignment

### Assignment: Overview

This assignment asks you to produce a formal proposal of at least 1200 words describing the research project you intend to pursue for the rest of the quarter. Typically the proposal builds on one of the topics you discussed in your Research Topic freewrite. However, you may write their proposals on a different topic if you so desire (**important:** contact Christine if you're switching topics!)

### Due:

- Draft due: Wednesday, January 16
- Revision due: Monday, January 28

**Paper format:** 1200 +words; 1.5 spacing; separate title page including name, title, and date; page numbers; in-text citations and works cited in MLA form; 1" margins; visual evidence (as appropriate) with captions.

**Submission Format:** Electronic posting to your individual Portfolio the Ning (use the term "Research Proposal" in the discussion title) of both the draft and the revision – attach the file to your discussion thread; in addition, hand in print out of your draft and your revision in class on the day each one is due.

**Grading:** This assignment is worth 10% of the overall class grade.

**Recommended *Envision Reading*:** Chapter 4, especially pages 86-90

### Assignment Goals:

This assignment has three interrelated goals:

1. To help you develop an effective research plan for your PWR 2 project, considering context, research questions, sources, timeline, and larger implications.
2. To give you practice working with the Research Proposal as an academic genre.
3. To provide an opportunity for working on stylistics and effective academic discourse.

## Proposal Draft and Revision

To give you time to develop your research idea and to focus on polishing your writing, this assignment involves a draft and a revision.

**The draft** is due Wednesday, January 16, at class. Turn your draft in two ways:

1. As an electronic document. Go to your Ning Portfolio (use the "Portfolios" link for your Section on the top horizontal menu to find your Portfolio. Start a new discussion in your portfolio called "Research Proposal". Include your proposal *as an attachment* to that discussion.)
2. As a print out. Bring 1 copy of your proposal with you to class.

**Draft format:** Your draft should be at least 1200 words in lengths, and should be 1.5 spaced. You may print your proposal as double-sided if you prefer. Please include page numbers. You may use images in your draft if you wish – just please use them rhetorically, not decoratively. In addition, be sure to cite any sources (textual

or image-based) that you include in your draft. Outside sources are not required for your proposal, though they may enhance your ethos as a researcher.

**The revision** is due Monday, January 28 at class. You should upload an electronic file to your Ning portfolio and also bring a print out to class with you.

### Proposal Requirements and Structure

The proposal should be at least 1200 words in length (include page numbers please!) and should have a well thought-out title and contain effective visual rhetoric as appropriate. It should be a traditional, linear Word document, although it must be divided into sections with the following subheaders:

- **Section #1 - Introduction.** This introduction should be designed to interest your reader in your topic and proposal and provide some historical/cultural context for your project. At the end of your introduction, include a tentative thesis to indicate to your reader that you are entering your project looking at your topic through a critical, analytic lens -- this thesis should clearly state your intentions using a metadiscursive structure (i.e., "In this project, I will..." or "This research project will investigate ..."). A good formula for an introduction is **context + problem/complication + proposed argument or research question**. Each stage in this formula should be a few sentences long. If you are not ready to construct a hypothesis at this point, be sure to include at least one well-thought-out research question to indicate what line of inquiry you're going to use in your research. NOTE: consider using reference sources (such as those found on our Library Research Guide – list under “Key Links” on the right sidebar of the Ning) to help you develop an understanding of the background of your topic.
- **Section #2 - Research methods and sources.** In this section, you should discuss the methods and sources you will use to conduct your research, including specific references to sites, databases, key texts or authors that you feel will be indispensable to your project. Include here also reference to less traditional research methods-- fieldwork, interviews, surveys, visits to chatrooms, gaming -- as applicable to your topic. This is also the section in which you might troubleshoot the research project, or weigh the benefits and drawbacks of certain types of sources (i.e., availability, bias, etc.). Make sure your reader understands *how the methodology/sources you have chosen are appropriate to your specific topic*. Keep in mind, also, as you move forward that you are required to use some of Stanford's databases as part of your search strategy.
- **Section #3 - Timeline.** Include a timeline for your project, using these dates from the syllabus as the foundation for your plan:
  - Wednesday, January 16: Draft of Research Proposal due
  - Tuesday, January 22 (by 11:59pm): Proposal Presentation Materials due
  - Wednesday, January 23: Proposal Presentations (by individual assignment)
  - Monday, January 28: Revision of Research Proposal due
  - Wednesday, February 13: Midterm presentations
  - Tuesday, February 19 (by 9am): Draft of Written Research Argument due
  - Wednesday, February 20: Four slides for Research Presentation due
  - Monday, February 25: Draft of Research Presentation due & In-Class dress rehearsal
  - Wednesday, February 27: Revision of Research Presentation materials & OCT goals sheet due
  - Wednesday, February 27: Research Presentations (possible additional evening session on Feb. 26 or 27)
  - Friday, March 1 (by 5pm): Presentation reflection due
  - Monday, March 4: Second draft of Written Research Argument due

- Monday, March 11: Final Revision of Written Research Argument due

In addition, set up certain milestones (by day or by week) that you will accomplish to keep yourself on track. Be sure that your timeline is more than a simple reiteration of the assignment deadlines for the course; it should reflect some awareness of the demands of your time outside of class, as well as the different stages in the process of research (going to the library, taking notes, going to the writing center, reviewing sources, etc.). You may also want to include other notable time commitments (significant midterms, a trip to visit family, etc., away games for a team). Finally, remember this is a proposal for your research *project*, not just your research *paper*, so your timeline should reflect that.

