

### **Assignment: The Research Proposal and Plan\***

The purpose of creating a research proposal and plan is to think about the kind of research you will be doing before you get started. This can help direct your research and save you time in the long run. You will be asked to think about what you know, what you need to learn, what approach you might take, and some tentative areas of your essay to be developed. You will also be asked to consider your initial feelings about the topic, who your audience might be, and some specifics about the research process. It's okay if you don't know all the answers at this point. The idea here is simply to get you thinking about your topic and about the research process before you get started—a sort of warm-up. Your ideas will become more specific as you continue the research and writing process. You will learn much more about your topic and your perspective may change slightly, or even significantly.

#### **Technical Details:**

- Answers should be numbered, rather than in paragraph form
  - Please label or mention the parts of the assignment as you answer them
- Double-spaced
- 12 point, Times New Roman font
- 1 inch margins all around
- Name and page number heading on the right margin (header is half inch from the top)
- Full name, course, instructor name, due date on the left margin, first page only
- Title of the assignment, centered over the body of the assignment

#### **Detailed Instructions:**

- 1. Write a brief (3/4-to-one-page) summary of an encyclopedia or internet article on your topic.** *You must attach a copy of the article* (if it's more than five pages, please attach only the first five) at the end of your "research plan" in order for this assignment to be considered complete. You may want to choose the best of the articles that you found during our preliminary research activity in the library.
- 2. Freewrite what you know about your topic.** Write rapidly, do not bother about exact phrasing or punctuation, and include details, descriptions, and examples. Explain the position you think you will take. *Spend at least 10 minutes on your freewrite.*
- 3. Think and write about what more you need to learn.** Following your freewrite, spend five or ten more minutes thinking and writing about what more you need to learn about your issue.
- 4. Apply some critical thinking prompts to your topic.** *Read the handout on critical thinking prompts. Choose five of them* (please identify which prompt you've chosen before you go on to answer the questions) and *write two to four sentences in response to each.* Remember, your answers should be very general at this point. You will have plenty of time to think about your topic in more detail once we begin note-taking and writing.

**5. Write your topic in question form, followed by some more focused questions based on some of the suggestions from our text or in class:**

- a. **What is your topic? Express it in question form.** (e.g. Who is responsible for the floating continent of plastic in the North Pacific?)
- b. **Write some more focused or narrow questions** (a minimum of four), **following examples from our text.** Try narrowing by time, place, person or story, as demonstrated in our text, or by fact, definition, cause, value, or policy, as demonstrated in class. Ask questions that will help you find relationships, as we practiced in exercise 1.6.
- c. **For every question, provide some thoughts** (not necessarily an answer) **about what you might expect to find should you choose to research these questions further.**

**6. Anticipate your research needs: consider and answer some of the following questions.**

What parts of your paper could you develop with your present knowledge and information? What parts will you need to think about and research further? Based on the results of your focused question exercise (number 5 above) can you learn enough to develop a researchable thesis in answer to one of these questions, or do you need to focus even further? What types of research materials will you seek, and where will you seek them? Make a list of key words related to your issue to help you search (you may want to go back to your Preliminary Research Worksheet and include some of the Library of Congress subject headings that you found). You may also want to include combinations of key words using Boolean logic, as discussed during our library session and in class.

**7. Plan for your first draft: consider and answer some of the following questions.** How much background information will you need to provide your readers? What terms will you need to define? If you don't feel that you will need to define any terms, explain why. How do you feel about this topic before beginning to seriously research it? Do you have strong opinions or feelings related to this topic? Are you curious? Fascinated? Driven by a professional or personal goal? Explain. What is a tentative way to begin your paper? What is a tentative way to end it? What original examples, descriptions, or comparisons occur to you now?

**8. Tentatively schedule your time to complete the essay.** Below is a list of tasks and assignments to be completed as you work your way toward the final draft of the research essay that is the focus of this class. Take a look at the list below and at the due dates on our course calendar. Create a list of your own that lists each task, how much time you think you will need to accomplish it (in hours), and schedule the time by listing the date or dates and time slots when you will work on and complete the tasks (see the example on page 3). Here is the basic task list:

- Gathering the main sources for your research (this does not include the sources gathered in our preliminary research exercise)
- Annotated bibliography
- Reading sources and taking notes
- Planning your first draft
- Writing your first draft (7 pages)
- Revising your first draft and completing the second draft (10 pages)
- Revising and preparing the final manuscript (12 – 15 pages)

Below is an example of what your personal research and writing schedule might look like. I inserted a three-column table in word to put together this example. It's okay if you don't know how to insert a table, just create a list that lists each task followed by the amount of time that you estimate it will take you to complete it and when you plan to work on it.

This schedule represents a little over thirty hours of work time. That's only about half of the time that should be allotted for homework in a three-credit course. Many of you may spend more time, and that's okay. I recommend that you plan to spend more time than what you think you might need. It's always better to have to adjust your schedule to do less than to have to try to make room later on for hours that you have not planned for.

Also realize that there are tasks that are likely to come up that I have not listed here, so you might want to build in a little more time in anticipation of those also. For example, you might find that you have to return to the library or spend some extra time online in between drafts to do some more research. There are always tasks that we can't plan for. Make sure you leave room in your schedule to handle them.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Time allotted</b>	<b>Work on &amp; complete</b>
Gather sources	4 hours	8 a.m. – 12 p.m., Thu., April 14
Annotated Bibliography	5 hours	6 p.m – 9 p.m., Thu., April 15 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., Sat., April 17
Read sources and take notes	6 hours	10 a.m. – 2 p.m., Sat., April 24 12 p.m. – 2 p.m., Mon., April 26
Plan first draft	2 hours	2 p.m. – 4 p.m., Mon., April 26
Write first draft	6 hours	6 p.m. – 9 p.m., Thu., April 29 8 a.m. – 11 a.m., Mon., May 3
Revise first draft/prepare second draft	4 hours	6 p.m. – 8 p.m., Thu., May 20 8 a.m. – 10 a.m., Thu., May 24
Revise second draft and prepare final manuscript	6 hours	8 a.m. – 11 a.m., Mon., May 31 6 p.m. – 9 p.m., Thu., June 3