

HIST 325/328 Prof. Williams
Assignment: Research paper abstract
Due on iLearn by class meeting time Tuesday 10/16

An abstract is a brief summary of a research project. Often, the abstract is written after the project is completed. However, research professionals in many fields may need to submit abstracts of future or partially completed work.

Abstracts generally include the following sections:

Title of the project

- 1) Statement of the problem
- 2) Methods and resources to be used
- 3) Results (actual or expected)
- 4) Implications of the research

Obviously, these sections will be handled differently for a new project than they would be for a project that was finished. Your finished research paper will begin with a revised abstract that will address the same topics based on your completed research.

The abstract you will submit Tuesday 10/16 must cover the four topics listed above in 200 words or less. For each topic, I have given an approximate word count guideline below. Use the word count feature of your word-processing software to count the number of words in your abstract. Include the number of words in parentheses after the title of your project. Here are some further suggestions on how to address each topic:

- 1) Statement of the problem: what question will your paper try to answer? Be as specific as you can. However, it is better to state a broad question carefully than to a narrow question that doesn't make sense or that would be impossible to answer. [70 words]
- 2) Methods and resources to be used: state the most important primary sources you plan to examine, and describe the historical approach your paper will take (focus on social behavior; intellectual history; worldviews or beliefs; politics...?). [50 words]
- 3) Results (actual or expected): very briefly, describe the range of possible answers you expect to the question stated in (1). [30 words]
- 4) Implications of the research: place your project in the context of the larger topic it forms a part of. Show why your specific question is important and worth answering. [50 words]

Each of these points must be addressed in a few sentences at most. Avoid including anything that is not completely necessary. Eliminate extra words. Write in short, declarative sentences. Do not waste words on vague generalities ("Since the dawn of time, humankind has been obsessed with the search for truth") or wordy phrases ("However, in fact it is the case that in many circumstances those who have considered the situation will have concluded that..."). Do not list the above questions in your abstract; rather, cover them all in a single paragraph of smooth, continuous prose.

