

Writing a Thesis Proposal: Argument, Evidence, & Counter-Argument

This thesis proposal represents a complete, reasoned approach to the assignment in its entirety. While it envisions a complete project, in no way should you feel constrained to only fulfill the project proposed in this document. Any project worth doing is worth revising as one engages with it.

Your thesis proposal needs to contain three crucial elements:

- (1) thesis, a claim that answers the details of the prompt in a specific, reasoned way
- (3) evidence, or the primary material which can be used to support your claim
- (2) counter claim, or an outline of ways in which reasonably well-informed readers might disagree with the thesis

The thesis is the core of the proposal, and most of your time will be spent developing a sophisticated thesis. Since the thesis develops the major claim of your argument, be careful that it well represents the entirety of the scope and insight of your project. Following your thesis, which is of course one (or two) sentence, you should explain and develop your ideas in a paragraph of 5 to 7 sentences. For more information, see the “Guide to Expository Analysis: Argument, Thesis and Introduction”

Furthermore, you should identify potential points of evidence that may be useful to your project. At a minimum, three moments of textual support should support your proposal, while 5 or 6 might suggest a richer and better developed project. Make sure your proposal clearly identifies each element of textual support by page number as well as a brief (1-3 sentences) description of the support itself.

Finally, the counter-argument is a necessary and important element of the proposal. It allows you to imagine how a reasonably well-informed reader may respond to your argument. It also allows you to gauge the strength of your thesis. It is of vital importance that a counter argument be possible to your claim—a claim which can't be disagreed with is not an interpretable thesis, but is rather a fact. You should strive to articulate 2 or 3 counter claims that may oppose your argument.

Since you will submit the proposal, you should bring two copies, retaining one for yourself.