A Guide to Writing a Senior Thesis in History & Literature

Committee on Degrees
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A Guide to Writing a Senior Thesis in History & Literature

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Table of Contents

Introduction: The History & Literature Senior Thesis 1
Rules of the Game 2
What's Inside 3
Acknowledgments 3

Insert: Your Relationship with Your Advisor 4

Chapter One: Developing the Project 6
Organizing Your Time 6
From "Topics" to the Basic Building Blocks of Research 7
Storming the Brain 8
Brainstorming Exercises 8
Supplementing Your Brainstorms: "Pre-research" 9
Chapter One Recap 10

Chapter Two: Writing the Proposal 11
The Thesis Proposal Assignment 11
Finding Your Research Question 12
Resigning Yourself to Hard (but Ultimately Best) Choices 13
Framing Your Question and Writing the Proposal Document 14
Try Not to Argue: Let Your Sources Speak for Themselves 14
Is There Any "Give" in the System? 15
Rewriting Your Proposal 15
Chapter Two Recap 16

Chapter Three: Researching and Writing the Rough Draft 17
Being an Active Researcher 17
Making a Plan: Thinking about Draft "Chapters" 18
Taking Notes and Writing Daily 18
Assembling the Rough Draft 20
Thinking about Audience 21
Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism 22
Submitting a Draft Chapter for Concentration Review 22
Augmenting Your Research Plan 23
Chapter Three Recap 24

Chapter Four: Revising, the Final Frontier 25
Developing a Productive Critical Eye: Thinking in Relative Terms about Precision, Clarity, and Persuasiveness 25
Working the Thesis Statement 26
Finding the Best Structure for Your Ideas: Tell a Good Story 27
Critiquing Evidence 27
More about Content 28
20,000+ Words? Should You Do It? 29
Chapter Four Recap 29

Chapter Five: Finishing the Job 30
Proofreading 30
Submitting the Final Copies 30
Celebrating the Process and Achieving Closure 31

Appendix A: Funding Your Research 32

Appendix B: Sample Documents 33
Sample title page 35
Sample title page for joint concentrators 36
Sample word count page 37
Sample grant proposal A 38
Sample grant proposal B 40
Sample thesis proposal A 42
Sample thesis proposal B 43

Insert: Good Habits to Develop Early/Bad Habits to Break Right Away 44

The History & Literature Senior Thesis

introduction

Believe it or not, the most difficult part of any extended research project is where you are right now: the beginning. It's difficult not just because it is all brand new to you (or at least it seems that way), or because you have the whole beast in front of you (or, once again, at least it seems that way). It's difficult because you've been a student for a long time now and you feel like you should know where to begin, but you're not exactly sure how to start, or with what.

By this time in your academic career, you've very likely heard that the first thing to do when faced with a large project is to break it down into smaller parts. This is excellent advice. The problem, however, is that this kind of advice is rarely followed with concrete ideas about *how* to break such a project down into its constituent pieces. In this handbook, we'll show you how. We'll walk you through the Hist & Lit senior thesis project step by step, showing you precisely where to begin, what to look out for along the way, and how to find the finish.

In trying to achieve this goal, we will attempt to walk a delicate line between clarity and rigidity. We want to be crystal clear about the steps of the process. We want to teach you all of the tricks of the trade. But we never want to suggest, even for a moment, that there is one, single "Hist & Lit Way" to conduct a research project, one ideal form for a Hist & Lit future that you must try to match.

This handbook is thus *not* a cookie-cutter template for the "perfect" thesis. It is a gathering of helpful advice designed to help you write the best thesis you possibly can. You will learn in the pages that follow that success in the Hist & Lit senior thesis project depends far less on following a specific set of rules than on imagination and efficient planning, mixed perhaps with a bit of elbow grease and a dash of firm perseverance. You will also learn that Hist & Lit senior theses may take many forms. Hist & Lit students have written amazingly creative projects over the years, and each reflects the individual ideas, interests, and views of its author. This is our ideal. We want your thesis to be your own and no one else's, something upon which you can gaze lovingly at the end of the year as a job worthwhile and well-done.

You'll notice early on that we break the thesis project down into essentially three moments: project development, researching and drafting, and revising (writing the proposal receives its own chapter, but it truly marks the end of the project development stage). Ideally, we want you to spend approximately 33% of your time on *each* of these moments. It is our experience that students typically invest far too much time on the research and drafting stage and far too little time on developing the project correctly and revising their work after its initial drafting. You will find, therefore, that in this handbook we place a great deal of emphasis on project development and revision.

We recommend that you read this handbook from cover to cover. Then, once you are familiar with its contents, you can refer back to it again (and again) along the way. Always keep in mind that if, as you read along, one of the suggestions doesn't sound useful to you, it's completely within your right not to follow it! (That's right. It's okay.) However, we strongly encourage you to follow the sage advice contained within these pages. Why? Because, quite simply, it works.

Rules of the Game

We have tried to build as much flexibility as possible into the Hist & Lit senior thesis, but there are a few rules about what it absolutely must be and what it absolutely cannot be. Let's get those out of the way right now.

- A senior thesis must be an original research project of no fewer than 10,000 words and no more than 20,000 words, not counting notes and bibliography. Students may petition the Director of Studies to write a thesis that exceeds 20,000 words. Typical theses run somewhere in the range of 15,000–20,000 words.
- All candidates for an honors degree in History & Literature must prepare a senior thesis. Students who do not complete a thesis are not eligible to graduate with honors in History & Literature. Students who elect not to complete a thesis must first secure the permission of the Director of Studies to withdraw from candidacy for honors. To receive credit for History & Literature 99, students may submit two twenty-page papers (one each semester) or one forty-page paper (in early May). Alternately, students may take additional courses that count for concentration credit to replace one or both semesters of History & Literature 99.
- History & Literature theses cannot be "creative writing" projects, except in the case of some joint concentrators. We want you to be creative. All History & Literature theses should be creative. But you can't write fiction. No novels or plays or books of poetry allowed.
- History & Literature theses cannot recycle papers from other History & Literature tutorials or other classes. Each year, students ask whether they can build upon the work that they have done, for example, in their junior tutorial essays. This is, of course, just fine; and you can even use some of the material from said essays in your thesis if you must (it's not necessary to reinvent the wheel). However, your senior thesis should be a completely new project. If you wrote on William Carlos Williams as a junior, it's fine to write about him again as a senior. But you must ask a new question and/or look at different texts — that is, you must forge a new path.

That's it. Those are the rules. The rest of what follows is, once again, a series of guidelines and suggestions and general musings only, designed to help you to direct your energies and to clarify your thinking and your writing.

What's Inside

Before moving on, let's take a quick look at what's under the hood.

Chapter 1, "Developing the Project," talks about how to develop your interests into a thesis project. You'll learn strategies for exploring and articulating what fascinates you about your History & Literature field. And then you'll learn about how to move efficiently from thinking about your project in terms of "topic," which is too broad to define your thesis, toward thinking in terms of the basic building blocks of an extended research project: primary sources and questions.

Chapter 2, "Writing the Proposal," helps you to organize your raw materials from the project development stage and then decide upon the best possible research question to guide your thesis work. Your research question will be the key element of your History & Literature senior thesis proposal. In this chapter we talk about what the proposal is. We talk about what it isn't. And we give you a few strategies for how you might approach it.

Chapter 3, "Researching and Writing the Rough Draft," lets you read more about, you guessed it, conducting your research and writing the rough draft of your thesis. We'll talk about how to stay active as you engage your source material and search for answers to your research question. We'll explain how to break down the writing of the rough draft into manageable pieces. And we'll suggest some techniques designed to help you to keep your thoughts flowing from that brain of yours onto the page, where they can be seen and shared.

Chapter 4, "Revising, the Final Frontier," teaches you about the skill (and it is a skill, which you can develop and improve through practice) of revising your work. Here you will learn about the place where your thesis, like Frankenstein's monster at the flash of the lightning strike, will truly come alive.

Chapter 5, "Finishing the Job," is really just a brief guide to the end of the project, containing a few words on proofreading, formatting, and matters such as the kind of paper you should use, where to get thesis binders, etc.

The **Appendices** at the end of the handbook contain basic advice about funding your research, some sample documents, and other goodies.

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This handbook began under the direction of Kimberly Davis, who initially spearheaded the project. Jeanne Follansbee, Stephanie Lin, and Amy Spellacy commented and contributed during the drafting. And finally, future History & Literature seniors owe a great debt of gratitude to Iliana Montauk '06. It was she who came to us originally with the idea for a senior thesis guide, and it was her enthusiastic leadership that helped initially to lift the project off the ground.

Your Relationship with Your Advisor

There is one key element of the senior thesis year for which no handbook will ever be a substitute, and that is your thesis advisor. (In this handbook, we use the terms "advisor" and "tutor" interchangeably.) Your senior thesis advisor will be a tutor from the Hist & Lit tutorial board, and you may have an additional advisor who is an outside faculty member at Harvard. The senior thesis project is truly an independent project, and so must ultimately be all your own. However, you are lucky to have at your side a friendly, knowledgeable guide whose sole job is to help you along the way. This is your advisor.

You should discuss potential thesis advisors with your junior tutor. In Hist & Lit, students may request to work with particular advisors. Look through the tutors' interest pages on the Hist & Lit website. Peruse the list of members of our Committee on Degrees. And be sure also to consider newly hired tutors whose interests might dovetail with your own.

Before you leave for summer after your junior year, we ask you to hand in a form where you state in a paragraph your ideas about the general topic of your thesis and include a brief bibliography. There you may list your preferences for tutors, if you have them. During the summer, the Director of Studies and Associate Director of Studies use these forms to create the best working relationship possible for each and every student. We try to honor student wishes whenever possible, but students should also understand that we cannot always do so. (It depends mostly on balancing teaching loads evenly across the tutorial board.) Even if you aren't matched with your first choice, you can be sure that the tutor with whom you will be working will be well-qualified to help you through the entire thesis process, from start to finish.

Tutors in Hist & Lit tend to be an amazing bunch. They are extremely dedicated professionals and it is their job to coach you through the senior thesis project. But you have a job in all of this, too, and it's more than just to write the thesis. It is your job to help them help you. That is, it's your job to be honest with them, to tell them what you're thinking, and whenever possible, to tell them in as precise terms as possible how they can help you most. Each step of the way, you should work in close contact with your advisor. Your tutor will often be your best sounding board for testing out your ideas. As soon as you can, you should be talking to your tutor about your interests. Talk about the texts and ideas that you think you might want to study further. Talk about the questions you have.

HL99 is graded separately each semester with a satisfactory (SAT) or unsatisfactory (UNSAT). A semester grade of SAT is awarded when you produce a proposal and draft chapter in the fall and a completed thesis in the spring. Your thesis will receive grades (and comments!) in the spring, but your tutor will not have any say in those grades. That's right: your senior tutor will never grade your senior thesis. This differs from junior tutorial, when your tutor was one of the readers of your junior essay. In senior tutorial, your tutor's first and only duty is to be your mentor and advocate.

Here are a few further thoughts that will help you to build a strong relationship with your tutor from the very beginning that will last through the entire year.

How should I relate to my tutor?

There are many kinds of relationships that Hist & Lit students have with their tutors. All should be professional. It's okay (and usually most beneficial) to develop a comfortable, informal rapport with your tutor. But remember, too, that your senior tutorial is a class that should be treated with the same amount of respect as any other.

What can I and can't I expect from my tutor?

Your tutor will help you to build your project from the ground up. They will help you to find resources and will point you toward the correct people at the library and in the rest of the university at large. They will read drafts and comment on them. They will also read some of the pertinent texts along with you in order to help you think about how to tackle them.

Your tutor will not, however, do your work for you. That is, your tutor will help you find the right direction, but don't expect your tutor to give you all the answers. Definitely don't expect your tutor to dictate to you your research question or provide you with the structure for your research and writing. Your tutor's job is to help you to write the best thesis that you are able to write. Nothing more, nothing less.

Remember that Hist & Lit tutors will be more than generous with their time, but they can't be there for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In your very first meeting with your tutor, be sure to have a frank conversation about your respective schedules. Talk about the communication method (email? Skype? carrier pigeon?) and the hours of the day that are best. Talk about what you and your tutor expect for response times to emails. Some people check email often; others not so often. Either is okay. It's simply important that you and your tutor agree on what to expect from one another. And before you leave for winter break, make a plan with your tutor for how and when you'll be in contact in December and January.

