

## Honors Thesis/Project Prospectus

The Honors Thesis/Project Prospectus is a two- to three-page proposal outlining your thesis/project. The purpose of the prospectus—which must be approved by your Thesis Advisor and submitted to the Honors Program, along with the first-semester Senior Honors Thesis contract, by the end of the first month of the semester—is to ensure that you and your Thesis Advisor agree upon your plan.

The final draft of your prospectus should address:

- Your research question or topic
- Why this question or topic is important
- How you will approach answering this question or analyzing this topic
- The genre of your thesis/project, page length, number of required sources, citation style, and other requirements determined by you and your Thesis Advisor. If your thesis or project also counts as a capstone for your major, you need to ask your Capstone Advisor about these elements.

Begin your prospectus by stating your research question or topic as concisely as possible. Keep in mind that the prospectus does not have to answer the question nor go into extensive detail about the topic. If you need help getting started on this statement, complete this prompt:

"I am working on the topic of \_\_\_\_\_  
because I want to find out \_\_\_\_\_  
to help my reader understand better \_\_\_\_\_."

(Source: Wayne C. Booth et al., *The Craft of Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, UP of Chicago, 2016, p. 46).

Next, to justify the importance of your research question or topic, describe the current academic conversation about it, noting how and why scholars agree or disagree about it. If your question or topic has not attracted significant attention, explain why it requires further consideration. For example, does this question or topic affect many people? What are the consequences of ignoring it?

Then explain your process for answering this question or analyzing this topic:

- In the arts and humanities (art history, composition and rhetoric, history, language, literature, philosophy, religion, and visual and performing arts), identify your primary sources, such as sculptures, documents, or novels. Also note your important secondary sources, such as biographies, academic journal articles, and monographs published by university presses. If you already have a methodology, or analytical concept, you will use in your analysis, define it.
- In the social sciences (anthropology, business, communication studies, criminal justice, economics, education, political science, psychology, and sociology), indicate your method or way of gathering data, such as case studies, interviews, large databases,

surveys, or mixed methods. Will your study be quantitative, qualitative, or both? Also note your important secondary sources, such as biographies, academic journal articles, and books published by university presses. If you already have a methodology, or analytical concept, you will use in your analysis, define it.

- In STEM, (biology, chemistry, geology, physics, technology, engineering, and mathematics), discuss how you will use the scientific method of questioning, observing, experimenting, and theorizing.

Last, after consulting your Thesis Advisor (and Capstone Advisor, if necessary), describe the kind of study you will produce, such as an artist's statement, analysis of methods and results, or speculative article. Note how many pages you are expected to write; the number of primary and secondary sources you need; the citation style you should use; and any other requirements that you and your Thesis Advisor (and Capstone Advisor, if relevant) agree upon.

(For more information, see Charles Lipson, *How to Write a BA Thesis: A Practical Guide from Your First Ideas to Your Finished Paper*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., UP of Chicago, 2018; and Mary Lynch Kennedy and William J. Kennedy, *Writing in the Disciplines: A Reader and Rhetoric for Academic Writers*, Pearson, 2012).

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