

USNA Department of History
Honors Program
Guidance Regarding the Thesis Proposal
(Revised February 2016)

A suitable thesis proposal will consist of a 6-8 page description of your topic that outlines the basic questions and issues to be explored in the thesis. It must also discuss the prospective primary and secondary sources to be used, and, crucially, the methodological or interpretive approach and the rationale for it. Lastly, the proposal *must address* the larger historiographical significance of the project.

Your proposal will be broken up into the following 5 sections:

1. ABSTRACT: An abstract that gives an *overview* of your particular project:

- i. This section clearly and concisely summarizes the historical problem(s) to be explored. Include an explicit statement of your historical question/problem.
- ii. Concisely describe and explain your project, i.e., the basic questions and issues you will investigate in your thesis.

2. HISTORIOGRAPHY: A historiographical section outlining the background to the topic. This part of the proposal addresses *the larger historiographical significance* of the project. Consider the following questions:

- i. Why is this problem or question important?
- ii. Who else has worked on this or similar issues, and how did they go about it?
- iii. What were the conclusions of previous research?

3. METHODS: A section detailing and explaining the particular *methodological focus of your research*. Consider the following questions:

- i. How are you limiting your project intellectually? You must be sure to strike a balance and not try to do too much or too little. How and why have you limited your project in the way that you have?
- ii. What methodological and/or interpretive approach are you using in your project? Why?
- iii. Which primary sources are available to support your research and which do you plan/hope to consult? Why are you choosing to include or emphasize particular sources? What do you assume these sources can relate? 1. If possible, give examples of specific documents or collections that you plan to use. 2. If you plan to travel for research purposes, you need to *justify the necessity of your travel*; for example, why travel rather than use online resources or ILL? Remember, many sources are available online at websites such as archive.org, hathitrust.org, and sites specific to archival repositories such as the British Library (<http://www.bl.uk/learning/online-resources>) and the US National Archives (<https://www.archives.gov/research/catalog/>) and the British National Archives (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>).

NOTE: the History Department *may be able to offer* up to \$1000 to defray the costs of necessary research travel. *Any travel costs above \$1000 must be paid by you.* Funding is rather uncertain as of February 2016, but Midshipmen who need to travel (and cannot get their sources online), will be given priority.

4. SCHEDULE: *A detailed schedule for researching and completing the thesis:*

- i. What can you reasonably accomplish in the time allotted with the materials available? Tell the committee specifically how you can complete the project on time.
- ii. Include dates for the following timeframe: April 6 through December 2016.

5. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: *A working annotated bibliography with no less than 50 and no more than 100 words per annotation that establish the relevance of that item for your research. Divide the bibliography into 2 sections, clearly indicating, first, primary sources and then secondary sources.*

Format:

- Adhere to the requirements of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Use footnotes.
- Body text is to be double-spaced, 12-point font (Arial, Times New Roman, or Calibri).
- Footnotes are to be single-spaced, 10-point, in the same font as the body text.
- Margins should be set at 1" top and bottom; 1.25" left and right.
- 2 inch spacing for entire document
- Use page numbers (lower right corner).
- The thesis proposal must be clearly subdivided at the start of its 5 sections by using the following section headers, each typed on its own line and in ALL CAPS: ABSTRACT, HISTORIOGRAPHY, METHODS, SCHEDULE, ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.
- The annotated bibliography should begin at the top of a new page of text.
- Attach a cover sheet following the model on the next page. Font should be the same as the body text. Do not number the cover sheet or include it in within the 6-8 page range.

Submission:

Your thesis proposal must be emailed to Professor Bellenoit (bellenoit@usna.edu) as a single Word document by no later than 2359 on Friday, 11 March 2016. Also send your proposal to your Honors adviser via the CC function; Professor Bellenoit will forward your proposal to the other members of the 2017 Honors Committee.

Type the following information in the subject heading of your email: 2017 Honors
Thesis Proposal – LASTNAME

Name your Word file in the following manner:
LASTNAME (2017)

Final Suggestion:

Go over and review the proposal with your advisor as soon as possible! Ensure that he has read it and that he or she has given you feedback. Remember, the more you are ahead the more time you have for actually analyzing and thinking about your topic...

UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

[title here]

by

[your full name here]

Adviser:

[name of adviser here]

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

11 MARCH 2016