How can I help my tutor to help me?

Communicating what you want and need most to your tutor is actually sometimes more difficult than it sounds, but it's crucial for a successful tutor-student relationship. One way to begin this process is to think carefully about your experiences in the past and especially about the comments that you've received on your papers during your time at Harvard. Look for patterns. Do you have trouble organizing your arguments? Tell your tutor. Do you have trouble organizing your time? Swallow your pride and tell your tutor. Are you a strong close reader, but maybe you have trouble connecting those readings to larger issues? Tell your tutor. Or maybe you tend to think big and your professors have always told you that you need to do a better job of grounding your arguments in more evidence? That's right: tell your tutor.

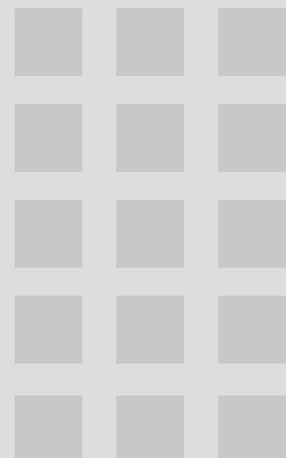
Remember most of all that your tutor can't help you if you don't tell them what's on your mind, and your tutor certainly can't help you if they don't know that there is an issue that needs attention. The absolute worst that you can do, therefore, is clam up and not seek help from your tutor when you need it. It is unfortunately a very common impulse among students, so avoid it if you have it. Always keep in close communication with your tutor, especially if you ever feel stuck. Whatever you do, don't ever go AWOL, either physically or mentally, even if your first instinct is to try to hole up and just "get it done" (whatever "it" happens to be at that stage of the game). It can only hurt you.

I'm thinking about working with a faculty member who's not on the tutorial board as my thesis advisor. How do I make this happen, and what are the pros and cons?

The best match for a thesis advisor is someone who is interested in your topic and who will be an effective critic and editor, even if they are not an expert on your topic. Be sure to choose someone with whom you are likely to be comfortable working on a week to week basis — to whom you would feel comfortable turning not only when things are going well, but also if you run into trouble with your work. This is perhaps the most important element of an advisor-student relationship, more important than specific expertise. Keep in mind that you can always consult about bibliography with experts in your field even if they are not your assigned advisor.

You may not choose for your advisor a teaching fellow or lecturer who is not affiliated with Hist & Lit, or a professor from outside of Harvard. But if you believe that a member of the Harvard faculty not on the Hist & Lit tutorial board would be your best advisor, go to that faculty member and present your thesis ideas as clearly as you can. Ask them whether they would be willing and available to advise your thesis.

If you choose to work with a faculty member not on the tutorial board, we will provide a concentration advisor who will keep you in touch with Hist & Lit requirements and who will help you to prepare for your oral examination. Note that it will be your responsibility to negotiate the specific role that your concentration advisor will play in your thesis work itself.



chapter one

Developing the Project

Runners, to your marks . . . It's a cliché, and you'll hear it from your tutors and professors more than once if you haven't heard it already, but the senior thesis is a marathon, not a sprint. If you have had the typical college experience thus far, practically every other assignment that you have completed as part of your coursework has been a sprint. It's been an essay on which you spend a few weeks at the very most (and usually much less time than that) to conceive and to complete. In a sprint, it is possible to expend all of your energy in one burst and still reach the finish line. You might collapse in a heap of sweat and exhaustion at the end, but you can still make it.

A senior thesis cannot be a sprint. If you try to complete it in one single burst of energy, you will collapse in that heap of sweat and exhaustion long before the finish is even in sight. You won't make it. For the senior thesis, you have to complete the project one step at a time. You must methodically pace yourself so that you have enough in the tank throughout the course of the race to make it to the end.

Think of project development as your training for the marathon to come. You've done a great portion of this training already. You have learned, that is, in your classes and your sophomore and junior tutorials, how to ask analytical questions and how to conduct research. You've learned how to write a formal essay in which you introduce an argument, defend that argument with evidence, and conclude that argument by explaining its wider significance.

In project development, the idea is to generate the raw materials of an extended research project — as many of them as you possibly can — in a methodical and efficient manner. It's important to take your time, to cast your net widely, and to keep an open mind. You want to make sure *not* to make final decisions about what your project will look like too hastily. You will, of course, eventually have to make some hard choices and stick with them, so prepare yourself for that. But that comes later. During the project development stage, you must allow yourself to dream a little.

Organizing Your Time

The first step in any large project is to map out a clear work schedule for yourself. Ideally, you want to integrate your thesis schedule comfortably into your schedule for other classes, extracurricular activities, and life in general.

Start by mapping out all of the senior thesis deadlines so that you can have a firm idea in your head of how much time you have for each step of the process. Your work calendar should, at the very least, include the deadlines for the thesis proposal and the draft chapter. Then, after you've learned more about each stage of the project by reading this handbook, you should use your calendar to set more individualized deadlines. As you progress through the first semester of your senior year, you will eventually want to work out a plan for each month and even each week of the project. You should regularly talk about your calendar with your tutor, who can help you to set realistic goals for your time and a comfortable schedule for your drafts.

On a week to week basis, we recommend that you spend as much time on your thesis work as you would for a normal class. If you think about school as a 40-hour work week, and if you are taking a regular load of four classes, this means that you should probably devote about 10 hours of your time each week to HL99. We all know, of course, that it is a rare Harvard student who works only a 40-hour week. College life tends to expand hours. We also realize that some weeks have more time in them for thesis work than others. But if you plan to spend, on average, about 10 solid hours per week on your thesis work, you will make steady progress from start to finish.

It's also important to remember that your senior thesis is only one aspect of your life, not your entire life. The best theses are almost always *not* the ones that are all-consuming in a given student's life. Shutting yourself out from the rest of the world to the neglect of everything else will not help you to be more "serious." It actually will cause you to lose perspective, which does not make for good analytical thinking and writing. Keep your perspective. Stay integrated with the rest of your life.

From "Topics" to the Basic Building Blocks of Research

Once you've thought a bit about time organization (and remember, you will modify your schedule regularly throughout the course of the project) it's time to dive in. The main trick to being methodical and efficient in the project development stage is to start thinking about your thesis project, as soon as you possibly can, in terms of three basic components:

1. topics of interest,
2. the primary sources that you might use to study those interests,
3. the questions that you have about your primary sources (and how they speak to your interests).

How you go about searching for and finding these components is, of course, completely up to you. But find them you must. There is no option there.

It's perfectly natural to begin a project by describing its "topic." Maybe you're thinking of writing about protest songs in the '60s. Maybe it's the medieval papacy. Perhaps eighteenth-century Paris has always tripped your trigger. These are all great general topics. It's important to know, however, that a "topic" is far too broad to define your research project. Why? Because a "topic" alone doesn't in and of itself lead to a compelling scholarly argument. For that, you need to move from thinking about "topic" toward thinking about the primary sources that you will use and the questions (ideally one single question) that you will be asking.

Interests, primary sources, questions. Eventually, you will narrow your project down by picking the "best" in each of these categories (more about that in Chapter Two). But for now, in the project development stage, you want to generate as many interests, primary sources, and questions as you can. These are the basic building blocks of any research project, and the only blocks with which you should be playing at this stage of the game.

Storming the Brain

The following brainstorming exercises are designed to help you move from thinking about broad, general topic ideas, to thinking about primary sources, and then finally toward more focused questions. Each exercise requires you to commit yourself to a twenty- or thirty-minute session (no more, no less!). It's probably best to do them on separate days, but it's up to you. The only real rule is that you have to find a quiet and calm place with no distractions. This is key. If you're distracted, these exercises are not nearly as useful.

You'll rarely if ever hear anyone say it, but brainstorming actually takes *practice*. You get better at it the more you do it. So it will be very helpful to commit yourself to several sessions. You don't want to overdo it, of course, but you should at least do them more than once. And in addition to your timed sessions, you might even want to have them working perpetually in your head "on the back burner" as you go about your daily business.

Sit down with your computer or some paper and a writing implement of your choice and just write what comes to mind. Take a deep breath. Relax yourself. Write. Remember that these brainstorming exercises are not tests, and no one will grade you on the lists that you generate. You don't even have to show them to anyone if you don't want. They are yours and for you alone.

Here again, in question form, are the fundamental issues that you must ponder:

- What within my field am I interested in studying further?
- What primary sources could I realistically use to study those interests further?
- What, exactly, are the questions that I have about those sources and interests?

Brainstorming Exercises

Exercise A (20-30 minutes): Brainstorm topics of interest. In the first brainstorm, your job is to write down all of the possible "topics" that you might be interested in researching further with your thesis. Here is where you list all of the themes, people, places, texts, events, movements, images, etc., that you might possibly want to study in detail. Nothing is off limits here. This is your chance to think big, so you can, if you like, indulge your grandest aspirations. The only criterion is that whatever you write down must capture your imagination and make you want to know more. What have you come across in the past years that has fascinated you? What has surprised you? What authors and genres and events and people keep you "coming back for more"? Just write down whatever comes to your head. You will have plenty of time to revise later. Want to study poverty? Write it down. Love? Fine. Put it on there. Do you like seventeenth-century art? Write that down, too. Interested in Shakespeare? T.S. Eliot? World War II? Women? Men? Frontier dentistry? Just write anything down that comes to mind that you might consider to be a topic of possible research interest to you. As you can probably guess, the purpose of this list is simply to help you locate the general areas where you might conduct further research. Think of these as the rough locations on your treasure map where you might start digging for your specific research question later.

Exercise B (20–30 minutes): Brainstorm primary sources. In the second brainstorm, your job is to take that first list of general topics of interest and then, *for each item,* write down all of the possible primary sources that you have come across in the past that you might use to study those general topics. There are a few items to think about with this second exercise. First, you will notice that in this brainstorm you will generate a very different type of list than in the first. You will generate, that is, a list of specific titles — "*The Tempest*" could be on this list, but "Shakespeare" could not; "the WPA slave narrative records" would work quite well, but "slavery" or "oral histories" would not. (It's perfectly okay, by the way, if you can't remember a name or title completely. As long as you are referring to a specific source, just jot it down to the best of your memory: e.g., "that cool poem about pirates" is perfect.) Second, remember that primary sources don't necessarily need to be written records. They can be photos, songs, paintings, buildings, maps — virtually anything that you can analyze. Third, note that you may not be able to come up with any primary sources for some, perhaps several of the more general "topics" from the first brainstorming exercise. That tells you something important about where you might conduct some supplemental, preliminary research later on. For now, just take brief note of these topics and move on to the next exercise when you're ready.

Exercise C (20-30 minutes): Brainstorm questions. For the last brainstorming exercise, your job is to take stock of both lists that you generated earlier and then to start asking some questions about the items on those lists. Don't be critical at this point. As with the first list, here, the sky is the limit. Just write the questions that come to mind — any questions, all questions. How did industrialization influence Russian poetry at the turn of the century? Why did Graham Greene write *The Quiet American?* Don't worry yet about whether they are "good" questions (there will be plenty of time for that later). Just be sure to ask as many questions as you possibly can. Ask questions not just of your topics of interest, but of the primary sources that you listed as well. You will be tempted to ask whether there are other primary sources that you don't know. That's an important question, so write it down. But try also to ask questions of the primary sources that you do know. Questions, questions, and more questions. You can never ask too many questions during project development. And the more you ask, the more you will know that you are on the right track toward developing a strong thesis.

Remember what a primary source is? Primary sources are the documents and "data" that we analyze in our work. In History & Literature these are the "texts" (and remember that "texts" are not just written) that we analyze and discuss. Secondary sources comment on and/or analyze primary sources.

Supplementing Your Brainstorms: "Pre-research"

With each of these brainstorming exercises, you may feel the need to research your ideas further in order to augment your lists. You may need to do this the most when developing your list of primary sources. That is, you may find, through brainstorming, a particularly intriguing topic of interest and a fine set of burning questions about that topic. But then you may have no idea about whether there are actually primary sources available to you that will help you to find some answers. You will want to review old courses and papers and classroom discussions to see whether anything else jogs your memory. You'll pull out those old notes and syllabi and use them to supplement the brainstorming lists that you initially drew up. And then, you'll do some sleuthing for new information, too. This will lead you to exploratory library visits and internet queries in order "to read more about it."

