

Guidelines for Term Paper Proposals

History 142

2018

Overview: Research vs. Issue Papers

A major element of this class will be the completion of a 10-12 page term paper. You may take one of two paths in researching and writing this paper: 1. a **research paper path** or 2. an **issue paper path**. For the **research paper**, you will develop a question and write a paper on some (any!) aspect of the Nigerian past. The scope of this paper can range from the Nigerian precolonial past through to the colonial and post-colonial periods. Your task is to develop an historical question you want to explore. For the **issue paper**, you will focus on a current or contemporary issue in Nigerian politics, society, culture, economy etc. that you want to explore in more depth, and write a paper that examines that issue *and that explains its historical context*. You will, in short, choose a current issue of concern in Nigeria, explain that issue, and then provide a deeper and detailed analysis of that issue by providing/explaining its historical context. In both cases, you will be expected to conduct research, and to cite specific scholarly and historical sources.

The Assignment: The Proposal

On Friday October 26th you will hand in a two-page research proposal, with an additional bibliography attached, for a grand total of **three pages**. At this point, you will **choose your path** (declare whether you are doing a research paper or an issue paper). Although I have attached guidelines for both assignments in the following pages, both kinds of proposals will contain:

1. A title.
2. A description of the topic/issue you intend to pursue.
3. A description of how you are planning [at this stage] to organize your paper.
4. A statement about why the topic is important, in terms of the history and historiography of Nigeria.
5. A discussion of the argument you intend to make [e.g. what do you think your thesis will be] in your paper.
6. Your chosen path, whether a research paper or an issue paper.

At the point of the proposal, I expect clear [not vague] conceptualization, in specific and substantive prose. In other words: I expect that you will have developed an understanding of the literature related to your topic, that you will be aware of the major historiographical controversies associated with your topic, that you will have a very good sense of the kinds of questions you will asking of your material, and that you will provide a bibliography of at least 10 sources you have consulted that are **germane to the topic / questions you plan to pursue**.

Guidelines for Term Paper Proposals: The Issue Paper Path

- Your OVERALL task is to come up with a current/contemporary issue in Nigerian politics, society, culture, economy etc. that you want to explore in more depth. You may write on any subject you wish. You should choose a current issue of concern in Nigeria, explain that issue, and then provide a deeper and detailed analysis of that issue by providing/explaining its historical context. In addition to the current material you find on the contemporary issue (i.e. newspapers etc.), you will be expected to cite five to seven other *scholarly* sources in your proposal

- In your proposal, you will outline the topic you intend to pursue for your issue paper. A good proposal will contain in (no particular order):

1. A title.
2. A description of the topic/issue you intend to pursue.
3. A description of how you are planning [at this stage] to organize your paper.
4. A statement about why the topic is important, in terms of the history and historiography of Nigeria.
5. A discussion of the argument you intend to make [e.g. what do you think your thesis will be] in your paper.

- The bibliography must contain BOTH monographs [books] and articles drawn from journals. Our library has some of the best journals in the field, you might try *The Journal of African History*, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, and *Africa* among the many that we receive. I will expect that you consult at least TEN sources before you write your proposal. If you have problems finding material, ask a reference librarian or come and see me. Searching the *Historical Abstracts* database [via Voyager] is usually quite helpful.
- To get started, pick an issue in which you are interested. Use current Nigerian newspapers etc. to get a sense about current issues of concern, then, read some of the general material/coverage of the topic. Take note of the issues and themes being covered. Then – and here is the hard part – begin looking for good, academic sources that deal with the context, history, causes, background etc. to the issue you will explore. **YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO SET YOUR ISSUE IN ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT USING ACADEMIC SOURCES – BOOKS AND ARTICLES!**
- You are responsible for correctly formatting both your proposal and essays. Use Turabian's, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations 6th Edition* in this regard or come and see me for advice and help.
- Your proposal must be *detailed* and *specific*. In it, you must demonstrate *detailed* and *specific* knowledge. Obviously, you will be at a beginning stage of your research, but try to avoid framing your proposal in vague or overly general ways. Always ask yourself: what questions I am pursuing, why am I doing so, and what – at this point – do I think my approach will be?

- Feel free to come and consult with me about topics OR sources. Remember, this should be fun, so choose a topic that excites and interests you.

