

WESTERN SEMINARY

GUIDELINES FOR THESIS & RESEARCH PROPOSALS

These instructions will walk you through the process of developing a research proposal for any research project you might develop during your Th.M. program. Consequently, these guidelines should be used to construct proposals for guided research projects and Th.M. theses. Indeed, you should strongly consider adopting a similar methodology for all academic papers that you write during your program.

General Guidelines

- ❑ I recommend that you purchase a guide to academic writing and use it as you construct your proposals, research your papers, and write your final products.
- ❑ Your proposal should be written using Turabian format.
- ❑ Writing is expected to be of graduate level quality, free of typographical and other errors, and should demonstrate professionalism. Please find someone to proofread your proposal before you submit it.
- ❑ The proposal needs to be detailed enough to show careful reflection on and a clear understanding of the direction of your research. On average a *guided research* proposal will be around 5-6 pages without the bibliography; a *thesis proposal* will probably average 10-12 pages without the bibliography.
- ❑ Remember, a clear, well thought out proposal will make your work much easier when you begin actually researching your topic. Portions of your completed proposal will often be incorporated into the final product itself.

Proposal Instructions

- ❑ Proposed Title and Cover Page: a good title goes a long way to clarifying your objectives and focusing your research; put some thought into it.
- ❑ Part 1. Introduction (*Guided Research*: 1-2 paragraphs; *Thesis*: ± 1 page)
 - Include an introduction that establishes common ground with the audience and some evidence of what “they” are saying about this topic in the scholarly world.
 - Your introduction should be interesting enough to motivate your readers to want to continue reading. It should also create some tension in the sense that you are leading to a hole in research and/or further study that needs to be done on a particular topic.
- ❑ Part 2. Delineation of the Study (*Guided Research*: ±1-2 pages; *Thesis*: ±2-3 pages)
 - *Statement of Problem*. State the purpose of your study, what “I Say,” and the problem you are planning to investigate. This section should be short (no more than 1-2 paragraphs), clear, and concise, as it is the heart of your study. State your one basic question and provide a succinct preliminary thesis.
 - *Limitations of the Study*. State the parameters of your study. Specify the areas that you will be considering in your study and which lie beyond the scope of your research. The topic should be focused enough to be manageable.

- Part 3. Literature Review (*Guided Research*: ±2 pages; *Thesis*: ±3 pages)
 - Find other studies, including journal articles, theses, and books that are closely related to your topic. State how your research will improve on the earlier studies. Use these to help establish a starting bibliography. You will have to add to this bibliography the more recent published articles and books.
 - Reviewing the literature is an important way to gain an in-depth knowledge of your specific area of study and to see how your research fits into the larger picture of ideas and questions that are currently being discussed in your field of inquiry. Remember that each summary should include how it is similar and dissimilar to your study; these are not full book reviews.

- Part 4: Other Resources (*Guided Research*: ±2 pages; *Thesis*: ±1 page for the outline, bibliography will vary)
 - Proposed Paper outline: this does not need to be overly detailed, but should provide a clear indication of how you will proceed and how the various parts of your argument will relate to one another.
 - Bibliography. This is an initial bibliography of materials specifically related to your study. Don't list Bible translations, encyclopedias, or commentaries unless they are directly relevant to your study.