This supplementary work of conducting pre-research in order to fill out your brainstorming lists is the last crucial part of the project development stage. It's also extremely fun, because your job is simply to explore. Go to the library and search the catalogs. Read, but also talk to human beings. Get in touch with the Hist & Lit research librarian, Steve Kuehler, at kuehler@fas.harvard.edu. Make an appointment and go ask some questions. This may require some courage, but it will pay great dividends if you do it. Go and talk to members of the tutorial board and other Harvard faculty who teach in your field. You'll be amazed at how much you can learn just from sending an email or two and setting up a few short meetings.

Our main recommendation about "pre-research" is that you only do it *after* you've brainstormed interests, primary sources, and questions each at least once all by yourself. The purpose of brainstorming, after all, is to free up your brain and to allow it to "speak" to you without prompting. Your goal is quite literally to tap into the recesses of your unconscious to learn what truly fascinates you and what you really think. If you conduct pre-research first, you can't be sure that your ideas — especially your ideas about what interests you — are your own and not from others.

Keep in mind, finally, that going out and exploring in order to develop your brainstorm lists is certainly research and a critical part of the senior thesis process, but it is not yet your research project per se. It is still project development. You can think of it, if you like, as collecting the necessary ingredients and stocking the kitchen for a delicious meal that you will cook later. You will take *some* of those ingredients and mix them carefully and in the proper measure in order to create the research project itself.

Chapter One Recap

Writing a senior thesis is a long haul, so you can't try to do it all at once. You need to pace yourself and not try to take on too much, too soon. You must also remain open to the possibility of new ideas.

The basic building blocks of a research project are interests, primary sources, and questions. A "topic" is too broad to define your research. You must figure out what primary sources are available for you to study and what questions you wish to ask about your interests and about those primary sources. The project development stage is difficult because it requires you to face the big picture. But the goal of project development is simply to gather potential raw materials, nothing more. If you take your time, focusing on one building block at a time and then adding a bit of sleuthing for supplemental information, you will have generated all of the basic elements that you will need for choosing a strong research project that's right for you.

Brainstorm interests, primary sources, and questions. Write down your ideas. Explore. Then brainstorm, write, and explore some more. That, in a nutshell, is project development.

Writing the Proposal

chapter two

Okay, you've spent some time gathering together the basic building blocks of a research project in the form of articulated interests, primary sources, and a whole slew of questions. Now your job is to start sifting through those raw materials and evaluating them. With a ruthless critical eye, you must systematically discern which materials you will actually use for your senior thesis project, and which materials you will set aside for another day.

Going back to the marathon metaphor, think of this next stage as the moment when you truly start to settle into the race. You've rid yourself of all your pre-race jitters. The initial adrenaline rush has fully subsided. You're now "in the zone," relying completely on your training rather than raw instinct. There is no turning back now, so the next step is to create for yourself a comfortable running pace where you're not expending any excess energy. You need to set your sights on your goal and build a firm picture in your head of the marathon's route: where the hills are, where the down-slopes should be (where you can take a little rest), and perhaps most importantly, where all the landmarks are so that you'll be able to gauge your progress along the way.

In thesis project terms, this means that you need to zero in on the precise research question that will drive your project to its final completion and then draw up a plan for answering it. You need, that is, to write your project proposal.

The Thesis Proposal Assignment

The end of the project development stage begins when you start to write up your thesis proposal for concentration review. The assignment calls for all students to submit a proposal of one page only, single-spaced, attached to another single-spaced page of relevant bibliography (both primary and secondary sources). The guidelines are strict because all of your tutors meet to discuss each and every student's proposal. For this discussion to work, proposals need to be short, concise, and very much to the point.

It's easy to see this and immediately be frightened by the prospect of your tutors meeting in a closed session to discuss your projects. Actually, it's one of the greatest perks of being a Hist & Lit concentrator. The sole purpose of this tutor meeting is to help you. The tutors are instructed to answer one question and one question only: do they think that this project, as proposed, is viable? Do they, that is, think that a student can reasonably complete the proposed project in the amount of time available, and with the resources that are available? That's it. They do not meet to "judge" your proposal. They certainly don't meet to judge you. Think of it instead as a group of scholars all taking an interest in what you are doing and lending a helping hand.

Finding Your Research Question

The central element of a strong project proposal is a focused and well-designed research question. The prospect of having to reduce all of your ideas down into a single question might send you into a panic. But you shouldn't panic. The most difficult aspect of finding a research question is the fact that the process requires you to be realistic (sometimes painfully so) about what is possible. Finding a good research question requires you to come to hard realizations about what you can actually accomplish in the time that you have and with the resources that are available to you.

What's nice is that there are only three fundamental criteria for a good research question and you have 100% control over all three. The rub is that your question must meet *all three* criteria for it to work. In the last chapter, we suggested that you write down every interesting question that came to mind. We urged you not to be critical yet, but rather just to write and to dream. Well, now is the time to start being critical. If a potential research question meets only one or two of the three criteria — even if you *love* it and you think it's the only question that you would possibly be interested in studying further (you would be wrong in this thought, by the way) — it won't work and you absolutely must eliminate it from contention.

Finding your research question can take several weeks of hard work, perseverance, and some very difficult choices, so prepare yourself for that now. You will need your tutor to help you, for often they will be the best and most objective judge. It will be important to be as open as you possibly can be to their ideas.

A strong research proposal revolves around a focused, well-conceived research question.

Here are the three criteria against which you will test every potential research question you have:

- **Your question must genuinely intrigue you.** If you look at the question and yawn, it's not a good research question for you.
- **Your question must be analytical in nature.** If your question is a "fact-finding" question, it's probably not a good research question. On the other hand, if your question articulates a genuine puzzle, has no obvious answer, and instead requires you to interpret several elements of a given topic and then formulate an opinion about it, chances are good that it's a good research question. Here's a trick: "fact-finding" questions tend to start with the interrogative words "what," "who," and "where." Analytical questions tend to start with the interrogative words "how" or "why." Think about it. Another great trick is to recognize that an analytical question creates a good discussion (at the dinner table in the dining hall, with your roommates, in the classroom — anywhere). A fact-finding question does not, because once you've discovered the answer to a fact-finding question, the discussion is over. Analytical questions have many possible "right" answers. This multiplicity of possible answers leads to discussion and debate (even better!) when people favor (as they tend to do) one of those answers over another. A good analytical question is exactly the same as a good question for discussion.
- **Your question must be answerable.** Last, but not least, we come to the criterion that is the most difficult to meet. There are a lot of great questions out there that are both interesting and analytical, but that are nevertheless still not good questions for a Hist & Lit senior thesis project. This is because many questions are ultimately unanswerable with the evidence available to you and in the time that you have. Once a question has satisfied criteria #1 and #2, you have to think honestly about how you would go about answering your question. You have to think about availability of resources: ***Is there a body of source material available to you upon which you can***

realistically draw? Do you have to go somewhere else to get it? Will it be available to you when you go? Does it cost money? You have to think about the actual contents of your source material and whether that material could actually answer the question that you ask: ***How likely is it that the source material will actually be able to answer my question? Does the source material contain enough data/evidence to make an argument?*** And then, you need to realize that while six months may seem like a lot of time right now, in research terms it can be lightning quick. You therefore must think about the time that you have to conduct your research: ***Can you possibly read and digest your source material in the time that you have to complete this project? Is it truly possible to conduct all of your research in the time that you have? If it's a potentially enormous source base, can you logically narrow it down to a more manageable size?***

Resigning Yourself to Hard (but Ultimately Best) Choices

Remember that, as you test your favorite questions against these three criteria, you will of necessity have to let go of some of your senior thesis dreams. (Not your dreams in general, just your dreams for the senior thesis!) Do not discount this fact: it's VERY HARD to let some of those dreams go. But let them go you must. For the most frequent and most dangerous pitfall that students run into in their senior thesis projects, hands down, is the pitfall that comes from starting their project with an unanswerable research question (i.e. a question that is too big, that has no sources, etc.).

Trust that if you throw out the unanswerable, unworkable questions now, even if you love them, your future self will thank you, thank you, thank you for doing it. It can mean all the difference between a successful and unsuccessful project. Remember also that if a question initially seems to be unworkable in light of the three criteria, it may not be totally lost. You may be able to turn an unworkable question into a workable one by doing some more preliminary research. You might not, for example, be able to answer your burning questions about the 1937 Paris Exhibition and fascism or about the influences of Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities* on the London upper class with one body of sources. But your tutor, or a librarian, or one of your professors might be able to help you find another body of sources that would work.

The most frequent and most dangerous pitfall that students run into in their senior thesis projects is the pitfall that comes from starting their project with an unanswerable research question.

You will discover that in this stage you will eliminate almost all of your favorite questions. You might even eliminate every single one of them, in which case you will need to brainstorm some more and repeat the process. Don't get discouraged if this happens! Work with your tutor. And remember that you're doing yourself a huge favor when you throw out the unworkable questions. You're only setting yourself up for hardship otherwise. If you do the senior thesis project in the right way — i.e. in the way that is the most efficient and the most enjoyable — it's this stage that takes the most and hardest work. But eventually, with perseverance, you will find that some questions will, like the very best cream, rise to the top.

Again, enlist the help of your tutor. Show your tutor the ideas and questions you've come up with and tell them why you think a question is a good one. Conversely, if you love a question, but suspect that it might not meet all of the criteria, talk to your tutor about that, too. Your tutor may agree with you that even though the question interests you, it might not be the best question for a senior thesis. But your tutor might also know about ways to turn it into a question that does work. You'll never know until you talk it out. This conversation will take up the first few weeks of senior tutorial, both in person and via email. But the more you talk it out now, the higher your success rate will be later.

Framing Your Question and Writing the Proposal Document

Once you have found your strong research question, your job in the proposal is to frame it for an audience. This is the actual writing of the thesis prospectus document itself. If you consult the small but useful selection of sample prospectuses in **Appendix B**, you will see that there is some room for modest creativity. No two thesis prospectuses are exactly the same. But generally, yours should begin with a general introduction of the context for your question. *Briefly* introduce the period and geographical location of your study. Discuss the main issues that your study will address. The idea is to take your readers, who you must presume know very little about your thesis subject, and teach them the basics of what they need to know in order to understand and follow your research question.

After introducing your question and providing context, you must situate your research question within a scholarly discussion. This will require some library time, but not as much as you might think. You must explain whether your research question has been asked and answered by others. If the answer is yes, you must discuss where your question has been asked before and describe the answers that scholars have provided thus far. Include, if you can, some information about why you feel that the answers that other scholars have provided are insufficient, or how your project will contribute to the debate by bringing new sources into the conversation. If no scholar has ever asked the question that you are asking (this is more unlikely), the burden is on you to explain the ways in which your research question can contribute to scholarship about your primary source base.

Once you have introduced your question and situated it within scholarship, you must describe the primary source base that you will use to answer that question. If you've done the hard work of project development discussed in this handbook thus far, this part should be very simple. Make sure you've clearly written your name, field in Hist & Lit, tutor, and working thesis title at the top of the page. And finally, tack on a bibliography of the primary sources and secondary sources that are relevant to your thesis proposal.

Try Not to Argue: Let Your Sources Speak for Themselves

You will probably think of some possible answers to your question, and you might even have some ideas about a provisional argument. Before you include an argument in your proposal, however — even a provisional argument — stop for a minute to consider this. Remember that you haven't done much research yet. Is it reasonable for you to know enough to answer your question before you've researched it fully? If you try to formulate an argument before you've conducted your research, you risk running into the problem of not allowing your sources to speak for themselves. That is, if you begin your research with an argument already firmly in place, you end up trying to "prove" that argument with your sources. This may work out if your argument is supportable. But if it's not, you're in trouble. Start instead with your well-designed, strong research question and then allow your sources to help you focus on the best answer. In short, let your sources talk to you.

Is There Any "Give" in the System?

