

Thesis Proposal Guidelines

Thesis Proposals should be approximately 8 to 12 pages long, exclusive of title page and bibliography. Click [here](#) to download a PDF of these guidelines. If you are interested in seeing sample proposals, please contact the Graduate Advisor.

Title Page

Supply the proposed title of your thesis, your name, degree program, and the names of your director and two committee members (with signature and date lines for them to indicate acceptance of the proposal). A sample title page is available [here](#).

Statement of Purpose

Establish the central **problem** or **question** you seek to investigate or answer in your thesis and explain why that problem or question is significant to the field within which you work.

Include a **description** of your project, including its key terms and themes, and a **justification** for undertaking it. This justification should establish (a) the significance of your research agenda (why your problem or question is worthy of attention); and (b) the consequences of your research for your field.

Literature Review

Describe your project's relationship to **secondary sources** that explore the problem or question you have selected, including scholarly research you plan to corroborate and / or challenge. Discuss **specific works** and their approaches and arguments in some detail. Locate your thesis within this scholarly discourse. Why is your work a significant contribution?

NOTE: Your literature review, along with your preliminary bibliography, constitutes the part of your thesis proposal that fulfills USF's requirement for a "comprehensive examination." You should be prepared to answer questions about these works during your thesis proposal defense so as to establish your mastery of a sufficient knowledge base in your field.

Sources & Methods

Identify the **primary sources** with which you plan to work. Explain why your sources are suited to the problem or question posed by your thesis. If some of your sources are in archival or special collections, explain how you plan to access them within the timeframe of your thesis.

Describe the **method or methods** with which you approach your thesis's central problem or question, including the arguments of the **central texts** on which you plan to rely. Why are these texts best suited to your project? What **terms or strategies** does your project borrow from them?

Organization

Explain how you plan to structure your thesis, including your organization of its component sections. A typical thesis includes an introduction, a body divided into subheadings or chapters, and a conclusion or epilogue.

Preliminary Bibliography

Provide a robust working bibliography for your project. Divide it into **primary and secondary sources**, noting items you have read or not read to date. All sources mentioned in your proposal should appear in this bibliography. The bibliography should be composed with the guidance of your major professor with suggestions from your committee.