

Department of History
University of Wisconsin-Madison
College of Arts and Sciences

History 710-01: Professional Development Seminar

Writing Grant Proposals

3 credits/ in person

Spring 2023
Tuesdays 3:30-5:25
5257 Humanities

Professor Louise Young
OH Monday 1:30-2:30 and by appt.

4102 Humanities Building
louiseyoung@wisc.edu

Seminar description/ Grant writing is a crucial skill for academic careers and yet it is often assumed that students simply possess this skill by virtue of being in graduate school. This seminar is focused on strategies for planning, writing and revising effective proposals for external fellowships to fund dissertation research. The strategies you learn will be transferrable to other proposals as well, such as dissertation completion and post-doctoral fellowships. Participants will take part in a 14-week hands-on, workshop-style seminar with the aim of writing and refining long (10 page) and short (2-3 page) versions of fellowship proposals tailored to competitions available in the participant's field of study.

Learning objectives/

This seminar will help you learn how to:

- research and plan the external fellowship competitions appropriate to your topic and discipline
- break down grant writing into a series of manageable skills and component parts
- produce a coherent and fundable description of your dissertation project in two different formats: a long proposal and a short proposal of your choice with appendixes: bibliography, personal narrative, curriculum vitae
- produce an individualized timetable/schedule for your grant writing to share with your advisor.

Course workload/ This is a 3-credit seminar, requiring a total of 135 hours of work. I anticipate that you will need to set aside an average of 6-8 hours/week for reading, research and writing assignments in addition to class time, but in all honesty, this will depend somewhat on where you are in relation to your dissertation project. You will come out of the seminar with a much firmer grasp on how to articulate your topic and the mechanisms involved in collecting and analyzing your data.

Grading/ This seminar is an opportunity to make progress on and improve your grant writing. The purpose of grading in this class is two-fold: to help you maintain engaged participation in the workshop and to give you regular individualized feedback on your proposals outside of the group context in which much of the material you produce will be evaluated on a weekly basis. Your grades will have two components: a letter grade and written/oral comments. Your letter grade will

be based solely on timely *completion* of all assignments (as scheduled) rather than on content. In addition to the letter grade, you will receive candid feedback on the content (organization, style, ideas, articulation, originality, etc.) of your proposal. Please recognize that the comments are intended to be helpful as well as brutally honest; almost all of us write dismal first drafts of our projects, however brilliant, that contain all sorts of unnecessary, pedantic, and/or downright incoherent prose as well as other verbal and conceptual baggage.

All assignments indicated with a (*) need to be completed and turned in as scheduled in order to receive a grade of “A” in this seminar. Minor variations in the assignment due dates are acceptable *with prior approval* from the instructor — but please be cognizant that this is intended as a hands-on workshop-style seminar and class meetings will be unproductive if you have not completed the assignments as scheduled.

In-class writing exercises/ Some of the guided in-class writing exercises we will use in this seminar are adapted from the SSRC Dissertation Proposal Development Workbook. Others are activities developed by faculty in various grant-writing workshops that students found particularly helpful. We will try out these activities and change or adapt as needed. Please feel free to give lots of feed-back about what methods are working best for you as we go along!

Canvas/ Please submit assignments through canvas where indicated, either as a “post” (via the discussion tab) or “due” (via the assignment tab). Readings can be accessed via the home page.

CLASS SCHEDULE

JAN 24 **Week 1/** Introductions; overview of the components of a research project proposal.

In class writing: outline or write out a paragraph introducing your research topic and questions.

JAN 31 **Week 2/** Identifying external grants, making timelines for proposal writing. We will discuss different fellowship opportunities and how to research grants in our fields. We will share and discuss your 1 paragraph statements and challenges. Mark Lilleleht, the Fulbright coordinator for UW-Madison, will join us for a Q and A.

Read: “Writing Effective Grant Proposals for Individual Fellowships in the Humanities and Social Sciences” by Susan Friedman; “On the Art of Writing Proposals” by Adam Przeworski and Frank Salomon. Make notes on instructions and any questions that come up.

What are the particular challenges with respect to articulating your own project that you can imagine after reading these guidelines? Did the guidelines cause you to re-imagine any aspects of your data collection or analysis? Please bring these thoughts and reactions to class.

Prepare: review one or more of these [grant sites](#) and list several you can apply for. Note deadlines and requirements. Prepare an overview of a grant that is important in your field, to be presented to the class.

