

## MAJOR ESSAY PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS AND RUBRIC

Your proposal should clearly identify your essay's proposed (1) title, (2) thesis, (3) argument, and (4) main bibliography.<sup>1</sup> The argument abstract should be [300 words](#). Please see the description of the "major essay" assignment below for more information about the essay's (and its proposal's) feasible topics.

You must submit your proposal in Canvas by the designated time. You will then present your proposal during a live seminar meeting for review and discussion by the class.

I recognize this proposal is due somewhat early in the term. For clarity's sake, this assignment's primary function is not to have you pin yourself into a corner in a new research area but simply to jumpstart your work toward the term's major essay. Having this proposal's central ideas in your head and the feedback you receive from the discussion of your proposal, you may write your essay along the lines of the proposal. As you do so, you may incorporate as you think best: (1) whatever suggestions you have received, (2) whatever modifications come to seem necessary to the essay's trajectory, or (3) whatever reorientations look to be advisable to the essay's focus in order for you to prosecute your essay's argument as consistently, persuasively, fruitfully as possible. If you feel you would like additional feedback at some point beyond what you have received on the proposal, please feel free to ask, but you do not need to solicit approval from me for any changes that come to seem advisable to your original essay plan in order to make your argument as strong as possible.

For additional advice about writing abstracts, see the abstract guide provided by [Pennsylvania State University Press](#). But note that your abstract should conform to the length requirement noted above, not the briefer length noted by PSUP.

Essay proposals will be graded according to the following rubric:

### **TITLE (10%)**

- Is the title concise? If it is longer, does it use a more concise main title with a longer subtitle?
- Does the title clearly describe the essay's contents?
- Does the title pique interest in the essay's topic?

### **THESIS (30%)**

- Even if the thesis is tentative (i.e., a hypothesis), does it make a definite assertion about a particular topic appropriate for the essay assignment?
- Does the thesis's assertion balance with the argument outlined in the abstract?

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- For PhD students, does the thesis set forth a publishable line of argument within the current state of scholarship on the essay's topic?

### **ABSTRACT (30%)**

Does the abstract concisely:

- Set the stage for the essay or identify why the essay is significant?
- Outline an argument that will demonstrate the proposed thesis?
- Identify how the argument's implied scope is workable within the space available for the essay?

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND STYLE (30%)**

- Does the proposal cite enough primary and scholarly secondary sources to meet the minimum requirements for the essay to be developed from this proposal? For PhD students, is there appropriate inclusion of a non-English secondary source(s)?
- Does the proposal cite sources of sufficiently various types (e.g., journal articles, monographs, reference works appropriate to the topic)?
- Does the proposal avoid including sources that are popular or questionable?
- Does the proposal properly implement the appropriate style manual?

### **REDUCTIONS**

- Lateness: -0–100% according to [this policy](#)
- Length: -0–100% according to [this policy](#) and the length specified above