Now, you might be thinking, "The proposal is due only a few weeks into the semester, so what if I'm still not entirely sure of what I'm doing when I submit my proposal? What if I change my mind?" These are perfectly logical questions to be asking at this point, but our response is that you shouldn't worry.

Might your research question change over time? Yes. It's possible, even probable, that your research question will evolve as you move further down the path. You will make adjustments to it (usually you will narrow it even further) based on what you find as part of your research. This is perfectly normal.

It does happen, however, that students will have their proposals accepted by the tutorial board and yet still find it necessary, later in the game, to change their project in a dramatic way. If at any time in the project you think this might be necessary, you should talk to your tutor immediately! Ninety-nine times out of 100, your tutor will be able to help you to right the ship and continue along your way. But if you and your tutor agree that a change is in order, you simply need to talk to the Director of Studies about it and come up with a new plan.

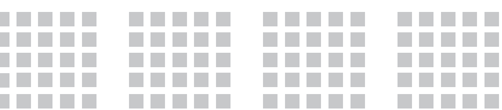
Rewriting Your Proposal

Once the tutors have met to discuss your proposals, they will decide whether you should move on from the development stage of your senior thesis work to the research and writing stage. Your own tutor will report back to you about the discussion. Often, tutors will have some very specific advice for ways in which to make your project better: ways to narrow your question productively, primary sources about which you might not know, and scholarship that will be helpful for you to consult and to think about as you continue your work.

Sometimes, however, the tutors will require students to rewrite and to resubmit their proposals. If this happens to you, don't be embarrassed. It simply means, once again, that they thought that you would have difficulty completing your project as proposed. The Director of Studies will contact you to inform you that you should revise and resubmit your proposal, and your tutor will give you specific information about what you will need to change.

It cannot be reinforced strongly enough: if this happens to you and you are asked to resubmit, you should not sweat it. Every year, students are asked to rewrite their proposals, and all go on to complete their projects. It is not punishment. It is simply to help you to develop your project further and to find that workable research question.

If you are asked to rewrite and resubmit your proposal, it is not punishment; it is simply to help you to develop your project further and to find a strong, workable research question.



Chapter Two Recap

As you write up your thesis proposal, the most frequent and most dangerous pitfall that students encounter in their senior thesis projects is the pitfall that comes from starting their project with an unanswerable research question. Do everything you can to avoid this trap.

Another very common mistake that students make is to write a proposal in which they plan to "prove" a hypothesis or argument though their research. Frame your thesis proposal around a viable research question: a question that interests you, a question that is analytical, and a question that is answerable with the sources that you have and in the time that you have.

Finally, if you are asked to revise and resubmit your proposal, it is not punishment. It is simply to help you to develop your project further and to find a workable research question.

Don't forget to refer to **Appendix B** in the back for some sample senior thesis proposals written by Hist & Lit students in the past!

Researching and Writing the Rough Draft

chapter three

So, now what? You've done so much already. You've explored possible topics and developed them by thinking about primary sources and questions. You've winnowed your ideas down to a strong guiding research question — one that interests you, that is analytical, and that is answerable. And you've framed your research question in your thesis proposal and had that proposal fully vetted by the Hist & Lit tutorial board. What's next?

Now it is time for the researching and writing phase of the project to begin. Ideally, researching and writing should be complementary, integrated activities. The one self-critique that virtually all seniors express after finishing their theses is that they wish they had started to write earlier than they actually did. In this chapter, we will therefore try to provide you with strategies designed to help you to research and to write at the same time. The idea to keep in mind is that the goal of this stage is *not* to write the final draft. The goal is to create a rough draft, which is utterly and completely different.

Too often, students do not distinguish enough the essential differences between a rough draft and a final draft. A rough draft is not just a less-polished version of the final draft. It is a completely different animal! In writing the rough draft, you are only creating for yourself a tool for discovering your ideas and gathering them together in a coherent form. It is a crucial tool, one that you cannot do without. But it is a tool nonetheless, and so it is important that you not agonize over it and that you write it as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Being an Active Researcher

Remember that your goal in research is very simple: it is to answer your research question — nothing more, nothing less. Because you have asked an analytical question (i.e., a question with more than one possible "right" answer and that therefore is a good question for discussion), you won't be able to find your answer just by "looking it up." You will need to collect evidence. You'll need to listen to what that evidence tells you. And you'll need to use that evidence to decide for yourself the best answer to your question.

To conduct research efficiently, you will need to concentrate on being active and never passive. Being an active researcher does not mean only that you are "alert" while reading, with pen and paper always at the ready, although perhaps it means that, too. It means that you should constantly be engaging your source material head-on, interrogating it with your research question and pulling out any answers that it might yield. You should be acting upon your sources, rather than just allowing them to act upon you.

The main reason that students grow passive when researching is that they lose sight of the question that they are asking. Without the question in mind, it's impossible to know what, exactly, might be important in the sources. As a result, students either try to note

everything down or (more common) they note nothing at all. To avoid this time-and-energy-wasting passivity, recite your research question like a mantra in your head. Write it on a note card or a post-it and attach it to your computer. Write it on the back of your hand if you must. Just do whatever you can to keep it at the forefront of your mind. If you do that, you will always be active as you research.

Making a Plan: Thinking about Draft "Chapters"

To find answers to your research question efficiently, you want to begin by organizing your research into small, manageable parts. The best way to do this is to start thinking about a provisional structure for your rough draft document right away. This may seem premature to some of you, but remember that the rough draft is just a tool that you are creating for later use. It's not your final draft. It's a preliminary organization of your research in loose essay form, and nothing more.

Any project will have many possible organizational structures, so the idea is to find a strategy of approach that works best for you. In close conversation with your tutor, think about the best ways to organize your research work into logical, workable pieces. These pieces will become the provisional "chapters" of your rough draft.

Are you thinking about conducting human subject research, like doing oral history interviews? Find out whether your project needs review and approval by visiting the Undergraduate Research Training Program (URTP) Portal, https://cuhs.harvard.edu/urtp-portal. Contact the Director of Studies with any questions!

Usually, your source base will dictate how you structure your rough draft. Think first about natural divisions that exist in your sources. Can you divide your source base by texts? By genres? By themes? Locations? Authors? Chronology? A provisional organization scheme might place a primary text or set of texts at the center of each draft "chapter." It might focus on particular chronological moments, or individual locations relevant to your research.

For whatever logical organization scheme you choose for your research, sit down again with your work calendar and figure out deadlines for each "chapter" of your rough draft. Remember that these chapters are provisional only. They may not correspond at all to the chapters of your final draft. They are simply a way into your project so that you can interrogate a logical portion of your source base with your research question and present how the evidence leads you to an answer or set of answers.

Taking Notes and Writing Daily

When taking notes, be sure to do more than just write down page numbers and quotations. Your notes should also consist of more than a collection of highlighted passages in your books or sticky-note arrows affixed to pages. You must realize that the purpose of taking notes is not just to cull data from your source material. It is to transfer what is going on in your mind as you read and interpret the evidence into written form. In other words, your notes need to do work for you. They need to help you to combine researching and writing into a single exercise.

You will need a good system for recording your findings accurately and consistently. If you read ten different books about how to conduct research, you will learn ten different note-taking techniques for your research. We're not going to tell you here precisely which one you should use. You've learned plenty during your time in high school and college, and it's quite frankly a choice that students need to make for themselves. So, whether you're most comfortable using spiral notebooks, legal pads, note cards, or computer note-taking and database software, it's important that you find a note-taking technique that consistently works for you and that ultimately allows you to record your data and ideas in a usable form.

You will also need to find a good routine for your research sessions in which you both read and write. For each session, be sure to allot enough uninterrupted time (an hour is fine; two to four hours are usually best). Then plan to spend about 80% of your session time reading and annotating (i.e., noting information with page numbers, highlighting, jotting down thoughts in a notebook or on a computer or in margins or on post-its — whatever helps you to record your data in usable form). After this, we suggest that you spend the last 20% of each session actually writing paragraphs or pages.

The trick — and this trick works wonders — is to spend this last 20% of your time writing in complete sentences. Forcing yourself to write in complete sentences each and every time you research will help you to formulate your ideas coherently and completely. Students grow comfortable writing in short-hand when they take notes, and the effect is that their thoughts are never allowed to take full form. If you spend some time writing every time you research, you'll be amazed at how quickly you'll amass page after page of written work — work that you can then directly transfer to your rough draft. Record data and jot down thoughts and ideas for an hour or two or three or four, write some sentences, and you're done for the day. Research really can be as simple as that.

Here is a series of exercises that we suggest for your complete-sentence writing sessions at the end of a day's research:

- **Briefly summarize.** Summary is not always the most useful tool to the researcher because it does not require analytical thinking. So be careful not to overdo it. However, writing out a ***brief*** summary (three or four sentences usually does the trick) of a text or a passage in your own words can sometimes help you to see elements that you may miss the first time through. It can also be useful later as you compile your rough draft when you need to give a short synopsis for your reader. Again, it's important to write out these summaries in your own words. It will force you to see things through your own eyes and not through the eyes of others.
- **Work out possible arguments in answer to your research question.** For every piece of primary or secondary source evidence, write out in paragraph form what that source tells you in light of your research question. This is not the same as a summary. Instead, you're putting the content of your source material to analytical use and writing out how it could help you to answer your research question. You will find sometimes that the source material on which you worked that day helps you to answer your research question very little, or even not at all. If this is the case, try to write about why it does not help you, and then also try to write about the kinds of questions that your source ***could*** help you answer. Remember that if a source does not answer your research question, it's not necessarily useless. It might (by ***not*** answering your question) actually help you to sharpen your research question by showing you what is not relevant.
- **Put the source in dialogue with the rest of your source material.** Last, try to write some sentences in which you answer for yourself how the material relates to other source material that you have consulted. Does it contradict? Does it support? Does it suggest a pattern? Or does it seem inconsistent with what you've already learned? If it is a secondary source that makes an argument, do you agree or disagree? Why?

Remember that your tutor is not your only resource! Our Hist & Lit librarian, Steve Kuehler, can also help with your research questions.
Get in touch with him at kuehler@fas.harvard.edu.

Keep in mind that in these short writing exercises, the only "wrong" way to do them is not to write in complete sentences. Otherwise, the sky is the limit. What you write is all your own — it's simply a means for you to put your thoughts on paper in usable form. Realize also that these exercises do not have to take a great deal of time. Do yourself a favor and keep it simple. Answer the simple questions that we suggest and rattle off a paragraph or two in 15 or 30 minutes. If you're inspired to write more, terrific; but if not, you're done for the day!

Assembling the Rough Draft

You should begin compiling your actual rough draft document as soon as you possibly can. You want to give yourself some time to gather data and to ponder the evidence that you find, of course. But as early as you can, you should start thinking about possible answers to your research question, and how you might present those answers in essay form. In your weekly sessions with your tutor, talk in as much detail as possible about what you are finding, or not finding, in your research. Brainstorm together about how you might use your evidence to formulate an answer to your research question. And then take the complete sentences that you've been writing at the end of each research session and start to arrange them in loose essay form, filling in the gaps along the way whenever you feel you are able.

Back up your work after each work session. Senior surveys have reported that almost 10% experienced computer failure at some point during their thesis work. Don't be a victim of bad luck!

For the drafting itself, you have a large number of very good resources available to you through the Harvard Writing Center and Expository Writing Program. These can help you with outlining, structuring, and executing your writing. But basically, you should focus your efforts on four main elements. You need all four of these elements for a complete rough draft, but it's not necessary (and probably not even useful) to try to write them out in order.

Here are the four elements that every rough draft must contain:

- **An introduction of your argument.** This is where you introduce the basic question that you are answering in your research and place your answer in dialogue with other scholars. You already did some of this in the thesis proposal. But in the rough draft, you want to flesh out the ideas and discussion a bit more. You want to write out all of the details that are necessary for understanding your research question and the sources that you are using. You want to write about the scholarship that addresses your research question, and about how your argument relates to this scholarship. Does it agree? Does it disagree? Does it modify? In what ways? Spend some time exploring these issues with your tutor, and write down what you think.
- **An answer to your research question.** This answer is your main argument, or thesis statement. Remember when we advised you not to argue in your thesis proposal? Well, the research phase is where you start to think about arguing. Formulating an argument takes some hard work. It requires you to let your evidence speak to you and not the other way around. Don't be too hasty to reach a conclusion, but as you read, always be thinking about the possible answers to your research question. Talk them over with your tutor every step of the way. And write them down. Each of your thesis chapters should have an argument, and all of those arguments should address the thesis's research question.

