These guidelines are adapted from those used at the University of Minnesota for those applying for doctoral dissertation fellowships. While the questions here are "hard," especially for a relatively short research or historiographical paper that will be completed within a single semester, they provide useful guidelines for thinking about and completing your project.

Your formal research proposal should resemble the sample research proposal that I will share with you. You should have your name at the top, followed by the title of your project. You should then address the following five areas, dealing with the questions I've included. Your finished proposal should be at least two full pages long and take up no more than four single-spaced pages. Frankly, the more thorough this proposal, the easier it will be to complete your paper. Remember that you will need to bring multiple copies of this proposal to class on the day that we workshop them in small groups. Good luck!

1. **Abstract / Topic Statement**

Provide a very brief (no more than 150 words) abstract / topic statement that describes your project.

2. **Background / Current State of Knowledge**

What research field or "conversation" do you intend to enter with your research paper? What are the previous interpretations on the general topic or theme area of your work? What questions are you answering or what answers are you questioning in that field?

3. **Objectives**

What will your research paper contribute to this ongoing discourse? What themes or questions will you explore? What do you hope to find out?

4. **Design & Methodology**

What do you plan to do? How will you go about it? What sources do you intend to use? What specific works will you study? What are the major primary and secondary sources? What are you going to do with them? How are you approaching your problem?

5. **Key References**

What are the key scholarly references which contribute to your project? Include all authors and titles mentioned above, possibly a few others.