

MA Research Commitment

Assignment 1, MA Thesis Proposal

Joshua Gary Mausolf and Nora Nickels

Due 11:59 PM CDT on October 19th

Requirements:

The MA Research Proposal should be a five-page, double-spaced, and succinct proposal outlining the thesis research question, its importance and relevance to existing social science literature, its data and methods, and its expected results or contribution. Attached to this assignment, please find further guidelines and suggestions to help you write a successful proposal. Below are the assignment requirements.

Required Sections:

1. Introduction

Your Thesis Proposal Must Establish:

- A. What is your research question (Question 1)?
- B. What is your hypothesis and provisional argument (Question 2)?
- C. Why should we care about this topic (Question 3)?

2. Literature Review (Question 4)

The literature review builds from the research question, argument, and expected contribution. You should outline what the most influential scholars on this topic have established and how your project is situated to build upon their findings. Consider limiting your discussion in this assignment to the three or four most influential scholars. You will have the opportunity to write an expanded literature review in the next assignment. For this assignment, you should also pay attention to the methods and data these influential scholars used including the strengths and weaknesses of their research and how your methodology will offer something new. What original contribution will your work make that others have not?

*Note that your thesis project should primarily engage **social science literature** (even if it uses a method more common to computer science). Generally, your work will not be developing new methodologies but rather applying computational methods to a social science question. The literature and existing theory therefore should predominantly be found in leading social science journals (not computer science). In sociology this might be The American Sociological Review* or in economics The American Economic Review or journals of similar caliber in those or other social sciences and subfields.*

3. Data and Methods (Question 5)

How will you execute the project? What is your plan of attack? In this section, you should establish your data source. If the data source exists, how will you access it? If you are collecting the data, describe the process (combining databases, using an API, web scraping). If you are conducting an experiment or survey, what is your plan? Do you already have IRB approval (if not, you might need to rethink your project). Once you have the data, what types of analysis will run to answer your research question? Here, it is important to think about mechanisms you can demonstrate with the data and analysis, and whether this will support the research question and hypotheses you proposed above.

4. References (Works Cited)

Include an additional section of works cited. You should follow an accepted and consistent in-text citations and bibliography style such as ASA, APA, or Chicago.

Submission

The assignment should be submitted in PDF format, attached to an email. The email should be sent to both Joshua Mausolf (jmausolf@uchicago.edu) and Nora Nickels (nnickels@uchicago.edu). This assignment is due by 11:59 PM, Central Time on October 19th. Late submissions will not be accepted.