

Physical Cultural Studies: Dissertation Proposal Guidelines

The dissertation proposal is an initial and exploratory attempt to formulate the dissertation project. It should identify a problem or issue that previous scholarship has overlooked, treated inadequately, and, is of theoretical and empirical relevance to the overarching concerns and constitution of the boundaries of Physical Cultural Studies. The proposal it should set out a program of research that is likely to lead to an original and illuminating treatment of the question it addresses. The proposal should not attempt to be the finished project, or even a summary of it; its function is to raise the issue and sketch an approach to it. It should address any major publications that have dealt with the same issue in order to indicate what remains to be done, and set out the various stages of the work that lies ahead. The proposal is just that: a set of suggestions that will inevitably prove inadequate once the real work begins. What is required is sufficient evidence that there is a real question, or set of questions, being asked – questions of the kind that are appropriate to a dissertation, and thus neither too narrow nor too ambitious. Further, the proposal should include evidence of mastery of the theoretical and empirical tools required for completion of the proposed project.

To successfully complete the proposal, to justify and identify the unique research to be carried out, present the methods to be used, and to discuss its potential significance, the following structure should be utilized:

The written proposal should be 15 to 20, single-spaced pages (12 point font) in length, excluding tables, figures, and reference list. It should consist of the following:

Introduction: Research Goals / Objectives / Purpose

Background: Summary of important research that provides foundation for the proposal and location of the research within the project of Physical Cultural Studies This is an elaboration of the first section, and focuses on discrete questions that your dissertation will address. Here you should include relevant background information that may be obvious to your adviser and other specialists in your field, but which are vital for enabling other members of the committee to understand your project.

Methodological/Theoretical approach: Locate the study within the methodological / theoretical / epistemological debates within physical cultural studies and provide the 'nuts and bolts' of the study. Indicate what work has been done previously in the field. Who are the important figures? How do they relate to each other? What are the major gaps, and where do you think scholarship should go from here? Situate your own work in terms of previous scholarship. What makes your own work an important one? How does your approach and concerns relate to previous research? Also describe what you yourself perceive of your own work's methodology.

Significance of Research: How is the proposed research important / relevant / significant for the ongoing constitution of physical cultural studies, and what difference, and to whom, will the project make?

References:

2 Lists:

- 1) A reference list containing that which has been cited in the 15-20 page dissertation proposal
- 2) A bibliography of that which you plan (including unread material) on utilizing as part of the proposed dissertation

Required Appendices:

Appendix One: Chapter Outline—Describe the separate chapters you envision with as much detail as possible on what you plan to do with each chapter. You should give the overall thesis and its chapters projected titles. This section should show the dissertation's arguments chapter by chapter, and clearly specify the central points of each chapter.

Appendix Two: Tentative timeline—Give a projected overall timetable for field work, writing up, and so forth with specific dates

Additional Appendices (within an extended appendix we propose that you complete the following):

- Extensive theoretical review / critique of the literature that provides the foundation for the proposed research
- Extensive methodological grounding and epistemological, ontological, axiological, political location of the project / the research(er)

You need not attach these additional appendices to the proposal that you circulate to your committee and to the department, you should however draw on these appendices as you write your 15-20 page proposal and be prepared to locate the proposal and your defense within the extended debates contained within the appendices.