

Guidelines for the Prospectus

Over all, the prospectus is the platform from which you will launch into the writing of your dissertation. Its function is to give your committee a very good idea of what you are going to work on, but also to demonstrate that you are not merely beginning your investigation, but are ready to get down to writing.

In pursuit of that larger function, the prospectus should accomplish a number of specific ends. It should

- 1) give a quick and satisfying abstract of the dissertation, with broad but clear definitions of the most important concepts involved;
- 2) provide a reasonably complete account of the trajectory of the argument you will make, outlining in summary form the issues you will traverse and how they intersect, including
 - a - a brief survey of important the positions you will consider;
 - b - a brief statement of how your approach relates to those positions; and
 - c - some sense of the governing thesis of your work;
- 3) offer an outline of your individual chapters, complete with a short abstract of each; and 4) include a plausible bibliography of the literature your subject will require you to address.

The form of the document you produce should parse into these basic areas. We've discussed a length of 20 pp. or so and I would imagine that you would want:

- 1 page abstract (point 1)
- 10-12 pages of project summary (point 2)
- 8-10 pages of chapter outline and abstracts (point 3)
- 2-3 pages of bibliography

I would additionally recommend that you also include some timeline that indicates how you see the work developing. It will be helpful to the committee to know your calendar (even if it changes as you proceed), so that we can anticipate your work. You should also probably allow, in any anticipated schedule, for the processes of getting feedback, incorporating it, and revising as you go.