

FORMAT FOR M.A. THESIS PROPOSALS  
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY – NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

The following is a suggested format for organizing your thesis proposal. This outline names the important parts of a thesis proposal and briefly describes the purpose of each. Topics and questions are indicated that you should address in your proposal.

- I. Abstract. This section is a brief 500 word statement summarizing your research proposal. It should include: (1) a clearly defined research question; (2) a declaration why this research is relevant; (3) a statement on how you will examine this research question; and (4) a summary of your expected findings.
  
- II. Introduction. This section introduces your proposed research.
  - A. What are your major research goals and why are they important?
  - B. What specific aspects of the general problem will you address?
  - C. What is the rationale or justification for pursuing this line of inquiry?
  - D. Briefly state your expected conclusions and findings.
  
- III. Background. This section outlines the theoretical framework in which you undertake your research.
  - A. What information or data will you bring to bear on your research problem?
  - B. Briefly review the literature in terms of your line of inquiry.
  - C. Discuss this previous research and its impact on your research.
  
- IV. Methods. This section describes your methodology for data collection and analysis.
  - A. In terms of your goals and the previous research undertaken, define your specific research questions or hypotheses. How are these questions be relevant to your research problem?
  - B. What sort of data or observations will you use to answer these questions?
  - C. Outline your general research methodology for data collection.
  - D. If your thesis will involve any work with human subjects, you must submit a **HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH FOR** to the Graduate School. This form is available in the Department of Anthropology Office. If you have any questions regarding this, please contact the chair.
  
- V. Expected Findings. This brief section outlines your specific steps of research.
  - A. What do you expect to find as a result of your research?
  - B. What are some other possible findings that you do not expect?
  - C. Present any preliminary results or pilot studies that you have conducted.
  
- VI. Schedule. This section tells what you have accomplished so far and gives a tentative schedule of the things you have yet to do.
  - A. Discuss your schedule for field work/data collection. When will this happen?
  - B. Discuss your schedule for data analysis. When will this happen?
  - C. When will you write your thesis?
  - D. When do you plan to defend your thesis?
  - E. Include a brief budget if you feel it is appropriate.
  
- VII. Committee. Include the names of your major advisor and two other committee members. One of the other committee members may be from outside the department if this is appropriate to your research. Discuss your proposal with your advisor and your committee members. Your committee's signature approval on the title page is required before you can enroll for thesis (ANTH 699) credit hours.