Honors Thesis Prospectus Assignment

This prospectus is due to Honors by December 12th at 5:00pm

The thesis prospectus is a document that lays out your research project and plan for completing the project. Its purpose is to push you to make significant inroads into your project during the fall term and to create a written document that will serve as a roadmap for you and your advisor. The research process is typically iterative rather than linear, meaning that the focus of your project may change slightly with your progress over the course of the year. However, we hope that you will make a strong effort to write your prospectus on a viable question of appropriate scope and commit to it. We would strongly prefer that you not change questions entirely after the prospectus stage.

As preparation for the prospectus we expect you to do significant exploratory reading and to select sources that are likely to be useful and relevant. These will serve as the basis for your annotated bibliography and your overview of the literature. We expect that you will add and subtract sources even after writing the prospectus.

Parts of the prospectus

Title (should contain a main title and a subtitle that further explains or clarifies your subject)

Research Question (should be clearly stated in your introduction)

Introduction / Background (3-5 pages) In your introduction, provide the background and context for your research question. Use responsible generalizations (cited) as well as specific examples when useful. You may want to narrate how you became interested in this question and area in the first place. Or you may wish to establish the social/economic/environmental importance of your question. What is your hypothesis if you have one?

Overview of the Literature (3-5 pages) Your literature review need not be exhaustive, but it should provide a representative sample of the kinds of perspectives and positions discussed and debated in your field. You should answer this question: What do you know about the literature in your field pertaining to your research question? Who are the major players? What are the major schools of thought? What are the trends in the literature? What are the major controversies? Have other people asked similar questions as yours? What were the answers?
Methodology (3-5 pages)
Restate your research objective and narrate the process by which you expect to do your research. This might include further library research or further analysis of your sources. Depending on your field and subject, it might include lab-based research, interviews, surveys, etc.

What kinds of data do you think you will need to find (qualitative? quantitative?) and where will you search for it?

What is your hypothesis (if you have one) and/or what types of findings do you expect?

Annotated Bibliography
The annotated bibliography gives the full citation for each source and then provides a kind of summary. Instead, however, of simply restating the main argument and evidence in a source, each annotated entry should try to articulate the relative importance of the source in the field and, most importantly, the “role” it will play in your project.” [Ex: “this source supports my claim that__.” “This source helps explain why__.” “This source provides a useful description of __.” ] Each source should connect in some way with your research. If you are unable to draw any connection, then the source is not relevant and should be discarded.