

Prof. Judith Shapiro. FIRST PAPER INSTRUCTIONS, SIS 660 PROJECT GRANT PROPOSAL

Write a short application for a grant to research a topic overseas. Start with an interesting sentence that grabs the reader and puts him/her into a situation that is important and contested. What questions are unresolved about this important issue? How will you go about answering them?

Much of the paper will focus on HOW you will go about getting the answers to a question that matters in some way, to yourself and to others. Most of the paper space will be taken up with a discussion of what you will actually DO and how you will do it.

Please begin by identifying a “case” or situation about which there is some tension on the ground, or some dispute among scholars and/or policy makers about the causes and solutions. How would you go about explaining the tension? What would you need to know in order to intervene? What would you really like to know?

For many of you, this exercise will be an opportunity to define your interests and learn about framing a project. You should think about “doability” – how realistic is your project, can you find the right contacts, can you complete it in the timeframe of a year or six months?

If you are not sure about your question, figure out which field of study that has the most to say about your issue and draw on that field for inspiration. Some of you whose interests are already well defined may decide to follow through on the whole application process, others may not feel ready. That will not affect how well you do on this assignment.

I have uploaded examples of successful Boren and Fulbright applications under Course Content

Some considerations:

What methods will you use?

What “literature” has a lot to say about this?

How long will you spend in a given location?

Is there an institution in that place which might be a good host/partner for you, either for an internship or for study?

One of the reasons we are doing this early in your grad career is that some deadlines (such as Boren) are coming up early next year and some of you may end up applying for these grants.

Some grants require you to include information about your personal background, skills, preparedness, and qualifications. The Boren also asks for an essay about the relationship to security concerns. However, for the purposes of THIS exercise, we are focusing on the project so please do not write those two essays at this point. (I am happy to read them later, if you are planning to carry through the whole application; you will be better prepared to write a security essay after we do that unit later in the semester.)

Aim for 4-6 pages. Bibliography or citations can help strengthen project proposals as they show you know the literature and can situate your question within an existing debate, but you may also need to stay within the word length, so try to be balanced about the number of citations you use. Any style is fine with me as long as it is consistent.

Check list

Do you have a snappy title? Good topic sentence that draws the reader in? Is there an early statement about the importance/timeliness/significance of the issue? (Who is concerned about the issue and why, why does it matter?)

What core question do you expect to address?

Does the proposal reflect your understanding of the latest debates on the issue? The leading thinkers/practitioners/activists? Have you read the literature? (Allocating a period of time to read the literature can be part of your proposal but you should do the initial work for your paper.)

What sources are available for you to draw on? (For example, peer reviewed articles and books from academic presses, journalism, NGO reports, project reports, historical archives, interviews.)

How will you go about your research? What will you actually DO? What methods will you use? (How will you go about ‘knowing’?)

Is this problem truly fascinating to you? Can you convey that sense of fascination?

What do you expect to do with your findings?

Do you use subheadings to help make the proposal easier to read?

Is the proposal interesting to read? Does it provide enough background that someone who is not a specialist can understand it?

Will you need IRB review? Informed consent?

Examples of common methodological choices:

Quantitative/qualitative

Interviews – structured, semi-structured, unstructured

Survey research (structured, semi-structured)

Focus groups

Participant observation

Archival research

Case study analysis

Comparative case study analysis