The purpose of a prospectus is to introduce your research ideas to your Dissertation Committee. The prospectus is important because it gives your research project a starting place at which you, your director, and your committee can agree. It also provides your committee with the context for your project, because they may not be fully familiar with the subject or issues that you are studying. The following are crucial parts of the prospectus. Work with your director on organization, length, and significance of these materials.

While Dissertation Committees may require different formats for the prospectus, the Graduate Committee recommends that the dissertation prospectus be a ten- to fifteen-page document (excluding works cited), developed under the advisement of the dissertation committee. The prospectus should articulate the dissertation’s thesis, provide a statement of purpose, and explain the critical/theoretical principles and methods that underlie the project. In addition, the prospectus should include a literature review and outline the proposed chapter organization of the dissertation. The dissertation prospectus should be construed as a formal proposal, aiming to persuade the professionals in the field of the value and timeliness of the project, its feasibility, and the grounds upon which the study is based.

The prospectus is not a mini-dissertation, and need not involve more time in writing and revising than another paper of comparable length. Yet enough care and stylistic grace should be exercised so that the prospectus clearly and concisely articulates the project, its arguments, methods, and special considerations in a manner that anyone in your field can understand. Have your prospectus draft read by someone who knows nothing about your topic, to see whether you have clearly set out your problem and defined a workable method. Overall, a prospectus is a transitional document, as things will change during the writing of the prospectus.

**Definition:** The prospectus is a proposal that:
- Provides a roadmap for your project for both you and your dissertation committee
- Explains the significance and implications of your project
- Focuses your project
- Allows a focused discussion of the existing literature

**Statement of Thesis and Contribution to the Field**
- What specific topic do you propose to examine?
- What do you intend to do in your dissertation?
- What contribution does your study make to the field?

**Historical Context and Scope: Literature Review**
- What critical work has been done on your topic of study?
- Provide a summary and critique of scholarly, critical work already done on your topic of study
- What gap(s) or misprision(s) of your topic exists in the scholarship?
- Why is addressing this gap important for this audience?
Statement Outlining Theoretical and Methodological Models and Significance

- What kinds of analyses are you going to do and why?
- What original contribution does it make to your field of study?
- What are the delimiting factors of your study? (Genre, chronology, theoretical approach)
- What are the practical larger implications of your work?

Outline and Short Summary of Chapters in the Dissertation

- An outline and summary of the chapters (with titles):
  For each chapter provide a précis that discusses the claim(s) your chapter will make, the text(s) it will examine, and the methodological/theoretical interpretive framework you will use in your examination
- Your goal is to establish what each chapter will argue and how it relates to the larger study
- Think about that dissertation as a whole, rather than as merely a series of separate essays. What overall message would you like the reader to take away from reading your dissertation?
- Bear in mind that you are describing your arguments, not making them

Works Cited of Materials Already Consulted