

This course has a single aim, and requires a single product.

The aim is to help each student write a proposal for doctoral research, of sufficiently high quality to obtain funding from an appropriate program of the National Science Foundation (NSF). The product is the **complete** proposal, with all required parts loaded onto Fastlane, and all necessary signatures obtained. *There will be no exceptions to this requirement.* (NOTE: Though each student is required to have a full proposal uploaded onto Fastlane, it is *not* a requirement of this course that the proposal be submitted; that decision rests with each student and his/ her advisor)

Furthermore, *there will be **no extensions** granted for completion of the proposal!* The reason for this is simple: the NSF deadline is a very firm deadline – you either make it on time in the world of proposal writing, or you fail.

Grades: a grade will be assigned at the end of the seminar, based on my assessment of your work. However, the real grade will be assigned by the funding agencies – either you get funding, or you don't.

Note that I say funding *agencies*, plural. While only one proposal is required, a wise student will, in the course of the semester, identify other potential funding sources and make applications to them. I am very willing to help you formulate these other applications as well.

Timing of requirements: perhaps your first task should be to go onto the NSF website (www.nsf.gov) and check out the deadlines for dissertation support proposals. However, the deadline for you to complete the proposal will actually be weeks ahead of the NSF submission deadline, because of the steps within the University's research bureaucracy that must be gone through internally before the proposal may be submitted. The key person for your interaction with the Research Office will be Donna Yurko, our departmental administrator. She will meet early in the semester with the class to explain these processes and to tell you her own deadlines for your budgets.

There will be two strict deadlines for components of the proposal:

1. Abstract: a one-page abstract is required by the start of the second class (Sept 8), and copies must be provided for each member of the seminar. We will go through these abstracts as a group, and *very* thoroughly.

2. Budget: the deadline for budget submission will be decided by Donna Yurko; she will inform us about this date.

Other sections will be required at dates yet to be determined, though probable

dates are in the syllabus, below. Remember that much of class time will be spent in critical discussion of each other's work, so always be prepared to share it with the rest of us.

Readings: There will be very few formal readings; a few short pieces are up on Courseweb for your use. I have found few readings on this subject that are worth very much, and a few that are worthless, even worse than that. We will, though, be talking quite a lot about how the process works and strategies for writing.

Writings:

Yours: This is a writing seminar, and the end product, as specified above is a proposal for NSF. Such a proposal is written in sections, so section drafts will be due as indicated below. Some of these drafts will be discussed in class, especially in the first two months of the seminar.

Mine: I anticipate making many comments on your drafts. MANY comments.

Electronic Format: Use either MS Word or Open Office; I can work in either. NSF will only take Word, though, or WordPerfect, for uploads onto Fastlane.

Groundrules:

1. *Do not take criticism personally!* The nature of this course is to subject each other's work to very intense scrutiny and criticism. Believe me, this is what selection committees do – knowing that they can fund only a small proportion of submissions, they are looking for reasons to discard proposals from serious consideration. We will all try to ensure that they do not find any in our proposals.

2. *Work very closely with your advisor.* Your advisor will actually be PI on the proposal, and simply *must* be in agreement that this is what you should do. If there is a disagreement between my comments or suggestions and those of your advisor, your advisor is the one to go with.

3. *Always keep in mind the “so what?” critique.* “Filling a gap” is just about the weakest possible justification for doing any kind of research. Why should anyone care whether this particular gap is filled, as opposed to all those other, literally infinite in number, gaps out there?

A few suggestions re style

1. Write clear, straightforward, preferably short sentences. I used to tell students that it is useful to assume that the gatekeeper for your work will be a disciple of Ernest Hemingway – if Hem wouldn't like it, it won't succeed; but I recognize that Hemingway is now sooo early last century as a writer that few students have read him. (Still worth reading, though; if you haven't read Hemingway, other than maybe *The Old Man & the Sea*, grab *A Moveable Feast* or that classic tear-jerker, *A Farewell to Arms*. Or that great ode to bullfights, trout streams in Spain, and castration complexes *The Sun Also Rises*, followed by Richard Brautigan's parody of it, *Trout Fishing in America*. Or the only work in English since the 17th

century except the King James Bible that uses the 2d-person informal forms [thou, thee, thine etc.], his novel of the Spanish Civil War, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. I digress.).

2. Do not presume your findings. That is, do not use a formulation such as “my research will show that...” or “I intend to show that...” If you already know what your research will show there is no earthly reason to pay for you actually to do it, and if you intend to show something it is most unlikely that you will accept the possibility that your expectations might not be met. Remember the words attributed to Einstein: “If we knew what we were doing we wouldn’t call it research.” You can, must in fact, state what you expect to find and why; a really strong proposal might suggest what it could mean if you don’t find that.

2A. The kiss of death: “this research argues that...” Selection committee members stop reading at that point, since anyone writing that sentence not only presumes his/ her findings (presumably an irrebuttable presumption) but is unlikely to even recognize the possibility that his/ her favored explanation is wrong, which disqualifies the PI as a researcher. I emphasize this because I have read this line in no less than four proposals/ drafts in the past three months, only one by a grad student.

3. Never presume that your readers know much of anything about your topic. You *must* make all points clear.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE (and probable due dates for written assignments)

Sep 1:	Introduction
Sep 8:	Discussion: Research Problems Abstracts due; go through Abstracts
Sep 15:	Discussion: Abstracts; research problems List of other potential funders due
Sep 22:	Discussion: research questions Requirement: Registration on FastLane
Sep 29:	Discussion: research questions
Oct 6:	Discussion: methods Research Problem statement due
Oct 13:	Discussion: Budgets
Oct 20:	Discussion: Ethics & IRB Assignment: go onto OSIRIS site and open up an account; do the basic required-of-everybody-even-the-Sanskrit-prof Human Subjects modules.

Oct 27: Due: Methods section

Nov. 3: Due: Budget & Justification

Nov. 10: Due: load onto Fastlane bio sketches of PI & advisor

Nov 17: NO CLASS – HAYDEN at Conference in LA

Nov 24: NO CLASS – Thanksgiving break

Dec 1: Meet as needed
Project Summary due (as per NSF)

Dec 8: Meet as needed

Dec 15: 5 PM EST: COMPLETE PROPOSAL DUE – NO EXCEPTIONS