

History 3041/5041
Fall 2007
Office: Lucas Hall 416

Prof. Gerda W. Ray
Rayg@umsl.edu
21 Aug. 2007

Research Paper Assignments Part I – The Research Proposal

There are two assignments related to the research paper:

1. Research Proposal. Due Tues., Sept. 18. Worth 15% of course grade.

2. Research Paper. Due Tues., Oct. 23. Worth 35% of course grade.

Elements of a Research Proposal

1. Working title. The title needs to indicate both the general topic area of the paper and the specific question which you are addressing in the paper.

2. Working Thesis. The thesis statement should be a preliminary response to the question asked in your research. Note: you will not be able to settle on the thesis until you find appropriate primary sources. Otherwise you could find yourself stuck, asking a question for which you do not have relevant sources.

As your research and writing progress, you should revise your preliminary thesis question into an actual statement about how (whatever you are researching) changed over time.

3. Preliminary List of Primary Sources. A primary source is one contemporaneous with the event it concerns. All different kinds of old writings and artifacts can be used as primary sources: newspapers, diaries, letters, official or unofficial reports, paintings, movies, etc. Your preliminary list of primary sources needs to be complete enough so that you know that you will have sufficient primary sources to answer your thesis question.
 - a. The types of primary sources which you will need depend on the kind of question you are trying to answer.
 - i. If, for example, you want to compare US (or any state) policy

policy statements with its actual programs, you will probably be using a great many government documents. Government documents include publications such as legislative bills (whether or not they were enacted), committee hearings, and reports.

- ii. If you are interested in how the St. Louis (or national) media covered a certain series of events, you will be reading many newspapers. The ones which are available locally are in the Thomas Jefferson Library (TJL), the St. Louis Public Library, the Missouri Historical Society Library, and elsewhere.
 - iii. To understand how a particular organization operated in St. Louis, you would check first to see if its papers are in one of the local repositories. An organization's (or individual's) "papers" include items such as records of work, publications, unpublished writings, correspondence, meeting minutes.
- b. The number of primary sources depends on your questions and on the size of the primary source.
- i. If, for example, your question concerns a local organization and there are five boxes full of its papers in a local archive, you might be able to do the research using that archival collection and two or three newspapers. (You would not need to read an entire ten or fifteen years of a newspaper. The archives would indicate the crucial time periods to check for news. (3 sources: the archival collection and two newspapers))
 - ii. If you are analyzing the policies of a particular church/temple/mosque (or an entire denomination) and there are not local archives, you may need to rely mostly on its publications. In that case, you might have to use forty or fifty different pamphlets and position statements. (40-50 sources)

4. Preliminary list of Secondary Readings.

- a. For the research paper, you need to use either three scholarly history books or fifteen scholarly history articles. For this assignment, you are encouraged to list more than those minimums so that the instructor can help you select the ones likely to be most useful.
 - i. For books, use the Merlin catalog. If any are needed from off campus, order them right away.
 - ii. For articles, use the on-line Bibliography “America: History & Life” and/or “Historical Abstracts.”
 - b. Make sure that your selections are scholarly history writings.
5. Statement of why you think this topic will be interesting enough to you to spend an enormous amount of time on it between now and the eleventh week of classes. The reasons need to be serious and clearly stated.
- a. In some cases, you will chose a topic because it has recognized importance. In that case, you need to explain that importance in your own words and explain why your paper will be different.
 - b. Other times, the reason might be personal. You attended a certain high school, for example, so you want to know what its role was in the Civil Rights movement.
 - c. At least 1-2 paragraphs; at least 8 sentences total. “Serious” means this is not the place to write that you need to do this paper so that you can graduate. You need to think about the questions you are posing.
6. Date when you met with a Research Librarian, or are scheduled to meet with a Research Librarian, or will telephone for an appointment, or why you think that this is not useful for you. (Date (and of what) or 1-2 sentences.)

Format: Electronic submission to Assignments in MyGateway. 750 - 1000 words (3 – 4 pages). Double-spaced, 12 or 14 point font, 1” (25 mm) margins.

Title page: Include: “Research Proposal,” the working title of your project, your name, the course number, Day or Evening, and the date.

Bibliography of primary and secondary sources: Students must use either the Chicago Style, the APA style, or the MLA Style consistently throughout the entire proposal. Students who are majors in History must use the Chicago style. Ignorance of the requirements is no excuse. Many times students simply follow a style found in a textbook or other reading. This is a **big mistake**. Publishers are free to use whatever format they wish. This essay requires Chicago, APA, or MLA.

There are numerous published style guides and several University-sponsored web sites. It is very unlikely that you can correctly format your proposal without consulting a style guide.

Format Questions re References: Please consult any one of the authoritative websites or style guides:

<http://www.umsl.edu/services/cad/writing.html>

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChicago.html>

<http://www.libs.uga.edu/ref/chicago.html>

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

If you need to talk with someone about footnote style, bibliography style, or any point of grammar, please take these instructions to the UMSL Writing Lab (409 SSB). They are there to help you make your writing more clear and professional, whatever your discipline.

Grading: This research paper proposal is worth 15% of your final grade. That means that if you do not do it, the highest grade you can earn in the course is 85% (assuming that you receive an “A” on every other assignment.)

A perfect grade on this proposal would be 100 points:

25 points for list of primary sources;

25 points for list of secondary sources;

25 points for your thesis statement and statement of why the topic is of interest;

25 points for correct formatting, spelling, grammar, and other technical issues.

Late proposals will lose 5 points for each day late. Turning in the proposal right after class is considered one day late.