- **Section #4 - Conclusion.** In your conclusion, address the "So What?" of this research. That is, why does what you are investigating matter as more than an academic exercise? Why should your audience want to read it? Why does it matter?
- **Section #5 - About the Author section.** Finally, as an addendum to the proposal, create a biography of yourself as a researcher -- an "About the Author" section in which you establish your persona and your ethos as a student-researcher on your topic. Please include an appropriately sized photograph of yourself alongside your bio (remember to consider ethos in your photo selection!). Be sure to use the third person in your biography. See Envision Chapter 7, p 174-175 for strategies for writing an effective bio.
- **Section #6 - Works cited or Preliminary Bibliography.** If you cite any sources, you'll also need to have a works cited at the end of the proposal, with the citations in MLA format. Any parenthetical citations in the text itself should also follow MLA guidelines. Even if you don't have a works cited, you should include a preliminary bibliography at the end of your proposal containing at least 4 sources; be sure this is in proper MLA form as well (please be sure to include URLs for your source UNLESS you found them through a database). Also, please after each citation, note how you found it. For example, this is a citation that might appear in the bibliography/works cited of a paper on Women & Computer science:

"Women and Computer Science - Science Q&A - Readers' Questions - New York Times Blog." *New York Times*. 16 Apr 2007. Web. 19 Apr 2008  
<<http://science.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/04/16/women-and-computer-science/>>. Found through a search of *NYTimes.com*

Please note that the most current version of MLA citation form doesn't require you to include URLs, **however** for my class, please include URLs for all materials you find online unless you use a database to do so. You can find more help on in-text citations and works cited format through the "MLA Documentation" link found under the "Class Materials" link on the top menu of our Ning site.

**Evaluation Criteria**

Drafts are not graded, but nevertheless should be as complete as possible. At a minimum, there needs to be some content for each of the six sections listed above. Students who submit drafts that represent very little effort and are pronouncedly incomplete will receive a ½ grade (A- to A-/B+) deduction from their overall grade from this assignment.

An exceptional research proposal will contain

- An interesting, focused introduction that captures the reader’s attention, clearly identifies the topic, and concludes with either a hypothesis or a research question (using the first person – “In this proposal, I will ...”) that provides a strong guiding principle for the rest of the proposal
- Clear articulation of topic; a move toward sophistication and complexity of approach to the topic, one which narrows a broad topic to a manageable scope
- Strong transitions between sentences and ideas, producing prose that is fluid and organic, with clear and logical structure, producing an overall sense of coherence in the proposal
- Use of clear, concrete language and example to develop ideas; attention to detail
- Strong sense of audience, including an understanding of the readers’ values, assumptions, expectations, and level of expertise in the topic under discussion
- Strong control of style, language, word choice, diction, syntax, sentence structure, and consistent and authoritative voice in writing
- A strategic, powerful, and appropriate use of rhetoric appeals
- Effective use of source material (textual and visual as appropriate), which is integrated into the author’s prose and argument, and is meticulously documented in proper MLA parenthetical citation form
- Attention to strategic and powerful document design
- At least 6 well-developed sections, creating a strong underlying structure for the proposal: an introduction; research method & sources; timeline; conclusion; about the author section; & preliminary bibliography or works cited
- A research method & sources section that includes specific examples of texts, methodologies, and search strategies, with rationales for the use of that particular research plan
- A timeline that integrates attention to class deadlines for the research project with the student’s individual research practices and academic/extracurricular commitments
- A conclusion that synthesizes earlier sections of the proposal while thoughtfully addressing broader implications (the "So What?" of the project)
- An About the Author section that carefully develops the writer’s ethos as a researcher on this topic through a combination of word and image.
- A works cited and/or preliminary bibliography as appropriate, in correct MLA form with notation as to how the author searched/located the sources
- At least 1200 words of concise, clear and powerful writing

### Further Advice

- First of all, since this is a formal piece of writing, be strategic in your stylistic choices, especially in your introduction and conclusion. Think about starting with example, a quote, a statistic, a question, a fact, an opposing opinion, etc. Also, use concrete language and specific example to grab your reader. And for your conclusion -- don't trail off at the end. Conclude with a solid statement, something that makes us think, or at the very least makes us understand your project and want to read more about it.

- Think of it this way: if you were writing a proposal for a \$10,000 grant, how would you convince your readers that they should fund your project? Would you use bland language, or would you finely craft it?
- Don't forget the power of visual presentation. How your proposal **looks** reflects on your argument and your persona as a rhetor. For instance: Do you want your subheads to be bolded? Do you want indented bullet lists or ones flush against the left margin? Do you want to use horizontal lines, color (it is going to be read on-line after all), boxes, shading, etc. to format your text? Do you want to embed relevant images -- not as decoration -- but as evidence for your argument? You may want to look at *Envision* chapter 8 p. 168-172 for ideas about the design of your proposal (linked through the Ning under "Class Materials" on the top menu).
- Don't forget to format your sources correctly: Article titles should be enclosed in quotation marks; titles of books should be underlined or italicized. Also, if you quote, remember to cite your sources. Refer to the "MLA Documentation Help" page, linked under the Resources link on the top menu of our Ning site for help.
- Overall, don't just go through the motions -- use specifics and concretes in your language and development as much as possible. Make your proposal an interesting read!

#### Further Resources

- **Review Sample Research Proposals.** Look at the sample proposals linked on the Assignments Overview page on the Ning (linked from the top horizontal menu bar). Consider the ways in which they can serve as models for your own writing.
- **Read *Envision* Chapter 4.** Chapter 4 contains a detailed explain of the process of drafting an effective research proposal as well as an additional annotated example. Key pages to read would be pages 86-90 (linked through the Ning under "Class Materials" on the top menu).
- **Get Extra Help on this Assignment:** Make a Writing Center Appointment (go to <http://sututor.stanford.edu>) for additional feedback. Additionally, you can [e-mail me](#), send me a tweet (@christinepwr2), or set up an additional conference with me to talk about your proposal.