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## ACW Template for Academic Book Proposals

The key to writing a successful academic book proposal is understanding what your acquisitions editor needs. The following template outlines what editors need to know about your book in order to gauge whether or not it is a good fit for their press.

Read the instructions to authors about book proposals on the websites of university presses to which you are submitting. The order of sections in this template reflects the most typical order of information in academic book proposals. However, different presses may request a somewhat different order for the sections of book proposals. Follow their requests precisely.

### Book Proposal Sections

**Book Description.** All proposals begin with a narrative description that provides an overview of your argument. Open your proposal with a few sentences conveying, in a big-picture way, what your project is about. The second and third paragraphs of this overview section go into more detail. They may highlight, for instance, your methodological approach or special resources you use to support your argument. The underlying goal of this section is to help editors see the need for your book and begin to picture how it fits into larger debates on the topic. Learn more about [how to make the case for your book](#) and explain [why your book matters](#).

**Table of Contents.** Typically, an annotated table of contents follows the overview of the book's argument. Some presses request a substantial paragraph for each chapter with fairly detailed descriptions of each chapter's argument. Often, however, a few sentences overviewing the argument of each chapter are sufficient. The best table of contents demonstrates the soundness of the logic in how you have structured the book. The chapter titles and descriptions should allow the reader to perceive the through-line or arc of your book's argument. Learn more about [how to structure your book](#).

**Competing Works.** This section of the proposal helps editors see how your project fits into the larger discourse of scholarly works on your topic. Aim to briefly describe several significant books published in recent years (including the author, title, publishing house, and date of publication). This is your opportunity to build on the groundwork laid in your opening description that conveys why your book matters. How does your book address gaps in the literature, for instance, or offer a fresh perspective? Be sure to explain not only how your book relates to these other works, but also differs from them.

**Market Considerations.** Being realistic and precise about your audience will help editors understand how they can best market your book. Is it written primarily for scholars? What disciplines does it engage? What professional societies and conferences linked to those disciplines could provide fruitful marketing avenues? If it could be adopted in courses for undergraduates or graduate students, list some of the potential courses. If your book aims for a broader audience, include information that demonstrates your ability to reach those audiences. Do you have a website or blog that serves as a platform for readers interested in your work? Learn more about [defining your audience](#).

**Status and Timetable to Completion.** This section conveys where you are in the process of completing this project. Be honest and realistic about your expected timeframe for completing a full draft that could be sent out to peer reviewers and what chapters you now have ready to share with editors or reviewers. Include practical information about the projected length of the manuscript (in terms of a rough word-count, rather than pages). Mention illustrations, graphs, or figures you plan to include.

**Author's Bio.** Many presses request a CV as part of your proposal submission. But it is also a good idea to include a paragraph highlighting aspects of your professional experience that convey your qualifications to write this book. Here you might include research grants that allowed you to undertake travel or archival research that inform the book, teaching experience related to this topic, or your participation in conferences and other public forums specifically related to presenting parts of your argument in this book.

### **Tips**

Here are a few tips for drafting your book proposal:

- Think of yourself not only as the author but as an advocate for your project.
- Be succinct. Write in a straightforward manner, but let your enthusiasm for your project shine through.
- Aim for between 8 to 15 double-spaced pages for your proposal, unless otherwise specified.
- Include a brief cover letter (no more than two pages) along with your proposal, and a sample chapter, if the press requests one.