- **A presentation of how your evidence supports your argument.** This is the largest part of your rough draft, where you write out how the evidence that you are gathering in your research leads you to your argument. Here is where you will translate the provisional structure for your rough draft into "chapters" of your draft. For each draft chapter you will write out, in as systematic a manner as possible, how a given portion of your research data answers your research question. This part of your rough draft will feel clunky. Parts of it might feel bloated. Others will feel incomplete. Pieces will be disconnected, disjointed, and disordered. Some sections might even feel a bit wrong. That's all okay. The goal here is to lay out your evidence for yourself and yourself alone, to describe what it says and how it supports your argument. That's it.
- **A basic statement about the implications of your argument.** This is a component of the rough draft that students often skip, but it's the most important part! This is where you start to write out your thoughts about the broader implications of your answer to your research question. It's where you return full circle to the information that you provided in the introduction of your argument. Write out how your argument allows you to understand your primary sources in a new way. Write out how your argument allows you to contribute productively to the scholarly debate about your subject. And write about how your argument leads to new questions and new ideas.

Remember that there's nothing really at stake in the rough draft. It's just a narrative of your notes — a gathering place for your ideas, loosely structured in essay form. You will notice that nowhere have we even remotely suggested that you're writing "Your Thesis" in this stage. You are writing its early, distant, evolutionary cousin. Once you've finished the rough laying out of your ideas and evidence, *then* (and only then) you will use the rough draft as the final tool that you will need to put together the final product.

Again, regular communication with your tutor will be vitally important as you compile your rough draft. Remember that you can't expect your tutor to do your research or to answer your question for you (why would you want that anyway?). But in your weekly conversations with your tutor you should slowly but surely start to consolidate what you are finding in your primary source materials and begin to narrate those findings on the page. Bounce your ideas off of your tutor. Tell them what your hypotheses are and about the evidence that leads you to those hunches. Your tutor will help you to know whether your evidence actually supports what you are saying and will help you to develop those ideas and hypotheses into strong arguments.

Thinking about Audience

This is rarely discussed enough when students first learn to write, but writing is often significantly easier when you picture yourself writing "to" someone. Your thesis has a natural audience already built into the system: members of the tutorial board and/or other Harvard faculty who have some expertise in your field. But this isn't quite the audience that you should be picturing as you draft. To write the rough draft usefully and to write it clearly, it can be extremely helpful to picture a particularly friendly, intelligent person in your life to whom you imagine that you are writing directly, as though your thesis were a letter. This person could be your tutor, if you like. But it is usually better to choose a close friend or family member.

The idea is to picture someone who is a receptive, warm, and completely non-judgmental force in your life. This might be your roommate, your best friend from childhood, a member of your family, etc. It ultimately doesn't matter whom you picture as your audience, but it should be a real person whom you know personally, and it should be a person who doesn't necessarily know a whole lot about your topic and ideas. Writing "to" this person will help you to explain your ideas clearly, carefully, and confidently.

Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism

One last concern to consider carefully as you research and write your rough draft is plagiarism. By now, you should know that plagiarism is bad, but if you haven't heard it yet, here it is, just for the record: Please do not steal other people's words or ideas. It's not a nice thing to do. It's horribly self-destructive. And it's incredibly unnecessary.

But this is not the kind of plagiarism that we're most worried about. While some plagiarism is intentional, some plagiarism actually happens by accident. Note well: both kinds of plagiarism, intentional and unintentional, result in the *same* penalty — they are, that is, equal crimes in the eyes of the Harvard Honor Council.

You must never allow accidental plagiarism to happen to you. You must cite every word and every idea in your rough draft that is not your own. The way to do this is to be vigilant and methodical about exactly writing down where your information is coming from as you take notes. If you quote verbatim, do so self-consciously and explicitly; use clear quotation marks and write down the author, title, and page number of the source. If you are working in translation, you must cite the name of the translator. And then, as you write your rough draft, you should try to write out citations that are as complete as possible. This is sometimes frustrating because citing sources takes time. But any time that you devote to citation now is time that you won't have to spend later. And it will help you to eliminate any chances for accidental plagiarism.

Both kinds of plagiarism, intentional and unintentional, result in the same penalty — they are equal crimes in the eyes of the Harvard Honor Council.

Keep in mind that watching out for plagiarism is also a very good way to gauge how analytical your writing is. If you find yourself simply retelling what other people have written, it's likely that you're not being analytical enough in your thinking. This is a good time to seek help from your tutor about how to approach your issue from a stronger critical angle.

In citing sources, Hist & Lit allows students to use either University of Chicago or MLA (Modern Language Association) citation style. The former is preferred by most history journals. The latter is the chosen style of most literature journals. Neither citation style is better than the other, but most writers have a clear preference for which one they like to use. The only two rules are that you must use one of these citation styles, and that you must ONLY use one of these styles. You cannot mix and match.

Submitting a Draft Chapter for Concentration Review

In mid- to late November, Hist & Lit requires all seniors to submit at least 12 pages of work in progress to the concentration for formal review. The purpose of this assignment is not to induce panic. It is simply to help you to keep moving at a decent pace through the middle stages of your project.

Of course, you won't be finished putting together your entire rough draft when you have to hand in your work in progress. This is perfectly normal, and perfectly fine.

Your goal should be to take one of your provisional chapters and develop it into a self-contained essay. You must make an analytical argument in your work in progress, defend that argument with primary source evidence, and situate that argument in dialogue with some secondary scholarship, so an introduction to your thesis will probably not work for this assignment. But remember that this draft "chapter" does not need to contain the main argument of your thesis as a whole. In fact, it should not, because your main thesis argument should require more than 12 pages to make persuasively!

The concentration will evaluate your submission and determine whether you have progressed far enough in your thesis work. If your draft chapter reveals that you might be struggling with your thesis work, you may be asked to meet with a member of the Hist & Lit administrative team, and perhaps to resubmit work before the winter break. Should this happen to you, just as in the proposal review process, you should not be embarrassed. The purpose of submitting your work in progress for review is simply to make sure that you are on track. If you're not on track, you want to know about it and plan how to fix the problem in December rather than in February!

In December, all seniors participate in a draft chapter peer review workshop with other Hist & Lit seniors and one or two tutors. These workshops offer the opportunity to learn about other seniors' projects and to get valuable feedback on your own. Workshops are scheduled during reading period, and the Assistant Directors of Studies will be in touch about them in late November.

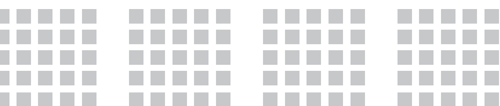
In your work in progress for concentration review, you must make an analytical argument, defend that argument with primary source evidence, and situate that argument in dialogue with some secondary scholarship.

Augmenting Your Research Plan

Occasionally students realize, as they work on constructing the rough draft, that they need more or different evidence to make their claims. This realization can be a difficult moment in the thesis writing process, so it's important to remain calm if it happens to you. Usually, the need for additional research means that you will spend a few more weeks reading source material, taking notes, and writing the suggested complete-sentence exercises. But sometimes it takes going back through the process of hunting for primary source evidence — talking further with professors and experts in your field, culling secondary material in search of further primary source evidence, and enlisting again the help of the research librarian assigned to Hist & Lit students.

If, in conversation with your tutor, you decide that you need more evidence for your argument, you will need to ask yourself the hard question of whether it's really a case of needing more evidence, or whether the evidence is actually not saying what you once thought it did. If the answer is the latter, then you will need to change your argument. If you decide that you need more evidence, however, you must then ask whether this evidence actually exists. If the evidence does exist, you spend a few more weeks going out and finding it. But if it doesn't, you may again need to change your argument, or even change your research question altogether to address more closely the primary source material that you do have.

This requires quick, decisive action and sometimes even conversation with the Director of Studies. Obviously, it is far easier to correct this problem if you can catch it early in the game, so it is absolutely crucial that you discuss with your tutor each and every week whether your sources are speaking directly to your research question. You must be brutally honest in these conversations. You are doing yourself no favors if you hide the fact that you are finding little useful data in your research.



Chapter Three Recap

The goal of the research and rough draft writing stage is to answer your research question in loose essay form. It's important to write as you research and to think about researching and writing as complementary, not separate activities. It's crucial, furthermore, to understand that the rough draft is completely different from the final draft. It is a storehouse of your ideas that you will use later as a tool for completing your final draft.

You should strive to be an active researcher. This means not just writing as you research, but also keeping your research question firmly in mind and making sure that you are using it to interrogate each and every one of your sources, both primary and secondary.

In writing the rough draft you should, in consultation with your tutor, formulate an argument, introduce that argument, describe how your evidence supports that argument, and explain the broader implications of that argument. And as you research and write, you should always be careful to cite any ideas and words that are not your own. If you didn't think it, or if you didn't choose the words, make sure that you've accurately explained and documented where it comes from.

Last, in each and every weekly conversation with your tutor, talk about how directly your primary sources are speaking to your research question. If you find that the evidence is not answering your question, you must decide whether you need to modify your question, or whether you simply need to do a little more research.

Remember that researching and rough draft writing does not have to feel, and indeed should not feel, like agony. Researching and writing is fun. As you conduct your research and write your rough draft, you should feel like you're in conversation with someone who has interests similar to your own. Together, you're figuring out a good answer to that fascinating question you've worked hard to devise during project development.

Revising, the Final Frontier

chapter four

Now that you've made a great deal of headway in assembling your rough draft, it's time to start thinking about how to use it as a tool for creating the final product. To return yet again to our marathon metaphor, you're now well into the race and the majority is actually behind you. You're starting to sense the finish line. The crowds are a bit thicker along the race path and the excitement is palpably starting to build. You still have a few miles to go, however, so you want to continue to pace yourself and work methodically toward the end. You're even starting to get a little tired and your muscles run the risk of straining, so you must use the energy you have left in the most efficient way possible. To cross the finish line in stride, you absolutely cannot break into a sprint too soon.

This last major stage of the Hist & Lit senior thesis marathon is the revising stage. Revising receives a chapter all its own in this handbook because all too often, the process of revision is overlooked. Students think about it in the final week or two of the project, when there is little time and even less brain energy left to devote. And they think of revising as simply a process of "cleaning up."

Revising should ideally be a much larger part of the project than this. It involves, literally, "re-seeing" (our word comes from the Latin, *revisere*, "to look at, visit again"). You should devote just as much time to it as you devoted to the assembly of the rough draft. It is where you take its raw materials and rearrange, eliminate, and augment them to create the final draft.

The precise task of the revising stage is therefore to take your rough draft and help it to evolve into its final form. Remember that your rough draft contains four basic elements: an introduction of your research question, in which you establish your research question and place it in dialogue with other scholars; an answer to your research question, which is your main argument; a presentation of your evidence, in which you systematically explain how primary source evidence supports your argument; and a conclusion of your argument, in which you explain the broader implications of your argument. You must now develop these elements into a tight, coherent essay, with a critical eye toward improving their precision, their clarity, and their persuasiveness.

Developing a Productive Critical Eye: Thinking in Relative Terms about Precision, Clarity, and Persuasiveness

The revising stage is all about developing a productive critical eye and using it to improve your work. The important word here is *productive*. Writers typically tend toward one of two critical thinking extremes: they are either not critical enough about their work, or they are too critical of their work. You know which type of self-critic you are. Either you write and everything looks brilliant to you, or you write and slowly but surely determine that nothing you say is "good" enough. The former leads to sloppy writing; the latter leads to writer's block. Both are deadly enemies of thesis progress. Your goal is to reach a perfect happy medium between the two extremes. You want to be sufficiently critical of your work so that it is always improving. You want not to be too critical of your work so that it is always progressing.

