

Comments on the term paper topic proposal

Point "4" under "Additional Comments on Assignments" in the course outline details exactly what is expected for the term paper topic proposal. The five numbered parts, presented in the given order, are all that is required to complete the 2 or 3 page topic proposal. **(1) a tentative title** should require no explanation, though your title should concisely summarize your chosen topic. **(2) the intended thesis/theme:** Here you should indicate the nature of the case you are presenting and/or your main argument in a paragraph or less. A thesis is a statement of an argument which must be substantiated (i.e. proven) through the presentation of evidence in the body of the essay. A theme is a recurring concept or unifying idea in a piece of writing. A thesis will be better suited to a topic that is more controversial, whereas a theme will relate better to a topic that is more settled in nature. **(3) a summary of the main points to be addressed:** Indicate briefly the source and types of information you are going to present with some salient details, concentrating on the information which most strongly supports your theme/thesis. You should cite relevant references in this part. These must appear in your reference list. **(4) some preliminary conclusions:** Here you should indicate any conclusions that you have reached about your chosen topic based upon your research to that date. Your conclusions may change as you do more research, but these should be consistent with what is written in the previous sections. **(5) a short list of references:** Provide 5-10 references most relevant to your topic. These may or may not have been cited in the previous parts of the proposal. Remember, that online references should be used sparingly in your term paper. This means that most of your included references should be from printed (scholarly books and articles) sources. The use of encyclopedias and "popular" books as references is generally not acceptable. These can be useful in identifying relevant primary sources, however.

Remember, your term paper will be, at most, 12 pages long. You should craft your proposal with this in mind, taking into consideration the limited amount of information that can be covered in the available space. Also remember to ensure that both geological and cultural aspects of your topic are clearly evident in your proposal (particularly in the theme/thesis, point summary and conclusions).

Proposals will be graded as indicated in the same section of the course outline.

Please submit two separately stapled copies of your proposal in the assignment drop box by the deadline (4 pm, Thursday Feb. 22).

These will also be accepted by the instructor following the lectures, until Tuesday Feb. 20.

Good Luck!