

# Proposal for the Position Paper

**The assignment:** Write a one-page proposal for the position paper due at the end of the semester, giving the topic and a possible thesis.

## IMPORTANT:

- **Watch the video.** The overview video explains what I want you to cover in the essay and what I'm expecting in terms of arguments, evidence, and structure.
- **Before you upload,** make sure your essay meets the Requirements for All Papers, including formatting, structure, and citations.
- **For how to do citations and bibliographies,** see the Research and Citation Center. You will be marked down drastically if your paper is not properly cited.

We'll work through the position paper in stages over the course of the semester. The first stages involve choosing a topic and writing a proposal.

## 1. Choose a topic

First, choose one of the 13 meeting topics for the course and decide on a controversy or debate pertaining to that topic.

- You can choose something that the people at the time might have debated (e.g., "Who was truly to blame for the Peloponnesian War?" as a debate arising amongst the Greeks during or after the war), or a question arising among modern historians (e.g., "Was the Athenian Empire an actual empire?"). In each case you need to outline both sides of the question in your paper and then provide evidence why you think one side was right.
- Choose a topic you're interested in and have fun with it. Make it wacky, make it provocative—anything is fine as long as you make an argument regarding your chosen topic and support it with facts.

## 2. Write a proposal

The proposal is just a brief one-page preview of your position paper. It should include:

- The topic you think you'll want to write about and the problem you're interested in addressing. You should be able to delineate the problem by describing the opposing views people might take. To make sure you have two clear opposing opinions, you might want to express them in the form "Some say... Others say..."
- Your preliminary thesis statement—in other words, what you think you might be arguing in your paper.
  - Your thesis statement, both here and in the final paper, should be a statement of opinion that someone could disagree with. It can take the form of following up the description of the opposing opinions with your own: "I believe...."
  - Remember that your thesis is provisional. You can change anything about your approach and interpretation after the proposal; in fact, uncovering information as you do your research makes refining or changing your initial assessments very likely.

Your proposal is structured like the introduction to the position paper, and may serve as the basis for it. A sample introduction is shown on the Position Paper page.

The proposal is not graded, but whether you submitted a proposal on time will be factored into the final grade for the position paper. I will give you feedback on things like the feasibility of researching your topic, whether the scope is too big or too narrow for a paper like this, and some possible sources you might want to look at.

Note: A sample proposal can be found on the course website, on the Proposal page.

Note: The one-page proposal described here is what's due in Week 7.