Guidelines for Term Paper Proposals: The Research Paper Path

- Your OVERALL task is to develop an historical question, theme, event etc. on which you want to write. You may write on any aspect of Nigerian history. Ask yourself: why did you take this class. What do you want to learn more about?
- In your proposal, you will outline the topic you intend to pursue for your research paper. A good proposal will contain in (no particular order):

1. A title.
2. A description of the topic you intend to pursue.
3. A description of how you are planning [at this stage] to organize your paper.
4. A statement about why the topic is important, in terms of the *history* and *historiography* of Nigeria.
5. A discussion of the argument you intend to make [e.g. what do you think your thesis will be] in your paper.

- The bibliography must contain BOTH monographs [books] and articles drawn from journals. Our library has some of the best journals in the field, you might try *The Journal of African History*, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *Africa*, and *The Journal of Southern African Studies* among the many that we receive. I will expect that you consult at least TEN sources before you write your proposal. If you have problems finding material, ask a reference librarian or come and see me. Searching the *Historical Abstracts* database is usually quite helpful.
- To get started, pick an area or theme in which you are interested. Read some general material on the topic. Take note of the issues and themes being covered. Check the footnotes or endnotes for source material. Gradually refine and focus your reading to more specific books and articles.
- You are responsible for correctly formatting both your proposal and essays. Use Turabian's, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations 6th Edition* in this regard or come and see me for advice and help.
- Feel free to come and consult with me about topics, sources or themes. The list of topics is long, and many are quite broad in scope. You will, therefore, have to refine more specific and focused essay questions within the general themes I have suggested to you. Remember, this should be fun, so choose a topic that excites and interests you.
- Your proposal must be *detailed* and *specific*. In it, you must demonstrate *detailed* and *specific* historical knowledge. Obviously, you will be at a beginning stage of your research, but try to avoid framing your proposal in vague or overly general ways. Always ask yourself: what historical questions I am pursuing, why am I doing so, and what – at this point – do I think my approach will be?

Research Paper Path Suggestions

- Please treat the following only as general suggestions. You are not limited to the topics described below, and, in all cases, your essay topic will in the end need to be MUCH more focused and specific. This is only to help you get started.

1. An environmental history of precolonial Nigeria
2. A History of Kanem-Borno
3. A History of Hausa City States
4. Trans-Saharan Trade and state formation in precolonial Nigeria
5. The Slave Trade and Nigeria
6. The transition to Legitimate Commerce in Nigeria
7. The Impact of Abolition
8. Government and the Igbo
9. Igbo-Ukwu
10. Islam and Nigeria
11. The jihads in Northern Nigeria
12. A biography of Usman dan Fodio
13. The Sokoto Caliphate
14. Slavery and the Sokoto Caliphate
15. The Fall of Oyo
16. The Rise of Oyo
17. The Reign of Alafin Abiodun
18. The Yoruba Civil Wars
19. An economic history of precolonial Nigeria
20. European Imperialism and Nigeria
21. The conquest of Nigeria
22. African soldiers in the conquest
23. A History of the royal Nigeria company
24. The nature of African resistance to colonial conquest
25. Rebellions against colonial rule
26. A paper on an aspect of indirect rule
27. A history of Native Authorities
28. The amalgamation of Nigeria
29. The economic history of colonialism
30. A history of cash-cropping
31. A history of forced labor
32. "Abolition" and the slow death of slavery
33. Lugard and Indirect rule
34. The history of a particular city, Kano, Lagos etc.
35. The history of a particular region or city under colonial rule
36. The Nigeria police
37. Crime in colonial Nigeria
38. Religious change in the colonial period
39. Urbanization

40. Popular culture in Nigeria
41. Theater in Nigerian history
42. Education and Nigeria
43. The history of higher education in Nigeria
44. Gender and colonial rule
45. Labor and railways
46. Strikes in Nigerian history
47. Taxation and colonial rule
48. Choose an individual and write a biography related to his or her impact on the Nigerian past
49. Nationalism in Nigeria
50. Nationalism and mass political parties
51. Choose a party or nationalist and write a history
52. Why did Nigeria achieve independence
53. Explain Nigerian "decolonization"
54. Explain devolution of power and the constitutions of the 1950's
55. The First Republic
56. Why did the first Republic fail?
57. The Census crisis
58. Coups in Nigerian History
59. The 1966 coup
60. The Biafran Civil War
61. The history of oil in Nigeria
62. Military Rule
63. The history of Yakubu Gowon, or any political figure of the 1970's and 1980's
64. The Second Republic – political, social, economic
65. Boko Haram
66. The Sharia crisis
67. A History of Nigerian elections
68. Anything else you can imagine!