Research Proposal Prompt

1,500 words minimum, 15% of course grade  
First draft due: Friday, 2/24 by 5pm on Moodle  
Final draft due: Friday, 3/10 by 5pm on Moodle

**Course Learning Objectives Assessed**

2. Create and sustain across one or more pieces of writing a focused research question that responds to an exigent issue, problem, or debate.

4. Locate, accurately cite (through summary, paraphrasing, and quoting), and critically evaluate primary and secondary sources.

5. Demonstrate knowledge of writing as a process, including consideration of peer and/or instructor feedback, in one or more pieces of writing from initial draft to final revision.

**Purpose**

So far, you’ve used the Source Analysis to familiarize yourself with a particular research topic and to understand some of the ways that arguments within that topic are rhetorically structured. You’ve also identified a unique research topic that you can pursue for the semester. The goal of this assignment is to define a focused research question and help you get closer to answering that question, and to prepare you for more exhaustive argumentation in your Position Essay. You will review your sources to show what research has been done on your topic and explain where your own research fits in. Give yourself enough time to think and write so that you are well set-up for the remainder of the semester.

**Task**

Your task is to produce a formal proposal for the upcoming Position Essay. This proposal must confirm a focused, exigent research question. It must also provide, introduce, and briefly summarize **at least 4 sources** that will help you answer that question. **At least 2 of these sources should be scholarly peer-reviewed articles.** Be sure to explain how your sources relate to your research question and how they relate to each other. In other words, synthesize how the sources are connected; this will give your audience the contextual information they need to understand why each of them is significant, both to the existing conversation and to your own research project. Finally, the proposal must explain where your Position Essay will fit within the academic conversation that these sources describe. What gap in the existing conversation do you intend to address?

**Process**

1. In class, you have considered (or will consider) several research questions on your topic, and narrowed your options down to one focused, exigent research question to pursue in your Position Essay. Your first step for the proposal is to confirm your research question and provide a brief introduction to your topic or issue.
2. Using a minimum of 4 sources, at least 2 of which must be scholarly peer-reviewed articles, describe the existing research and argumentation that surrounds your research question.
   1. A full description of each source should summarize its major points, explain its rhetorical situation, and evaluate its credibility for use in a researched argument.
      1. Some sources will be more or less important, both to the ongoing conversation and to your own researched argument. Use your discretion when describing sources, giving the most attention to the most critical sources.
   2. As you introduce and describe your sources, keep in mind that your goal is to present them as part of a larger conversation—How do they agree, disagree, or add other points of consideration?
      1. Describing this conversation will require planning; in what order should your sources be introduced, and how should they be grouped? What kind of introductory matter will best prepare the reader for the relationships you want to highlight?
3. Lastly, explain how **your** proposed project would fit into this conversation.
   1. This explanation will be tentative, as you have not written the Position Essay’s argument yet—the intention of this proposal is to help you get your thoughts in order and to give me a sense of your research process.
   2. There are many ways a project can participate in an existing conversation. Perhaps your goal is to examine new primary sources; perhaps you’ve noticed a subtopic that hasn’t been given enough attention in academic discourse; or perhaps you like *most* of an existing argument but see the need to qualify it. This is one of the more challenging parts of the process, but it can also be the most exciting! Additionally, you can always check in with me for brainstorming.

**Audience**

Your audience for this assignment includes your instructor and your peers. This audience is looking to know that you’re on the right track with your research, and to give you feedback on your thinking thus far.

Your audience also includes yourself and your future self. In other words, by thinking through these research ideas now, you are helping your future self engage more clearly and thoroughly in the research process.

**Formatting Guidelines**

Double spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins on all sides. Save the file as your last name and the assignment title (i.e. FreudenburgProposal.docx) and **submit as a Word file.**

**Citation Guidelines**

Information that is not your own (including language from your chosen text) must be cited within the text of your paper and the Works Cited page according to MLA or APA style (or another citation style approved by me).

**Evaluation Criteria**

This essay will be assessed based on how well it achieves its intended goals: confirming a research question, describing the existing research landscape surrounding that question, and proposing a project that will fit into that conversation. See the essay rubric for details on the evaluation categories.

