

Writing a Thesis Proposal

Your proposal should include:

1. a statement that clearly delineates your research question and the relevance of this study
2. a discussion of your methodological approach; a discussion of the sources you will use and why these are appropriate for your topic and method
3. a bibliography

Your adviser may also request you include a chapter outline. This is an appropriate step after you have done a fair amount of research. But before the chapter outline is possible, that is before you know what you're going to say and in what order, you need to have the above elements of your proposal in place and you need to have read through your sources, even if not thoroughly yet.

A Research Question: All good research starts with a question. You need to discuss with your adviser if you are required to have an analytical question or if a descriptive question is sufficient to meet the scholarly standards in your program. Your research will be focused on answering the question you have stated. Return to this question if you feel you are beginning to stray down interesting but tangential paths of research. Sometimes scholars get side tracked as a means of procrastination. Keep your research question clearly in sight at your favorite researching/writing place.

Methodological Approach and Sources: Before you can begin your research in earnest, you must determine your own method of analysis and you must decide which sources best support the research you want to conduct. If you're not sure which method to follow (or even if you are sure), Anne Sigismund Huff suggests that you find an exemplar or model piece of scholarship that you want to imitate and emulate in your own research and writing. Be able to argue why you have chosen the sources you have and the method you have in order to answer your research question (and why other methods and sources are not included).

Bibliography: Begin now getting your bibliography in the correct form according to Turabian's Manual of Style which is used at the GTU. Divide it into Primary and Secondary Sources. Never add a new entry to this bibliography without paying attention to the proper form; revising and editing at the last minute produces unnecessary anxiety and wastes time when you'll be needing to make other final revisions.