As you work to develop a productive critical eye (and it takes work and practice!), a good trick is to think only about precision, clarity, and persuasiveness as your critical categories. Eliminate all other criteria from your vocabulary. Another trick is to realize that the primary reason that writers become unproductively (be it hypo- or hyper-) critical of their work is that they critique it according to absolute, rather than relative categories. Absolutes — "good," "bad," "right," "wrong" — are rarely, if ever, useful categories of critical analysis. The reason is that "good" and "bad," "smart" and "not smart," can't mean anything on their own. No scholarship is inherently "good" or inherently "bad." There is only scholarship that is "better" and "worse" than other scholarship: what actually exists are relative, rather than absolute, qualities.

Try to work, therefore, in relative terms. Your goal in revising is to make your work *more* precise, to render it *more* clear, and *more* persuasive than it was before. As you write and rewrite your ideas, you are continually transforming your work from a less precise, less clear, and less persuasive state toward a more precise, more clear, and more persuasive state. That's all revising is, really. If you focus your critical eye on these three *relative* categories and forget about everything else (truly, just these three and nothing more!), you will always be productively critical of your work. Your writing will improve every time you work on it. And best of all, you will never get in your own way and hinder your own progress.

Being a productive self-critic requires thinking in relative, rather than absolute terms as you assess the quality of your work.

Working the Thesis Statement

In the revising stage, you first job is to start honing your thesis statement down to size. Ideally, your reader should be able to read your thesis statement and know exactly what the main message of the thesis document will be. Revising your thesis statement is thus a crucial step in writing a precise, clear, and persuasive senior thesis. Many thesis statements contain several sentences, and this is fine.

In conversation with your tutor, take each and every key concept that you use in your argument and ask whether it conveys exactly what you want it to mean. Make sure that every term holds precise meaning: terms such as "society," or "religion," "class," or "culture," for example, can always be clarified more specifically. Remember also that precision is relative. The key is to strive constantly to make your terms more precise than they were before. Make sure that your thesis statement contains information about the "who" or the "what" of your argument, the "where" and the "when" of your argument. Narrow your terms as much as you possibly can to reflect precisely what you are going to discuss in your thesis. If you are arguing about "The Middle Ages" or "modern America," ask yourself whether you need to be more specific. Can you narrow it down to a year or fixed set of years? For the location of your argument, are you really talking about an entire nation, for example, or might you more precisely be talking about a particular region? Are you talking about all Americans, or rather one very specific group of Americans (of a certain class, of a certain ethnicity, of a certain city, neighborhood, etc.)? And what about your sources? Have you mentioned your specific source base in your argument? Are you talking about all of Walt Whitman's poetry? Or just a specific book, or even just a specific poem?

Finding the Best Structure for Your Ideas: Tell a Good Story

Once you have started running your thesis statement through the critical gauntlet, it's time to think about how best to convey that argument to an audience. Too often, students forget that the main purpose of writing the senior thesis is to *communicate* ideas to the world. In communicating your argument successfully, you must frame it and present it in terms that your reader can understand.

In researching and writing the rough draft, you began by developing a provisional structure for your ideas. Now that you've laid out your ideas according to this provisional arrangement, your job is to critique that structure and to figure out ways to make it stronger. The structure of your thesis helps you to make your thesis argument more precise, more clear, and more persuasive. So, in conversation with your tutor, you should discuss the best ways to order your thoughts and evidence so that you can present them in a logical, coherent, and convincing way. Remember that there is never only one way to communicate an idea to an audience. Think again about how many chapters you want your thesis to contain and what the precise argument of each of those chapters should be.

A very common mistake is to assume that readers know far more than they actually do about the subject of the thesis. The result is that students neglect to tell the whole story. Don't ever forget that you have a story to tell with your thesis, and that all theses, like traditional stories, must contain a beginning, middle, and end. Most students spend all of their time on the middle parts of their stories, which is where the analysis is, but then overlook entirely the beginning and end. Don't ever assume that your reader already knows the beginning and end of the story that you want to tell.

Here again is where picturing a friendly, but non-expert close friend as your conversant can be incredibly useful. The more you have that person firmly in mind as you write "to" them, the more likely you will be able to narrate your story precisely, clearly, and convincingly. And if you're worried about providing too much "common knowledge," ask your tutor for specific advice.

Are you working with a complete rough draft that contains all four prescribed elements? If not, you are doing yourself a disservice by continuing onward. If you're not sure, talk to your tutor immediately and devise a good plan for proceeding.

Critiquing Evidence

The last element of revising, as you hone your thesis statement and find the best structure for your ideas, involves thinking about how well your evidence supports your argument. This is sometimes very difficult to do alone, so regular discussion with your tutor about evidence will be crucially important. It's another cliché, but it can sometimes be helpful to envision yourself as a lawyer making a case to a jury. You must convince the jury that your particular answer to your research question is the best one out there.

In conversation with your tutor, ask yourself the following questions: Does your evidence really say what you claim? Do you have enough evidence to make your claim? Have you considered all of the obvious counterarguments? The more you put your evidence to the test, the more persuasive your arguments will become, and the more successful your thesis project will be.

More about Content

Here are some further items to consider carefully during the revising stage.

- **Illustrations:** Illustrations, also called figures, might include anything from a photograph to a printed advertisement to a map to a chart. Illustrations may be inserted in the body of your thesis or included in an appendix at the end. You should include high-quality digital images instead of photocopies if at all possible. Writers often choose to reference an illustration in the body of the text, signaling to readers to refer to a particular figure that's being discussed by turning to a nearby page or to an appendix (e.g., "See Figure 1.") The inclusion of illustrations in a senior thesis, which has a fairly circumscribed audience, falls under fair use, so you do not need permissions to reproduce illustrations in your thesis. However, all images should be accompanied by a caption that identifies the image and may include brief explanatory text. You may also use the caption to attribute the source where you found the illustration (e.g., a url or the name of the archive where you photographed the item), or you can cite the illustration in a footnote or endnote. You do not need to cite your images in your bibliography. For more detailed guidelines on including illustrations in your thesis, see ***The Chicago Manual of Style*** or the ***MLA Style Manual***.
- **Style:** Every student has their own writing style, but be sure to consult the University of Chicago's ***The Chicago Manual of Style*** or the ***MLA Style Manual*** for grammatical rules. The Expository Writing Program guide, ***Writing with Sources,*** is also very useful.
- **Quotations:** Quotations of four lines or fewer, surrounded by quotation marks, should be incorporated into the body of the text. Longer extracts should be indented and should not include quotation marks. Each quotation should be accompanied by a reference.
- **Translations:** If you are using non-English sources in your thesis, you must provide English translation of all such material. Whether you include quotations in the original language is your decision to make. For example, you may elect to selectively include quotations in the original language directly in the body of your text or in footnotes or endnotes, you might include longer passages or even entire short works in an appendix, or you might decide to exclude quotations in the original language entirely. Regardless, you should always include an English translation, and cite whether translations are your own or come from published sources. Be consistent with whatever quotation format you choose, and use it throughout the thesis.
- **Appendices:** An appendix provides additional material that helps support your argument and is too lengthy to be included as a footnote or endnote. Appendices might include images, passages from primary texts in a non-English language or in your translation, or archival material that is difficult to access. It is rare but perfectly acceptable for theses to include appendices, so make sure to discuss with your tutor whether an appendix makes sense for your project.
- **Notes:** Remember that you may use either footnotes (at bottom of page), endnotes (at end of the thesis), or MLA style parenthetical notes. Use notes properly for the following purposes:
    1. to state precisely the source or other authority for a statement in the text, or to acknowledge indebtedness for insights or arguments taken from other writers;
    2. to make minor qualifications, to prevent misunderstanding, or otherwise to clarify the text when such statements, if put in the text, would interrupt the flow;
    3. to carry further some topic discussed in the text, when such discussion is needed but does not fit into the text.

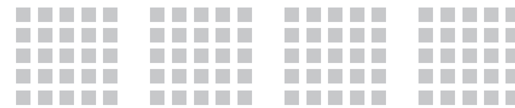
- **Bibliography:** You must append a list of works cited to your thesis. It's a good idea to compile your bibliography as you write, rather than try to put it together all at once at the end (there are very powerful bibliography programs now available, such as Zotero and Endnote, that generate bibliographies automatically). The purpose of the bibliography is to be a convenience to the reader. In the works cited list, primary and secondary sources should be listed under separate headings.

In considering the 20,000 word limit, remember that bigger does not equal better. The best theses tend to be tight, elegant, and to the point.

20,000+ Words? Should You Do It?

If you think that your thesis might exceed 20,000 words (without notes), your tutor will need to consult the Director of Studies on your behalf. Please note that students' requests to exceed 20,000 words must go through their tutors and that these requests must be made by mid-February (check the yearly calendar for the specific deadline).

You should not make the decision to go beyond 20,000 words lightly. Your sole criterion should be that the argument needs words in excess of 20,000 for it to be truly clear and persuasive. Remember: bigger does not necessarily translate into better. The best theses tend to be tight, elegant, and to the point. And even if you do receive permission to exceed 20,000 words, remember that you can still be penalized if readers do not think that the excess length is warranted.



Any extension of the thesis beyond 20,000 words must therefore be merited by the nature of the topic, or sustained excellence in the treatment of the subject, or both. Talk it over with your tutor and make your decision wisely. If you can bring your thesis under 20,000 words with some good editing, by all means do that instead. Your thesis will only be stronger for it.

Chapter Four Recap

The revising stage involves developing a productive critical eye. The key to being *productively* critical is to think in relative, rather than absolute terms. Continually try to make your writing and analysis *more* precise, *more* clear, and *more* persuasive.

Start by critiquing your argument. Think about how best to organize your ideas so that they communicate your argument effectively. And think about how well your evidence supports your claims.

If you think you might want your thesis to exceed 20,000 words, consider carefully whether your argument warrants the extra length. The best Hist & Lit theses are tight, elegant, and to the point. Bigger does not necessarily translate into better.

Last, be creative when you revise. Remember that sometimes revision involves dramatic rearrangement of your ideas, so don't be afraid to try new things. And most of all, don't forget to enlist regular help from your tutor!

chapter five

Finishing the Job

The last stage of the senior thesis project translates into the final .2 miles of the 26.2 mile marathon route. It is the final phase of the race, when the steady stride and momentum that you've worked hard to generate and maintain propels you, once and for all, through to the end. Over the deafening noise of the crowd cheering you to the finish line, we simply want to provide you with some words about proofreading, and some final thoughts about achieving closure for your project.

Congratulations! You're almost there!

Proofreading

All of you have heard plenty of stern words from your professors and tutors about the necessities of proofreading, so we will spare you more diatribe here. We will simply assert that proofreading is, in fact, important. And we'll remind you that you should do your very best to leave yourself *at least* a full day or two at the end for it.

Proofreading helps you to present your work in a good light and ensures that your thesis will make a good first impression on your readers. The goal of proofreading is to make certain that your readers can concentrate fully on your ideas. You do not want to allow them to be distracted by anything else. Even the most brilliant ideas can become obscured by typos, incorrect citation styles, and bad grammar.

If you can, try to enlist a friend to proofread your work for you. You should proofread your work, too, but you are probably too close to your words to see them with 100% clarity. Ideally, another pair of eyes will help you to seek out and destroy all of the annoying and pesky little errors.

- **Title Page:** All theses must include a title page that accords with Harvard's required format (see **Appendix B** for sample title pages).
- **Word Count Page:** Immediately following the title page, you must insert a separate page indicating the word count for your thesis (see **Appendix B** for a sample word count page). This figure refers only to the text; it does not include footnotes, documents, bibliography, or appendices.
- **Table of Contents:** Every thesis requires a Table of Contents to guide the reader.
- **Body Format:** Margins should be 1", and pages should be numbered, beginning with the first page of the introduction. Left justify only; do not full justify. The lines of type must be double-spaced. Font size for the body text of the thesis should be 12 pt. Footnotes must be 10, 11, or 12 pt. in the same font as the body text. Times New Roman font is strongly recommended.
- **Acknowledgments:** Please do not include acknowledgments in the hard copies that you initially submit. Readers prefer not to know who directed your thesis, lest they be somehow swayed by that knowledge. If you wish, you may add acknowledgments after your thesis has been read.

Celebrating the Process and Achieving Closure

The last, but most certainly not least, part of the senior thesis project is to celebrate its end. On the day that theses are due, Hist & Lit throws a champagne party to celebrate its seniors' wondrous accomplishments. Try to attend this party. Use it to take a moment to reflect upon and to celebrate what you have accomplished.

