

Essays – Proposal

The proposal gives a one-page preview of your position paper.

The assignment: Give a one-page preview of the research paper you'll be submitting at the end of the semester. This one-pager includes your problem/question, the possible sides to this question, and your proposed argument.

What you need to do

● Get ready.

Watch the video. The overview video explains what I want you to cover in the proposal and what I'm expecting to be included.

● Choose a problem or question you want to explore.

Choose a controversy or debate pertaining to the ancient Roman world. One starting point is to look over the 13 meeting topics. What would you like to dig more deeply into?

You can choose something that the people at the time might have debated—e.g., “Is Greek culture degrading Roman virtue and old-fashioned values?” as a question arising in the late Republic, or a question arising among modern historians—e.g., “Did the Roman empire arise through conscious imperialism or ad hoc reactions to events?” In each case you need to outline both sides of the question in your paper and then provide evidence why you think one side was right.

Choose a topic you're interested in and have fun with it. Make it wacky, make it provocative—anything is fine as long as you make an argument regarding your chosen topic and support it with facts.

● Formulate a preliminary thesis statement.

Opposing sides. The problem you're interested in addressing should involve something that could be argued with opposing positions. You should be able to delineate the problem by describing the opposing views people might take.

- To make sure you have two clear opposing opinions, you might want to express them in the form “Some say... Others say....”

Preliminary thesis. Your thesis statement, both here and in the final paper, should be a statement of opinion that someone could disagree with. It can take the form of following up the description of the opposing opinions with your own: “I believe....”

You can change it later. Remember that your thesis is provisional. You can change anything about your approach and interpretation after the proposal; in fact, uncovering information as you do your research makes refining or changing your initial assessments very likely.

● Write your one-page proposal.

What to include: Your proposal is structured like the introduction to your position paper, and may serve as the basis for it. It should include

- your problem/question;
- the opposing sides; and
- your preliminary thesis.

A sample proposal can be found on the course website.

● Finalize your proposal.

Submit your proposal Upload your proposal to BlackBoard.

Feedback and guidance. The proposal is not graded, but whether you submitted a proposal on time will be factored into the final grade for the position paper.

I will give you feedback on things like the feasibility of researching your topic, whether the scope is too big or too narrow for a paper like this, and some possible sources you might want to look at.