Post: 1 paragraph (250 words max) defining your project to be shared in class.* As succinctly as possible, introduce the topic of your dissertation and the problem you want to solve or question that you want to answer through this research. Be sure to explain what your project will do in a way that can be understood by scholars both within and outside of your discipline who may not be familiar with your topic or its context.

Make a list of issues and challenges that you discovered in the process of thinking through and writing this paragraph.

Small group work: workshop your topic paragraphs

In-class writing: revise your topic paragraph based on feedback from the class

FEB 7 **Week 3/** What makes a grant proposal successful? We will be analyzing and “diagramming” 3 successful proposals in class. Some topics and strategies we will consider in class: organization, topic sentences, writing style, what makes a project “interesting”?

Read: model proposals

Due: (1) Worksheet on the 3 model proposals

(2) Individualized timeline of grant competition deadlines and writing schedule to share with your advisor.* Research the competitions you are eligible for and make a timeline to share with your advisor that details when you plan to be writing each application, when you will submit draft proposals for your advisor to comment on, and when you will submit the proposal. Include notes about when you will have materials ready for letter-writers. Every grant is different, so pay attention to how much time it will take to revise or reshape your basic proposal narrative for that individual competition.

Make a list of questions, strategies, and anticipated challenges in the grant proposal process

In-class writing: work on your opening paragraphs defining your topic and research question. Make a bullet point list of how you might revise based on the models we read for this week: what is missing from your current draft? What are you inspired to add?

FEB 14 **Week 4/** How to formulate compelling (coherent, provocative, fascinating, original, creative) research questions: in-class exercises and strategy session.

Read: Read two of the four book introductions: Robinson, Bradley, Chia, Winichakul

Prepare for discussion: find and make note of the research questions that form the basis for the projects described in each of the book introductions you read. (Highlight the paragraphs, identify page #s so you can refer to them in discussion). Write your own reformulation of each of their research questions.

Note that we are looking for underlying questions rather than arguments and conclusions here.

Post: 2-3 paragraph first draft description of your research questions, how they are original and why they are significant (to be shared in class)*

In-class small group work: workshop your research questions

In-class writing: revise your research questions based on feedback

FEB 21 **Week 5/** How to identify and talk about sources. Students will share a 5-minute presentation on the archives and libraries you plan to use, and include one sample primary source and an explanation of how you plan to analyze it.

Prepare: power-point presentation with 2-3 slides including one sample source. List of archives, collections, you will use + a brief description of these archives that includes all the information you can obtain in advance: finding guides, digitization and on-line access, catalogs, etc.*

If at all possible, this would be a good week to visit (virtually) one or more of the archives you plan to consult.

In considering your primary source, explain how you will use it to solve the research problem or answer the question you have proposed. In your proposal, it will not be enough to say that you will “find and read” historical sources. You need to talk about *how* you will analyze them and discuss how and why analyzing them will help you to successfully answer your questions/address your problem. Take note of any challenges that you discovered in the process of thinking through your approach to your primary source.

Due: Turn into canvas a revised 2-3 paragraph description of your research questions and why they are original and significant*. **(instructor feedback)**

In-class writing: Take a crack at your description of your archives and source material.

FEB 28 **Week 6/** How to talk about (historical) methods. We will discuss various scholarly constructions of methods and consider your draft methodology statements in class. In-class writing on situating your work with respect to previous scholarship and disciplinary conversations within the historical field.

Read: Look again at the book introductions we read in week 4, and read the two you missed out the first time. How do these authors discuss their methodology? We are not looking at these texts as methodological models for your projects; rather, we are looking at

them as models for how to successfully *talk about* methodology.

Post: 1 page draft discussion of your methodologies (to be shared in class). To help you get started on this task, you may want to identify scholarly works that inform your methods or approach. Briefly describe how the methods/ approaches used by these scholars informs your own, how you will build on them, correct, revise or enlarge them (etc). What if any are the shortcomings of these methods as used by other scholars and how will you correct them? Describe what you need to learn from your research in order to solve your problem or answer your question. What method(s) or approach(es) have you chosen to accomplish these goals and how/why will they be effective? As you write, note any challenges that you discovered in the course of writing this assignment.

In-class writing: revise your draft discussion of methodology

MAR 7 **Week 7/** Situating your project within a scholarly context, also known as the “lit review.” What goes into a proposal and what doesn’t; strategies for demonstrating that you know the scholarly literature on your topic without summarizing it at length. In-class writing exercise on situating your work with respect to scholarly conversations outside of your discipline. If time: making a detailed schedule and timeline for your research.

Read: Keppy, Rotter. What are some of the rhetorical strategies they use for laying out both narrow and broad-ranging categories of related scholarly studies?

