MASTER OF HUMANITIES/MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE PROGRAM
Master of Humanities
Thesis/Project Proposal Guidelines

1) Preliminary Step: Develop a set of related ideas into a coherent topic.
   a) Before you even begin writing a proposal, much less a thesis or project itself, you need to have a well-defined topic. To this end, think about the following:
      i) What are the ideas that interest you enough to want to write about them in a sustained manner?
      ii) What main question arises from your general ideas on this topic?
      iii) Who and/or what kinds of scholarly work or evidence will you use to answer this question critically?
      iv) Having considered the scholarly material, what general logic will your study follow?
      v) What theoretical models will you consider and/or employ to systematically answer your question and/or argue for your position?
   b) Once you have addressed these questions, you can begin to think about your proposal.

2) Prepare a Proposal for your Thesis or Project.
   a) Your proposal provides a map for your larger project. It formally organizes your thinking about the topic. Most proposals include four main components: Introduction to the study, theoretical framework(s) to be used, a review of the literature, and a statement of methodology. If you cannot address these four areas, you are probably not ready to write a proposal. If you can, then follow these guidelines to organize your proposal's content.
      i) Working Title
      ii) Statement of the Research Project or Study: WHAT IS YOUR QUESTION?
         (1) Will you proceed by providing a systematic answer presenting a number of views or will you go on to argue for a position, i.e., defend a conclusion?
         (2) This section should introduce and describe the project you will undertake and map out the steps you will take. Specify your central question and possible subsidiary questions to answer as “stepping stones” toward your main question and/or to support your position. Present your goals for the study, and explain the significance of your study.
      iii) Literature Review/Current State of the Question:
         (1) Here you explain the background and the current state of the topic and outline briefly the most significant scholarly studies in the area, how you will use them, and why they are important contributions to the question.
      iv) Proposed Research Methodology and Use of Theory:
         (1) This section should describe the methods or tools you are proposing to use in order to answer your question and/or support your position.
         (2) What kinds of evidence will you present? Detail what theory/theories you will use.
            a) For Example: if you are studying a literary topic, you might employ some type of literary theory to your study, such as post-colonial theory. If your study is historical, you might be concerned with the practices of recording history along the lines of the New Historicians. A philosophical paper might employ particular phenomenological or pragmatic theories
            b) Not every thesis or project will align itself, or adopt a single theoretical “ism”, but it is important that you present how you will systematically approach your question. You may combine or draw from several theories or you can pit one theory against another. Be precise and clear about how and why you will do so.
      v) Consulted Works:
         (1) This section presents your reader with your bibliography to date. It should be formatted according to standard bibliographic guidelines.
      vi) Concluding Section:
         (1) Summarize your study. Explain what you will uncover, why it will be valuable, and to whom it might be useful.
3) **Mechanics.**
   a) The proposal should take the following format:
      i) 10 – 12 pages, double-spaced, typed in 10 – 12 point traditional font (like New Times Roman or Arial).
      ii) Title page (including your name, title, committee member names)
      iii) Text should include sub-headings according to the guidelines described above.
      iv) Bibliography of all consulted works at the end.
      v) Margins should be one (1) inch all around
      vi) Citations, bibliographic format, and other formatting questions should follow guidelines set forth by *Chicago Manual of Style* (ed. 14 or higher), *MLA* style guidelines, or *APA* guidelines. Be consistent in your formatting and use only one style throughout.

4) **Some Useful Resources for Thesis and Project Writers**
   a) [http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Assignments.html](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Assignments.html)
   b) [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/index.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/index.html)

5) **Using Resources in Proposals:**
   a) As you begin writing your proposal, you will have a body of initial research gathered from various resources, typically books, articles, films, artwork, and data gathered in a project. These comprise both primary and secondary texts. It is important to keep in mind that your proposal, and ultimately your thesis or project, is interpretive. It will grapple with and synthesize these research materials, be they primary sources (like the philosophical writings of Kant for example), or secondary (such as a later author’s commentary on Kant). To this end, it should not simply regurgitate these texts, but should represent your reading, digesting, and interpreting them to the end of your project or thesis question.