This party is your victory lap — a victory lap that you not only deserve, but owe to yourself to take. The Hist & Lit senior thesis is a project that will help you to grow as a scholar and as a human being. It is important to take some time to appreciate and to commemorate your work, regardless of its final grade, and to toast yourself and the process as you move on to your next life adventure!

appendix A

Funding Your Research

In the spring of your junior year, you will receive information about funding your senior thesis research. You certainly do not need to do summer research in order to write a successful thesis. (Some of our best theses have been started in September.) However, some students find it helpful to begin their research over the summer, often in conjunction with other jobs or internships.

You may be thinking that junior year is too early to apply for a thesis grant since you have not decided on a thesis topic. This is normal. For the purpose of your grant applications, you want to be as specific as possible about the primary materials with which you think you would like to work and the questions that you think you would like to answer. Grant committees understand that your topic will naturally evolve between the time that you submit your grant proposal and the time when you actually carry out your research. So even if you do not know the exact topic that you wish to study, you can at least work with your tutor in the beginning of the junior spring term on devising the general subject for your thesis research, on narrowing down possible source bases, and on identifying library collections that you could use in your research. This will be a useful exercise for you whether you receive a grant or not.

You can find Hist & Lit's Summer Funding Guide on the Hist & Lit website, which includes a list of thesis research grants that are the most likely matches for concentrators. It is by no means exhaustive. For more information about funding, consult the Harvard College Database of Funding and Opportunities for Undergraduates (FOUnd), the Office of Career Services, and the Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships. Note that there are some, albeit more limited, funding opportunities for research during the fall of the senior year, including the Harvard College Research Program.

Note that deadlines tend to be EARLY in the spring semester (for many, February and March). You should contact the relevant program to double-check deadline dates and to inquire about specific application procedures. When it comes time to write your application, the best person to advise you is your Hist & Lit tutor, since they will be most familiar with the project you are formulating.

If you have further questions about funding, make an appointment with the Associate Director of Studies. The fellowships tutor in your house can be an additional source of support. Finally, there are workshops at Harvard in February on writing proposals and devising budgets that could be helpful to you; you will receive emails announcing these workshops near the beginning of the spring semester.

Sample Documents

For your convenience, we have included a sample title page, sample word count page, some sample grant proposals, and some sample thesis proposals (without bibliographies).

Please note that the title page and word count page accord with university guidelines that all students must follow.

The grant and thesis proposals are provided as examples only. They are not meant to be prescriptive in any way.

appendix B

sample title page

1.5" margin

1" margin

"ET TU BRUTE?": THE IMAGE OF CAESAR IN THE RENAISSANCE

by

Font: Times New Roman, 12 pt.
NOT BOLDED! Just regular text.

Robert Edwin Smith

This format is REQUIRED by the College. Do not change it!

Presented to the
Committee on Degrees in History and Literature
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Honors

Harvard College
Cambridge, Massachusetts

March 1, 2011

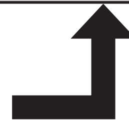
1" margin

"ET TU BRUTE?": THE IMAGE OF CAESAR IN THE RENAISSANCE

by

Robert Edwin Smith

If you are a joint concentrator, list both your concentrations! The primary concentration should be named first, and the allied concentration second.



Presented to the
Committee on Degrees in History and Literature
and the Department of Classics
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Honors

Harvard College
Cambridge, Massachusetts

March 1, 2011

sample word count page

1" margin

Word Count: 17,568

Harvard College Research Program

Research Proposal

Anglo-American Modernism has long intrigued me. My interest was first piqued in high school, where I read T.S. Eliot's poetry in class and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* at home, and then cemented during my first semester at Harvard in my Expository Writing course on Woolf and Hemingway. Largely because of my interest in these figures, I became a History & Literature concentrator in the Britain and America field at the end of my freshman year. Since then, I have encountered Woolf in English 10b (Major British Writers II) and written a sophomore essay for History & Literature entitled "'For all the world to read': Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*." This year, I have expanded my study beyond Woolf with a junior tutorial focused on British fiction in the Modernist and pre-Modernist periods. In addition to various articles, I have read such authors as James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, Ford Madox Ford, and Henry James. My tutorial has emphasized British writers because my tutor, Michele Martinez, specializes in British literature. However, because my field is Britain and America, I have also engaged American Modernists outside of tutorial. For example, in History 1666, The World of William James, I have written one essay on the links between Gertrude Stein's aesthetic and James's description of consciousness, and I am writing a long research paper on the same subject and its implications for the interest of both Stein and James in painting. I have also sought to understand the place of Modernism in the history of literature by constructing a schedule of courses this spring that brackets my tutorial in British Modernism on one side with The World of William James and on the other with English 169, The Road to Postmodernism.

This longstanding interest in Modernism has culminated this year in my junior paper for History & Literature, entitled "'Swagger Sex': The Politics of the Female Body and Reproduction in Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr*." In this essay, I explore the character of Anastasya Vasek in Lewis's 1918 novel, focusing primarily on her control of her own sexuality, body, and reproduction and the threat that such autonomy presents for the title character, Frederick Tarr. Tarr remains caught between Anastasya and another sort of woman represented by Bertha Lunken and Rose Fawcett, whose children pin him down into forced, boring relationships. I examine the ways in which Lewis's biography to some extent lies beneath the development of these characters and Tarr's dilemma, trace the additions and revisions that Lewis made to *Tarr* over time, and turn finally to a discussion of Lewis's attitude toward contraceptives, which he presents as an aid to feminists in later writings. Ultimately, readers of Lewis might well view contraceptives as an aid to philandering male artists like Lewis and Tarr and as a partial solution to Tarr's dilemma.

For my senior thesis in History & Literature next year, I am planning an expansion of my junior paper, and it is for this project that I am applying for funding from the Harvard College Research Program. I will extend my examination of body politics to other works by Wyndham Lewis, particularly his 1937 novel *The Revenge for Love*. I also hope to undertake a comparison between the body politics of Lewis's work and life and the body politics of another Modernist. Gertrude Stein seems the most likely candidate for this comparison. Both she and Lewis spent many years in Paris in communities of artistic expatriates, and both possessed a passionate interest

in visual art; Lewis was a leading avant-garde painter as well as a writer, and Stein was an important collector and critic of art and a friend to artists such as Matisse and Picasso. Lewis and Stein even met once, in 1913 in Paris, and wrote about each other with marked vehemence. Indeed, Stein's American- and woman-centered life and work serve as an excellent contrast to Lewis's marked British masculinity. In my thesis, I would examine these connections and contrasts and focus on the body politics of both artists, particularly in relation to the representation of the female body and reproduction in their work. I would also investigate the responses of Lewis and Stein to the changing patterns of reproduction in the inter-war period, when fertility rates fell sharply and birth control became a political issue in Britain and United States for the first time.

In this project, I hope to be advised by Michele Martinez, a member of the Committee on Degrees in History & Literature and the Department of English and American Literature and Language. She has worked with me this year as my junior tutor, and her familiarity with feminist and other theories about the female body and the work of Wynham Lewis certainly qualify her to advise my thesis. However, because she specializes in British literature, any extension of my project to include Gertrude Stein would require me to seek some outside advice from a scholar of American literature.

I plan to undertake the research for my thesis during the summer at the Robert W. Woodruff Library at Emory University in Atlanta, GA, my home city. Since I must remain at Harvard for three weeks to fulfill my commitment to the Harvard University Student Porter Program, I will not be able to begin my research until July. Once I begin, however, I plan to research my thesis in lieu of finding employment, and I have applied for a stipend to support my work. I will spend the months of July and August at Emory, using their collections to read texts by Lewis and Stein and to research the cultural conceptions of the female body and reproduction that surrounded them and the ways in which these notions were changing at the time. At the end of the summer, I plan to travel for two or three days to the Carl A. Kroch Library at Cornell University and examine the papers of Wyndham Lewis in the Rare and Manuscripts Collections there. As a less frequently studied Modernist, his letters have not drawn the attention that Stein's papers have, and they are less readily available in collected form.

In order to support this project, I have applied for a stipend because research for my thesis will take the place of a job during July and August. I have also requested reimbursement for the expenses I will incur at the Woodruff Library, where I will be unable to take books out of the library and will need to photocopy all source material. Finally, I have requested reimbursement for transportation, lodging, and food during my brief trip to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, at the end of August.

Thesis Research Proposal for "Anti-Colonial Protest in Literature: Moroccan Theatre in the French Protectorate"

Most scholars agree that Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 catalyzed modernization in the Arab world through contact with the West. During a decline that had lasted several centuries, Arab literature had also stagnated, but the arrival of the printing press from Europe along with the influence of European writers provided Egyptians with new ideas and possibilities. Soon, Arabs had appropriated and experimented with the traditionally Western literary forms of the short story, the novel, and theatre.[1]

While many scholars have studied the West's influence on Egyptian, Levantine, and Iraqi literature of the 19th century, a much later Franco-Arab encounter has remained largely ignored. In 1912, Morocco was the last African country to be colonized. Although Moroccans had contact with the West before Spain and France divided their country into regions of separate European control, it is interesting to note that the first theatre in Morocco did not open until 1913. Furthermore, it seems that no Moroccan wrote Arabic-language drama until the early 1920s. Thereafter, two forms of theatre apparently became widely popular: plays by the French writer Molière (translated into Arabic), and anti-colonial drama performed in the Moroccan dialect of Arabic.[2]

Within this story lays a central paradox and many questions that I hope to answer. A combination of historical and literary methods may explain the effect of European influence on Moroccan literature as well as Moroccan strategies for struggling against colonialism. How and why did Moroccans adopt (and therefore accept) a European literary form to protest European politics? Why didn't theatre exist until the 1920s and then suddenly become widely popular? Why did writers use theatre to fight French and Spanish colonialism instead of other literary forms, or how did their use of theatre differ? How did European or other Arab literature influence Moroccan writing? How did Moroccan theatre affect the anti-colonial movement and the colonial powers, if at all?

While research has offered answers to similar questions for different parts of the world and other types of literature (my bibliography mentions examples of works on anti-colonial poetry and drama from the Arab east, especially Egypt), little has been published that addresses this phenomenon in Morocco; moreover, the few works I have found lack a theoretical background, revealing close readings, or a synthesis of the evidence into conclusions that further our understanding of the cultural effects of political/military encounters on the one hand, and about methods of resisting colonialism on the other. Several barriers may have prevented scholars from researching this subject — a thorough

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[1] For an example of this widely accepted point of view, see M. M. Badawi, ed. *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
[2] Abdelwahed Ouzri. *Le Théâtre au Maroc: Structures et Tendances*. Casablanca: Les Editions Toubkal, 1997.

study requires knowledge of the languages spoken in Morocco, for instance, to ensure access to primary and secondary sources (Moroccan Arabic, Standard Arabic, French, and Spanish are necessary, all of which I know). Furthermore, many of the sources — including theatrical pieces that were never published and recordings of the performances, in addition to the writers, dramaturges, and actors — are only available in Morocco.

This summer, I hope to travel to Casablanca, Rabat, Fès, and other parts of Morocco to work with these sources. Through archival research, I will search for the texts of plays unavailable in the United States and secondary sources on those plays. In stores as well as archives, I will look for recordings of plays that were shown on TV. Finally, I will meet with Moroccans researching similar subjects (I have already found a graduate student in Fès who said he would tell me about the dissertation he is writing on Moroccan theatre if I came to see him) and interview primary sources, too. I will almost certainly be in Casablanca for an eight-week internship and will start my thesis research then since, in addition to having Casablanca's resources available, I will be able to make day-trips to Rabat (the national archives are open on days I will most likely have free from work) and contact my human sources by phone. I would like to devote at least three weeks after my internship solely to thesis research, however, so that I can continue working in the archives in Rabat and elsewhere, in addition to conducting interviews in other parts of the country.

