Comparative American Studies Honors Program

Guidelines for Writing the Honors Prospectus
Spring 2014

A prospectus for honors work in CAS should define a topic for investigation or exploration, discuss the significance and viability of conducting this research or completing the creative project, situate the topic within appropriate fields of study, demonstrate the availability of primary source material or materials and technologies to be used, and discuss your relevant intellectual preparation for the work to be done. The prospectus will normally include 4-6 pages of text with an appended bibliography. You should prepare the prospectus in consultation with the director of the program or a potential project supervisor. Be advised that while you may identify a potential advisor, the CAS faculty will make final determinations about advisors based on faculty availability and expertise.

Normally, an honors prospectus should follow the format below:

I. Topic for thesis investigation. The prospectus should clearly delineate the topic and scope of the work to be undertaken. It should outline the particular issues to be addressed, and indicate what questions the project is designed to examine. In making a tentative prediction about your thesis work, the prospectus should demonstrate that the scope of inquiry or design of the project is feasible.

II. Literature Review. The prospectus should address the relevant scholarly literature on the topic in order to clarify the significance of this project for the field or fields of study. The prospectus should indicate how you position this research or creative project in relation to that of previous scholarly or creative work, and indicate the originality of the research or innovative aspects of your project.

III. Individual preparation. The prospectus should indicate your previous course work, private readings and other relevant information that prepares you for this year-long project. It should also address your facility in foreign languages, quantitative methodology, ethnography and/or other methodologies, media technologies, or other technical skills relevant for the project to be undertaken.

IV. Sources. The prospectus should identify the primary sources to be collected and analyzed or the main aspects of the creative project. For primary sources, you should also address their availability and how you will gain access to them if they are not available at Oberlin. If your project requires media technologies or materials not available or costly, explain how you plan to obtain the technology or materials or fund the project.

V. Bibliography. The prospectus should include a bibliography that differentiates between primary and secondary sources. Secondary source listings should be limited to the most relevant materials, and need not be annotated.