

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PROPOSAL FOR THE M.A. PAPER GUIDELINES

(See CIR Convocation Deadlines and Proposal Approval Form)

SUGGESTED FORMAT: The following format is offered as a guide to writing the M.A. paper proposal. You can and should modify it to reflect the content and structure of your proposed paper. The proposal should be 3-5 pages or more if your bibliography is extensive.

I. DESCRIPTION OF TOPIC

- A. Start with one sentence of broad introduction to the topic.
- B. Describe the matter that you intend to address. This may be any of the following:
 - An overlooked topic in the literature that has not been systematically addressed,
 - Illuminating or evaluating an unquestioned assumption in the literature or a controversy,
 - Proposing an alternative explanation to the conventional view of why something occurs, or
 - An extension or application of an existing theory, perspective, or evidence in one discipline or literature to address an apparently unrelated problem.
- C. Support your line of argument with a few statements. Explain why you feel justified in taking your stand. Refer to relevant data and sources, either empirical or theoretical, to support your argument.
- D. Tell why your study is important. What does it suggest about some bigger picture?

II. METHODS OF ANALYSIS

- A. Describe the nature of your data and the method you will use to analyze it.
- B. Indicate why or how your data will allow you to address the issue you have chosen.

III. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A. Include at least 8-10 works that deal with the topic's general background.
- B. Include works which you can use as models for your approach.
- C. Include major literature specifically dealing with your topic.
- D. Include sources that will provide data for your own research.

Over

GENERAL CRITERIA: Your proposal should fulfill all six criteria noted below.

1. Your topic should be meaningful to you; it should not be trivial, tautological, "so what?"
2. It should be clearly situated within the literature.
3. It should be manageable in scope, not too narrow or artificially narrowed (e.g., do not take a huge topic and then narrow it by reading at random only a few of the relevant classic works).
4. It must be relevant to the social sciences and your participation in CIR.
5. Your proposal must be clearly written.
6. YOU MUST HAVE A POINT!

PROCEDURES: The proposal is subject to approval by your faculty sponsor and your CIR preceptor. You are responsible for providing copies of the proposal and signed approval forms as listed below.

1. ***Initial proposal***—Two copies: one for your faculty sponsor and one for your CIR preceptor
2. ***Intermediate revisions*** of your proposal need only go to your faculty sponsor and to your CIR preceptor.
3. ***Final approved proposal.*** Include the ***M.A. Paper Topic Approval Form*** containing your name, student ID number, **working title for the proposal**, the approval signatures from your faculty sponsor and your CIR preceptor, and a copy of the proposal to **the CIR office by the seventh week of winter quarter**. Upon review by CIR, the department will send your faculty sponsor a set of convocation deadlines, the MA paper guidelines and evaluation form, and a copy of your ***M.A. Paper Topic Approval Form***. You will also receive a copy of the signed approval form for your records.
4. ***If you make substantive changes*** in your approved project, you must submit a revised proposal, noting the changes, and a new ***M.A. Paper Topic Approval Form*** signed by your faculty sponsor and preceptor. Please note *substantive revision* on ***M.A. Paper Topic Approval Form*** and submit it with the revised proposal to the CIR office.