After spending this spring preparing for my summer research, I will arrive in Morocco with the tools, plans, and knowledge necessary to make the most of my time there. I am already delving into preliminary research with Professor William Granara, my tutor for my one-on-one Near Eastern Languages junior tutorial and Harvard's leading academic of North African literature. He will probably become my faculty adviser for my thesis and continue working with me on this topic throughout next year, but, at the moment, he is helping me explore the subject of anti-colonial poetry from the Arab east and helping me find lesser-known materials touching on this theme in the context of Moroccan theatre. Furthermore, since the research topic I have chosen is considered cutting-edge in my field, I am lucky to have found many other instructors so interested in my work that they have already offered their resources, including my History & Literature junior tutorial leader Zahr Stauffer (who is especially helpful at working through frustrating moments of long-term projects with me, as well as directing my attention to productive questions), a graduate student in Near Eastern Languages applying to work for the History & Literature department, Jonathan Smolin (he is writing his dissertation on Moroccan theatre and has already provided me with a list of useful references and information about conducting research in Morocco), and Susan Slyomovics, an anthropology professor at MIT for whom I worked freshman year and who will put me in touch with her contacts in Morocco.

Thank you for considering to provide the funds necessary to make this project possible.

Name: Field in History & Literature: European Studies **Tutor: Thesis Topic or Title:** Issues of Gender in Travel Literature: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters*

In 1716 Edward Wortley Montagu was appointed Ambassador to Turkey, a position that involved travel through Europe to Constantinople, the epitome of the exotic and unknown. While Edward's diplomatic negotiations took place in Sultan Ahmed III's palace, his wife, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu caught a glimpse of an even more forbidden world, exoticised in accounts by European travelers and fantasized about by the literate European public—the seraglio. She kept a diary based on her experiences there, which she later transformed into a collection of 'letters' written to family, friends, admirers, literary men, and her husband. Although she published numerous works upon her return to England—many of which extolled the intellectual capacities of women, disparaged their current societal position and responded to male authors' chauvinism—*The Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763) were not published until a year after Lady Mary's death. In her lifetime, the manuscript circled among a small circle of friends, the most noteworthy of whom was Mary Astell, an English proto-feminist writer who wrote the a short introduction to the *Letters* in 1724.

In this thesis, I will examine Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Turkish Embassy Letters* as an indirect critique of the condition of women in Enlightenment England. I will specifically focus on the descriptions of the women in the harem and Lady Mary's relationship with them, keeping four main backdrops in mind: the genre of the epistolary novel, the oriental tale and orientalism, the epistolary correspondence between Montagu and her circle of confidants, and the pamphlets on women's conduct and position in early eighteenth-century England. Generally, I will ask: what did *TEL* mean to its few English readers before 1750 and what would it have meant to a wider English readership?

Lady Mary works hard to debunk prevailing stereotypes about the harem and the Near East. In so doing, she makes common cause with writers of the same period (Montesquieu, Johnson, Voltaire), who both take advantage of the newfound popularity of the Oriental tale and undercut its exoticism. Of particular interest in this connection is Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), which gives to the epistolary novel an orientalist tinge to accomplish a social critique (of France) as well. By tracing the reception of these oriental tales in England, I hope to set Lady Mary's work in relation to widespread public interest in the Near East.

The epistolary character of Lady Mary's work necessitates an examination of the conventions of letter-writing in the period. Secondary essays will help me assess whether style was associated strongly with gender (female or male) or with a topic (travel writing or politics).

A significant focus of my investigation will comprise Lady Mary's circle(s) of acquaintance and the travels of her manuscript within these circles. Lady Mary was close with both Mary Astell, the champion of women's learning and critic of the institution of marriage, and Alexander Pope, the famed Catholic poet. She also participated in London Coffeehouse society (Kit-Kat Club). I will continue to trace the circles of readers of the manuscript after Lady Mary's death up until the publication(s) of *TEL*.

Finally, Lady Mary's social critique in her portrait of the harem must be examined in relation to the larger debates over the proper role and position of women in English society. Primarily examined through Astell's and Lady Mary's publications, correspondences between Lady Mary, Astell and Pope, and secondary literature, I will characterize the "proto-feminist" movement of the time, evaluating its coherence, composition, tenets and activity.

As a whole, this thesis will weave together themes of gender, travel and social commentary to argue the significance of *The Turkish Embassy Letters* in eighteenth-century England and to capture the interplay between culture(s) and text(s).

Name: **Field:** American Studies **Tutor:** Thesis

Prospectus: Queer on the Frontier: Cultural Representations of the Gay Cowboy in Art & Cinema

"It is an assault on children because it is sending them the message that homosexuality is an acceptable, normal lifestyle. It is also a perversion of Westerns. All Western heroes have been portrayed as straight shooters — and that just doesn't mean hitting a target with a gun. It's a matter of character." - Robert Knight, director of Concerned Women for America's Culture and Family Institute, commenting on Marvel Comics' gay cowboy series The Rawhide Kid *in 2002.*

Robert Knight's comments reflect the cowboy figure's status as a paragon of idealized American masculinity. Defined as a rugged hero and a self-made man, the cowboy sits at the center of a mythical frontier West that enchants the imagination of Hollywood and society. Yet as Annie Proulx's recent short story "Brokeback Mountain" (1997) demonstrates, even that archetypal image of manhood can be recast in a manner that jeopardizes the cowboy's standing in a testosterone driven, heterosexual culture. This thesis seeks to chronicle late 20th century representations of the cowboy that offer an ambiguous or subversive portrayal of his sexuality.

Though the thesis will focus on the post-Stonewall era, it will begin by asking: how queer was the nineteenth-century frontier? Scholars have already attempted to draw out latent homo-erotic undertones in nineteenth-century representations of cowboys by examining the work of Frederic Remington and other iconic Western artists. This thesis breaks new ground by moving to examine
20th-century representations of cowboys, beginning with the Western genre films of the post-war era including Howard Hawks's *Red River* (1948), *The Left-Handed Gun* (1958, based on Gore Vidal's teleplay), and Andy Warhol's *Lonesome Cowboys* (1968). This brief section of the thesis will work to demonstrate that the image of the cowboy was charged with homo-eroticism even prior to the more public expressions of gay identity that developed after 1969.

More important to the focus of the thesis, however, is an examination of how explicitly queer representations of the cowboy are being deployed by gay communities and artists following the riots on Christopher St. Important questions include: How did gay culture appropriate, subvert, and challenge the myth of the cowboy, and to what ends? Were certain subsets of gay culture intent on defining themselves in opposition to traditionally effete stereotypes of homosexuality? Were some images of the gay cowboy focused instead on tarnishing and undermining the poster-boy figure of aggressive masculinity that represented the oppression and hostility of the heterosexual male majority? Are images of queer cowboys driven by a fetishization of a cultural and physical ideal, and if so, what are the implications for gays' conceptions of themselves? What is the significance of placing images of gay identity within the aesthetic history of the Western frontier? Little scholarship has been devoted to these questions, and this thesis hopes to address this gap in the critical literature.

In examining these questions, the thesis will look to primary sources of gay stories, cartoons, and erotica published in the gay press during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Another primary source is the art of Delmas Howe, which offers a particularly interesting oeuvre relevant to this subject; his series of large homo-erotic paintings, *Rodeo Pantheon*, depicts classical characters such as Hercules or Theseus but dresses them up as cowboys and places them against a Western frontier background. Since little has been written on Howe, his paintings provide an important source of fresh primary source material related to the thesis's focus. If time and resources permit, the thesis will include an oral history section devoted to interviews with real-life gay cowboys that would be obtained during a trip to the final round of the International Gay Rodeo competition that takes place in Dallas next month.

The thesis will end by moving beyond the gay community to look at more mainstream representations of cowboys, including John Schlessinger's 1969 classic *Midnight Cowboy*, Ang Lee's upcoming film adaptation of Proulx's story, and a gay cowboy comic book character named The Rawhide Kid that Marvel introduced in 2002 to the public consternation of family conservatives. An analysis of these works combined with the critical reception that they received in the mainstream press will allow an examination of the various heterosexual responses to subversive cowboys, and will highlight the anxieties that surround queer appropriation of traditionally macho subjects. The thesis will reflect on the question from a historical perspective, examining how the significance of subversive cowboys differs across cultural moments, for surely the circumstances surrounding *Midnight Cowboy* in 1969 differ from the current social climate that will receive Lee's version of *Brokeback Mountain*. Drawing on queer theory, film theory, and art analysis, the thesis will apply a "myth and symbol" methodology to examine just how "straight" is the "straight-shooter" figure that Knight invokes as an iconic American myth.

Good Habits to Develop Early

DO be an active researcher.

To conduct research efficiently, you will need to concentrate on being active, and never passive. Being an active researcher does not mean only that you are "alert" while reading, with pen and paper always at the ready. It means that you should constantly be engaging your source material head-on — interrogating it with your research question and pulling out any answers that it might yield. You should be acting upon your sources, rather than just allowing them to act upon you. Keeping your research question firmly in mind is the key. The main reason that students grow passive when researching is that they lose sight of the question that they are asking. Without the question in mind, it's impossible to know what, exactly, is important in the sources. The result is either that students try to note everything down or (more common) that they note nothing at all. Recite your research question like a mantra in your head and follow where it leads. Write it on a note card or a post-it and attach it to your computer. Write it on the back of your hand if you must. Just do whatever you can to keep it at the forefront of your mind. If you do that, you will always be active as you research.

DO be brutally honest with your tutor.

The senior tutorial is no time for being coy, and it's no time for putting on a show of strength and understanding when you have none. Be as confidently and stridently honest about your work and your progress as you possibly can, as soon as you possibly can, and as often as you possibly can with your tutor. Tell your tutor every time you see them precisely where you are in the process and how you are feeling about it. Your tutor may exhibit seemingly magical powers of wisdom and insight, but no tutor can read your mind. If you hide the fact that you're struggling, or procrastinating, or whatever, your tutor can't help you. And what your tutor wants more than anything is to help you. Your tutor can help you best when they know what you need. And to know, you've got to give up the info.

DO sleep, eat, and exercise.

This should probably be number one on this list, because it is perhaps the most important. Because the senior thesis is a marathon and not a sprint, if you don't pace yourself and take care of yourself along the way, you quite honestly will have a very difficult time making it to the end. Physical and mental wellness through the long months of your thesis project starts with the basics, and it has to start right now. There is no time to waste. Get into a healthy routine. Keep up with your sleep. Finally make good on those Harvard gym privileges. Or start that yoga class. Whatever. Just take care of yourself! You will thank yourself in February (and for the rest of your life as you realize that starting up those habits now will keep you young). Oh, and by the way, taking care of yourself also means allowing yourself to put your thesis aside and to have fun every once in a while, too. Working all the time isn't healthy, either.

Bad Habits to Break Right Away

DON'T make it your goal to write an award-winning essay.

Over-achievement is something that has been ingrained in many of us at Harvard from the very beginning: we are a community of perfectionists. If you are one of the many, we're not even going to try to suggest that you eliminate your perfectionist impulses from your brain (that would be a pipe dream). What we will do, however, is strongly urge you to set some smaller goals for yourself first, and right away. Start by making Goal #1 a well-designed research question. Make Goal #2 a complete rough draft. And make Goal #3 a strong final draft: one that asks a strong, well-conceived research question; that makes a precise, clear, and persuasive analytical argument; and that has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Once you have a strong final draft, then you can make Goal #4 to polish it into award-winning shape. Every Hist & Lit student is capable of truly amazing work. And we mean every single student. So the best theses are not a reflection of some innate mystical capacity that certain students have and most don't. The best theses are almost always (99% of the time) the ones that start efficiently and stay efficient from beginning to end. If you make it your goal to be efficient and organized, not to skip steps, and to work that way throughout the entire course of your project, we can pretty much guarantee that success will follow.

DON'T shut yourself out from the rest of the world.

This goes partly with the good habit of talking to your tutor and allowing yourself some healthy fun from time to time. But it also means that you need to remember that your senior thesis is only one aspect of your life, not your entire life. The best theses, once again, are almost never the ones that are all-consuming in a given student's life. Shutting yourself out from the rest of the world, thinking that it will help you to "be serious," actually will cause you to lose perspective, which does not make for good analytical work. Keep your perspective. Stay integrated with the rest of your life.

DON'T think of your senior thesis as a reflection of you.

Ready? Everyone repeat: "I am not my thesis. My thesis is not me." This should be a mantra running through your head each day, every day, for the next year. No one (and we mean no one) will think less of you — or more of you — based on the results of your thesis.

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