

# English 299: Introduction to English Studies

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## PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL

During the first 2-3 weeks of the course, you selected a text to use for your English 299 research project. Now, it's time to formalize your selection by writing a preliminary proposal and bibliography for the project. In the proposal, you should concentrate on 3 main questions:

1. What is the text you've chosen to write about and why?
2. What will be your unique angle of approach to this text?
3. How will you go about researching the text?

Begin by introducing the author and text you've chosen to write about. Describe the genre of your text (novel, short fiction, drama, poem, memoir, film, etc.), when it was produced, and, very briefly, what the text is about on the plot level. Then, outline what you consider to be the main thematic concerns of the text. (Just as an example, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley is a novel first published in 1818. It is *about* a scientist who creates a monster out of dead body parts. The monster, abandoned by his creator, then goes on to seek revenge against the scientist by murdering his family members and loved ones. The novel's main *concerns* are scientific over-reaching, male usurping of female power, the importance of maintaining domestic affections, parents' responsibilities for educating their offspring, and so on.) You should also include in this section a few sentences describing what led you to this choice.

The next part of your proposal should explain the topic or approach you plan to take. What interests you specifically about the text and what do you hope to argue about it? What led you to this particular focus? Was it something puzzling or surprising in the text itself? Was it a particular episode or passage? A formal feature? A pattern that you noticed emerging? Or perhaps it was a connection to another text or another field of discourse—something from history, philosophy, or literary theory?

Finally, explain your plans for research. What have you already discovered in your very preliminary initial research? Cite a source or two as evidence that you are either entering into a critical dialogue that already exists about the text, or that you are going in a new direction that hasn't yet been explored. Also explain what sources you think will be helpful to you as you continue your research. Will you use critical articles and books about the text? Historical documents? Books representing other areas of knowledge that you might bring to bear on the text (history, psychology, philosophy, geology, etc.)? In this section, you must also list 3 preliminary sources you have found which you think will be useful. These sources should be listed using correct MLA citation format.

**Length:** Your proposal should be approximately 400 words long, not including the bibliography.

**Due Dates:** **Draft**—Monday, January 29; **Final Version**—Friday, February 2