Proposal Rubric

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Incomplete** | **Needs Development** | **Satisfactory** | **Strong** | **Polished** |
| Research Question and Academic Conversation | (0 points) | Essay’s research question is not focused &/or exigent. Essay’s proposed research project does not address the question &/or fit into the existing conversation.  (22 points) | Essay contains a sufficient research question. Essay proposes a research project that addresses the question & fits into the existing conversation.  (26 points) | Essay contains a focused, exigent research question. Essay proposes a research project that addresses the question & fits clearly into the existing conversation.  (30 points) | Essay contains a sophisticated, focused, exigent research question. Essay proposes a research project that addresses the question to great depth & fits clearly into the existing conversation.  (35 points) |
| Description of Existing Research | (0 points) | Essay gives little to no clear description of the sources &/or the larger conversation in which they participate. Connections between sources are unclear.  (22 points) | Essay gives a limited description of the sources & the larger conversation in which they participate. Connections between sources are somewhat explained.  (26 points) | Essay gives a clear description of the sources & the larger conversation in which they participate. Connections between sources are explained.  (30 points) | Essay gives a sophisticated description of the sources & the larger conversation in which they participate. Connections between sources are well-explained.  (35 points) |
| Organization & Paragraph Unity | (0 points) | Essay organization does not follow a logical essay structure; paragraphs do not have unity and transitions.  (6 points) | Essay organization mostly follows a logical essay structure; paragraphs mostly have unity and transitions.  (7 points) | Essay organization follows a logical essay structure; paragraphs have unity and transitions.  (8 points) | Essay organization is thoughtful and clear; paragraphs have strong unity and transitions.  (10 points) |
| Editing & Proofreading | (0 points) | Essay contains distracting errors that prevent readability, indicating that it is not edited or proofread.  (6 points) | Essay is not well-edited and proofread, containing a number of grammatical and mechanical errors.  (7 points) | Essay is mostly well-edited and proofread, containing relatively few grammatical and mechanical errors.  (8 points) | Essay is well-edited and proofread, containing few grammatical and mechanical errors.  (10 points) |
| Documentation | (0 points) | Sources are not well-cited and well-documented throughout. Fewer than 2 sources are scholarly + peer reviewed.  (6 points) | Sources are somewhat well-cited and well-documented throughout. At least 2 sources are scholarly + peer reviewed.  (7 points) | Sources are mostly well-cited and well-documented throughout. At least 2 sources are scholarly + peer reviewed.  (8 points) | Sources are carefully cited and documented throughout. At least 2 sources are scholarly + peer reviewed.  (10 points) |

# Draft Submission and Feedback for the Research Proposal

## Draft Submission

1. Complete a thorough draft of your Research Proposal: **750 words minimum,** drawing forward **at least two sources.**
2. Upload your draft as a Word Document to Moodle 🡪 “Draft & Draft Feedback Submissions” 🡪 your workshop group’s forum.
3. Using “Add discussion topic” 🡪 “Advanced,” attach your Word Document to an original forum post.

## Draft Feedback

1. Download a group member’s Word Document.
2. Open the document in Word and turn on “Track Changes.”
3. Create **marginal notes** that respond to specific sentences, areas, or ideas in your peers’ papers using “New comment.”
   1. Avoid repeated spelling/grammar changes unless readability is impacted.
   2. Aim for 2-4 marginal notes per page.
4. Type an **end comment** (1 paragraph) at the end of the paper that highlights:
   1. At least one major strength of the draft and indicates what the author should continue doing, and
   2. At least one area of revision that the author should be aware of and how they might approach that revision.
5. **Save your feedback** by saving the file with a new, appropriate name (i.e. AnnahFeedback).
6. Upload your feedback as a reply to your peer’s original forum post.
   1. “Reply” 🡪 “Advanced” 🡪 attach appropriate file and post as reply.
7. Repeat with remaining drafts.

Things to look for while constructing feedback:

1. Research Question and Academic Conversation
   1. How narrow, specific, and exigent is the paper’s research question? Based on this question, does this research project have a realistic path forward?
   2. Does the paper contain a clear proposal for addressing its research question? Does this proposal account for the existing conversation on the question? Why or why not?
2. Description of Existing Research
   1. Does the paper contain at least 4 credible sources which are relevant to its research question? How well does the paper summarize these sources and explain their rhetorical situations to a new audience?
   2. How well does the paper relate its sources to each other? Do sources seem to be in conversation with each other? Why or why not?
3. Organization
   1. Point out a place in the paper with strong paragraph unity (where a paragraph contains one singular focus). What makes it strong?
   2. Point out a place in the paper where paragraph unity is weak. How can it be improved?
4. Documentation
   1. Indicate any instance where a citation is unclear or missing. What is confusing about the way something is referenced?
   2. Make sure the works cited page includes all sources referenced in the text. Sources should be clearly identifiable.