

# Research proposal guidelines

Nicholas Rivers

Advanced Quantitative Research Methods for Public Policy, API6319A  
Fall 2019

Before proceeding, read through the following two documents:

1. The Term Paper Guidelines, prepared for this course. Available on the course website.
2. The Guidelines for Writing Papers, including MRPs, at GSPIA, prepared by Zuercher, Vucetic, and Notten. Available [at this link](#). Note that this document relates to all kinds of papers, whereas the paper you produce for this course *must* be a quantitative paper.

Your research proposal should be informed by these two documents. In general, I would expect the following format:

- Introduction: here, you will set the general context for your research. You will explain why it is an important area of research, and also why it is interesting. You will narrow down your general context to arrive at a specific research question or null hypothesis. It will be useful for you to have done some background reading, and you should cite and briefly discuss related research in preparing this section (I don't expect an extensive bibliography in your research proposal, but there should be some evidence that you have done some reading and that you know how your research will fit into the existing literature).
- Research design: here, you will explain your strategy for answering the research question (or testing the hypothesis) you set out above. You will especially focus on the comparisons you will be making in order to answer the question, and how these comparisons yield insight into your question. You will explain whether there are confounding variables that will hinder your ability to draw conclusions from the comparisons you are making, and how you will address these.
- Data: here, you will tell me what data you will use to provide insight into your research question. You will describe where the data are obtained, what they represent, and how they were collected. Your aim here is to convince me that you have an appropriate data set for answering the research question at hand.
- Methods: here, you will let me know approximately what you plan on doing. For example, you might say that you're going to assess the relationship between two variables while controlling for a third variable, and you might explain why this is appropriate for answering the question you posed. (We will introduce research methods more fully later in the semester.) You'll also highlight any problems with your approach, and try to think of ways that you might get around the problems.

Your research proposal should be about 2-3 single spaced pages, roughly. It should be properly formatted, and contain a (relatively short) bibliography. Good luck.