

## Project Six: Proposal

For your final project for this course, you will build on your ethnographic research by exploring a topic, issue or problem that in some way relates to the discourse community you have just researched, and then write a proposal suggesting a solution to this problem. Your proposal will be organized around a central claim or set of claims about a topic, which you will then systematically discuss and support in an attempt to convince a specific—and real—audience that your proposed solution has the potential to be effective.

**Getting Started:** In order to complete this project successfully, you will need to consider the kinds of topics/issues/problems faced by members of the community you researched. For example, suppose for your ethnography project you ended up writing about vegetarians living in Arlington Heights and, in the process of doing research on the beliefs, assumptions and values of this group, you learned that the issue of animal rights is extremely important to many members of this community. Exploring the topic of animal rights further, you might investigate whether Roosevelt has a chapter of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Is this a good or a bad thing? Is PETA an important voice in public debates over how we use and treat animals, or is it a radical or even dangerous group that should remain on the fringes? What is the official policy of Roosevelt University regarding the use of animals in scientific research and experimentation? Is such experimentation necessary and important, or is it cruel and outdated? Why are there so many stray dogs and cats in the area, and is anyone trying to do anything about them? Is there a local policy or ordinance concerning these animals? If so, is it a good policy? If not, what might be done about it?

Clearly, “animal rights” is a topic that sparks many questions and other ideas, so your next step would be to focus on a specific aspect of the topic, to narrow your scope to something you find interesting and important and could argue about in some detail. For example, you might want to propose that local governments invest in a “catch-and-release” spay and neutering program as a means of managing the homeless pet population. To successfully propose such a program, you would need to lay out your case in a systematic way, providing enough details, examples, and other evidence to support your claims. You would also want to think about objections some readers might have to your line of thinking, and to address these concerns in some way.

Whatever issue you choose to address, keep in mind what Ballenger writes in Chapter 6: “Presenting a problem and offering solutions is another form of persuasion—after all, you may want to convince others that your solutions are reasonable and effective—another motive for using problem/solution forms is to change people’s behavior and attitudes.” Your ultimate goal is action on the part of another person; persuade them to act!

**Rhetorical Considerations:** If your problem/issue is legitimate, then there is definitely an audience prepared to hear your solution. You must decide what will be the most appropriate venue for your proposal: a letter to a politician, a letter to the editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, an op/ed column in the *The Torch*, etc.. We will discuss your options in class, but know that this assignment requires you to submit your proposal to an actual, living, breathing audience.

We will also discuss various ways of organizing your proposal based on your audience, medium, and project goals in class.

**Putting It Together:** The format and style of your proposal will vary depending on your goals, your audience, and your venue. You are responsible for researching and adhering to appropriate guidelines for your format of choice. Your essay should have an original title that supports the main theme/points you are trying to make. Your project should be 4-6 pages (approximately 1000 to 1500 words) and is due **Tuesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>**.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** After successfully completing this project you will be able to 1) make arguments aimed at persuading others to recognize something they may never have considered before; 2) see how writing can shape and influence the world in important ways; and, 3) consider how audience affects word choice, style, tone, etc.