

Guidelines for the History Honors Thesis Prospectus

Revised 12 March 2012

A prospectus for honors work in history should define a topic for investigation, briefly discuss the historical importance and research viability of the topic, situate the topic in historiographical context, demonstrate the availability of relevant primary source material to be used, and discuss the student's relevant intellectual preparation for the work to be done. A student should prepare the prospectus in close cooperation with the potential honors supervisor, writing and revising multiple drafts if needed. The prospectus will normally include 4-7 pages of text with an appended bibliography. The prospectus must also identify the potential adviser. Normally, an honors prospectus should follow the format below:

I. Topic for thesis investigation. The prospectus should clearly delineate the topic and scope of the work to be undertaken. It should outline the particular problem to be addressed, and indicate what questions the thesis is designed to examine. In making a tentative prediction of the investigation, the prospectus should demonstrate that the scope of inquiry is feasible.

II. Historical and/or historiographical discussion. The prospectus for investigation should place the topic in historical perspective for readers unfamiliar with the field. It should address the relevant historiographical literature on the topic in order to clarify the particular significance of the field of study. The prospectus should indicate how the student positions the research to be undertaken in relation to that of previous scholarship on the subject, and indicate the originality of the research.

III. Individual preparation. The prospectus should indicate the student's course work and private readings that have provided adequate background for the research to be done. It should also address the issue of the student's facility in foreign languages, quantitative methodology, oral history, and/or other methodologies when relevant for the research to be undertaken.

IV. Sources. The prospectus should identify the central primary sources to be used in the conduct of original research. It should also address the availability of sources, specifying, where relevant, how the student will gain access to primary materials if they are not available at Oberlin.

V. Bibliography. The prospectus should include a bibliography. The bibliography should differentiate between primary and secondary sources. Secondary source listings should be limited to the most central and relevant materials, and need not be annotated.