

The George Washington University
Department of Religion
The MA thesis prospectus

A. GENERAL GUIDELINES

The prospectus enables you to be certain that you and your thesis review committee both understand and consent to the work you will undertake in fulfillment of the master's thesis. Therefore, the more detailed and precise your prospectus, the less chance for misunderstanding as you undertake the writing of your thesis.

The length of the prospectus will vary according to the nature of the student's chosen topic and the student's progress to date, but in general, it is expected that a prospectus will be between 7 and 15 pages long, including references. To be certain that they understand what is expected of them, students should discuss the prospectus with their department chair or advisor. The prospectus should be submitted to the department of religion for the student's record. In addition, students should submit one copy of the prospectus to each member of their thesis committee.

B. THE THESIS PROSPECTUS

Although the shape of your thesis may change somewhat as you undertake the process of research and writing, the prospectus should generally indicate that you comprehend and understand the nature and trajectory of your thesis subject. You should be familiar with current literature in the broader field which your thesis subject comprises, and be able to demonstrate awareness of how your chosen topic fits into this field of knowledge and scholarship.

The prospectus should contain the information indicated below:

1. a title page: working title, name, date, academic advisor, thesis committee, etc. (1 page)
2. a description of the topic (no more than 1 page, double-spaced)
3. the research questions: hypotheses or questions to be addressed in the thesis; state clearly how these relate to the existing literature.
4. an explanation of chosen methodology. This includes a description of the texts, artifacts, or other data to be collected, and the methods that will be used to analyze them.
5. a tentative outline of chapters, in brief, descriptive paragraph format
6. a proposed work schedule, with estimated date of completion
7. a bibliography that demonstrates critical awareness of pertinent literature in the broader field of your subject, in addition to the literature that is relevant to your particular topic. These two types of sources should be listed under separate headings

Please use subject headings for each item and begin your bibliography and any tables and/or charts on a separate page from the main narrative of your prospectus.

The prospectus requires that you describe the nature of your project as comprehensively as possible; know the critical contexts for your work as well as how your work fits into these contexts; and demonstrate that you have a good plan for executing and completing your project. Your thesis committee will then be better able to comment on the feasibility of your project and make any recommendations, if necessary, for its modification. Please note that your committee and the department will not accept a prospectus that is ill-conceived or beyond the scope of your ability to complete in a reasonable time-frame.