

II. ADVANCED THESIS PROPOSAL

Faculty Committee

Name _____
Date _____

Faculty Advisor _____
Committee Members _____

The thesis proposal submitted to thesis committee should resemble a research design that students prepare in their research seminar (GOVT 290, 291, 292, or 293). First, it should have an introduction, providing background and context for the issue that students intend to pursue. This material should set up the question that students intend to pose. Second, the question should be delineated clearly. Tied to this, students should discuss why their question is interesting or important. Third, the proposal should have a short literature review. The purpose of this section is to insure that students are familiar with different opinions and approaches to their question. Fourth, the proposal should include a hypothesis or thesis statement. Fifth, students should indicate how they intend to proceed with their research, discussing, for example, what research strategies they plan to pursue to answer their question and test their hypothesis. Finally, the senior thesis proposal should conclude by discussing the potential significance of the research.

Outline Format¹

I. Introduction

- A. Background/Context-- Describe the topic and focus of the research project.
- B. What is the research question you are attempting to answer? What do you expect your answer to this question might be? (Thesis statement.)
- C. Why is this question interesting or important? Provide a rationale pursuing it.

II. Literature/Background review

III. Methodology/Strategies

- A. Recognizing that the use of qualitative and quantitative data is not mutually exclusive, explain whether the proposal will be conducted primarily along quantitative or qualitative lines.
- B. What will your central variables be? How will you define them so that they may be empirically observed, assessed and/or measured? (That is, whether they are quantitative or qualitative, how do you intend to *operationalize* these variables?)
- C. Specify expected sources of quantitative data, and how they will be transformed into tables, figures, or charts. If survey data are used, specify their expected sources.
- D. Identify primary sources of qualitative evidence, such as journals, mass publications, primary documents, etc.

IV. Expected Results

V. Conclusion: Potential Significance of Research

¹ Portions of this outline are based on Schmidt, Diane E. *Writing in Political Science. A Practical Guide*. 2nd ed. 2000. New York: Longman.