Post: Turn in a 2-page description of your sources and methods, drawing on our work in the two sessions above (weeks 5 and 6).* Describe what you need to learn from your research in order to solve the problem or answer the questions you are posing. In what ways have you chosen to focus your research (be it to study specific groups of people places, time periods, texts, etc)? Why are these choices appropriate given your research question or problem? What sources and methods of investigation will you employ to collect and record the information that you will need to complete your search? How will the method(s) or approach(es) that you have chosen for your research enable you to accomplish your research goals?

In-class small group work: workshop your drafts on sources and methods.

In-class writing: outline your historiography section: what are the key literatures that you build upon? What are the debates that you are joining?

MAR 21 **Week 8/** Your detailed plan and timeline for your research. Strategies for succinctly presenting your qualifications and preparedness.

Post: 2-page description of the literatures that you will reference in your project and the debates where you will make an intervention.*

Prepare: think through your schedule or timeline for the stages of your research. Bring a list of your qualifications and preparedness.

In-class small group work: workshop your drafts on historiography.

In-class writing: revise your historiography section based on feedback

MAR 28 **Week 9/** Strategies for effective personal statements. We will discuss strategies and aims of personal statements and how they should and shouldn't intersect with your project statement.

Read: model personal statements from sample Fulbright proposal packet.

Post: (1) Turn in a detailed work plan (2 paragraphs) and schedule or timeline.* Describe how you will organize and carry out your investigations. What is your total timeline for your dissertation research? Where will you go and how long will you spend in each research site? What will you be doing there? How will this work contribute to solving your problem/addressing your question? When and where will you do the work of analyzing your data? Be forewarned that this will take some time to work out even though the amount of space devoted to it in your proposal is relatively small. Plan to work on this with a calendar in front of you and think realistically about logistics. Sketch out your research plan in as much detail as you can, at least on a week by week basis. This can be an extremely valuable exercise (and a reality check) if you take it seriously.*

(2) 1 paragraph (200 word max) draft statement of your qualifications, training and preparedness for conducting research on your topic (to be shared in class). Describe the skills you have gained that make you particularly well-suited to conduct your dissertation research. For instance, what languages and investigative or analytical skills have you learned that will be necessary for your research, and how did you attain them? What contacts or permissions or access do you have that will be helpful or essential to conducting your research? What if any unique qualifications do you possess? This paragraph should not be challenging to think through but cramming it all into 100-200 words will probably take strategic trimming.*

In-class small group work: workshop timeline and qualifications

In-class writing: Draft your personal statement. Where did your research project topic come from? What are the personal and professional experiences, interests, observations, questions and/or scholarship that motivated your research? What are the large underlying or overarching questions that run through your intellectual biography?

AP 4 **Week 10/** Titles and abstracts — why they matter and why you should not wait until the last minute to construct yours. In-class writing exercise on formulating a title and abstract. ALSO-- Historiography, take 2.

Bring: 2 hard copies of your historiography, one for Louise and one to workshop

In-class small group work: workshop your revised historiography section

In-class writing: titles and abstracts

AP 11 **Week 11/** vitas and personal statements

Bring: bring a copy of your updated cv. (A personal statement is *not* a narrative version of your cv but glancing at your cv may help you think through what you want to emphasize).

Bring: 2 hard copies of your personal statement, one for Louise and one to workshop

In-class small group work: critique personal statements.

AP 18 **Week 12/** Long proposal. Moving between drafts for short and long versions. Strategies for adapting proposal to different grants. How to use outlines, and make reverse outlines

Bring: all the components you have drafted: topic and research question; sources and methods; historiography and debates; timeline; qualifications. If you want to workshop a specific section, bring a hard copy to share.

In-class writing: reverse outline your individual components; outline your long proposal

In-class small group work: workshop your outlines, or the section of your proposal you need some more work on.

AP 25 **Week 13/** Writing - no seminar meeting this week.

Write: the first draft of your 10-page research narrative. You will be able to draw on many of the individual components that we have produced already but I recommend that you *not* simply cut and paste them into your proposal. Instead, work off of them but be willing to write new versions that flow out of the narrative you are constructing. You will need to develop an outline and subtitles for your proposal. Consult the model proposals for ideas but adapt the subtitles to your own project.

Post: by Sunday evening, a draft of your proposal to circulate to class.*

May 2 **Week 14/** We will workshop your 10-page proposal drafts in class today. Strategies for making revisions including the “topic sentence rule of thumb” and “reverse outline” methods.

Read: You will each be assigned to reread and comment on one proposal this week.