

HIST 325/328 Prof. Williams Fall 2007
Research Proposal Assignment

For the research proposal assignment, you will submit a paper of 750 (minimum) to 1250 (maximum) words, covering the following topics under three separate headings.

Throughout the proposal, write as if you are describing your planned research (which in fact must be largely complete in order for you to write your proposal) to a committee which will be evaluating whether to give you a grant to fund this research. You need to show that you have a clear idea of what you are going to do; that you have a plan to do the research that is realistic and convincing; and that you are aware of what others have done in the area before you.

The paper will be accompanied by a bibliography, using Chicago style, listing IN TWO SEPARATE SECTIONS the primary and secondary sources you will use for your paper. The number and type of primary sources you will use will depend on the type of paper you are writing. You must list at least five (5) secondary sources, of which no more than two may be for general background on your topic.

I. Description of planned research: topic and thesis question

One paragraph, stating the topic you will research and your thesis question, and describing the topic and your approach to it. Your topic and thesis question should each be stated in one clearly written sentence. The sentence containing your thesis question must be underlined. Describe your planned research in a way that implicitly shows why the topic is interesting and significant.

II. Feasibility of the research: description of primary sources to be used

Two to three paragraphs describing the primary evidence from ancient sources (literary works or other written texts, artifacts, or monuments) that will allow you to answer the question stated in Section I. Do not simply list your primary sources. Do not summarize them. Do not insert bibliographic details into the text. Instead, state what the source is, describe what type of source it is, and give a brief description of its content and its relevance to your question. Some examples (the third one is partly fictional):

“The *Life of Anthony*, the first hagiography, was written by Athanasius perhaps in the 360s, and provides evidence for...”

“The extant books of the historian Ammianus Marcellinus cover the reigns of the emperors from Constantius II to Valentinian, providing rich evidence not only for political and military events, but for the author’s own views on religion, culture, and administration...”

“The church of San Vitale in Ravenna is one of the best surviving examples of Justinianic church architecture and church decoration. Its plan, construction, and decoration have

been exhaustively described by Krautheimer in his monumental *San Vitale: A Church of the Sixth Century...*”

The goal of this section of the proposal is to show that you will be able to give a convincing answer to your question, because adequate primary sources exist and you have properly identified them. You may also wish to address the limitations of the evidence: that is, areas in which relevant questions cannot be answered because the evidence does not exist or presents serious problems of interpretation, or because you have chosen not to consider some of the extant evidence for some reason.

III. Previous approaches to the topic: description of secondary sources on the topic

Two to three paragraphs describing the main approaches to your general topic, or, if applicable, to your specific question, found in the secondary sources you will use. You may also want to include a paragraph describing the resources you will rely upon to fill in the background and context of your topic. Again, do not list or summarize the secondary works you are using, and do not give bibliographic details in the text. Instead, divide your material into different points of view, approaches, or interpretations, and discuss the authors of the specific secondary sources under these headings. Some examples (again, some of these are fictional):

“Scholarly interpretations of Persian military tactics take two main approaches, one which emphasizes nomadic influence on Persian cavalry tactics, and another which argues for the centrality of aristocratic warriors and their personal military followings... Scholars whose works falls into the first camp include Burns, in his seminal *Persia and the Nomadic World*; Paulheimer, in a series of articles from the 1970s; and Sivanjian, in a recent study that has revived this theory...”

“T the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library transformed scholarship on Gnosticism, producing two main currents of interpretation. One emphasizes the connections between “gnostic” forms of Christianity and social formations in the early church, while the other denies any coherence to the category of “gnosticism”...”

“The historian Ammianus Marcellinus was long regarded as a neutral, objective historian whose work provided a clear view of the events and dynamics of the period he covers. The massive study of John Matthews, *The Roman World of Ammianus Marcellinus*, represents the culmination of this tradition, while the more recent work of Timothy Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality*, calls the entire approach into question and intends to direct scholarship on Ammianus more towards uncovering the historian’s hidden agendas and the workings of his literary method...”

IV. Bibliography

Separate primary and secondary sources into two sections under those headings. Use Chicago style (see the handout on Chicago style for directions).