

**MMW3, Spring 2008**  
**Fourth Writing Assignment:**  
**Prospectus and List of Works Consulted**

**Length:** 2-5 pages

**Due:** Thursday, May 1, or Friday, May 2, in section

**The Prospectus:**

The prospectus is the first writing assignment that asks you to put your research into the form of an argument. In your prospectus you need to describe your topic and to note some of what you have learned about it, to delineate your research question, to outline (briefly) the scholarly context within which you will be working, and to propose your own thesis (the answer to your question). You can think of writing the prospectus as taking part in a scholarly conversation in which you demonstrate that:

- You have learned something substantive about your topic;
- You've been paying attention to what other people have been writing about it (the scholarly context);
- You have your own ideas on the topic (your thesis) . . .
- . . . even though you understand that some people disagree with you (alternative hypotheses);
- You are worth taking seriously (your evidence); and
- The insight you offer is important and interesting (your statement of significance: the "so what?" of your paper).

Academics often write prospectuses of papers on which they are still working. Producing a prospectus at this stage in your writing process will help you to figure out your argument for yourself. Remember that your prospectus is a *planning* document, not the final version; the Prospectus Police will not come to get you if further research shows you that you need to make substantial changes.

**Format:**

Write a one- to two-page overview of your research paper. Don't worry that your project is still incomplete; do the best you can with the research you've conducted so far. Your prospectus should be written in expository prose (one to four substantial paragraphs is typical) and should do the following:

- Introduce your topic.
- Explain the historical context of your research.
- Specify the particular person or people, practice, institution and/or phenomenon that you will be investigating.
- Specify the research question that your paper will address.
- Summarize the scholarly arguments concerning your topic, including alternative hypotheses.
- Propose your own arguable claim (your working thesis).
- Communicate, in a narrative format, the main points you will make in your paper, in roughly the same order in which they will appear in the final draft.
- Address the significance of your topic and of your thesis.

Your prospectus should include relatively little quoted or paraphrased material, but it should describe the kinds of evidence you will be using.

**The Works Consulted Page:**

Type up a works consulted page (or pages) of all of the books, articles, and websites you have consulted in working on your research project. The criteria for the works consulted page are as follows:

- It should contain at least six sources (not counting lecture material, textbooks, websites, or encyclopedias) that you plan to use in writing your final paper. (Note: You should cite **all** of the lectures, textbooks, websites, and encyclopedias from which you have gotten information about your topic, but they will not count toward the minimum of six sources required for this assignment.)
- All of the sources should be relevant to your research topic.
- All of the sources should be scholarly (for example, you should not use popular magazines or fictionalized histories).
- At least one of the items you cite should be an article from a scholarly journal.
- Each of your sources should be recorded in a complete, MLA-style citation; format the works consulted page as you would a works cited page for a final draft.

**Photocopy the title page (or first page, for an electronic source or scholarly article) of each source that you cite.** When you submit your prospectus and works consulted page you must submit these photocopies as well. If you quote or paraphrase any of the sources, please also submit a photocopy of the page(s) to which you refer, labeled with the source's title and author.

A final point: Remember that once you have turned in your prospectus, you will be able to change your topic *only* if you have your TA's permission. Remember, too, that if you *do* change your topic after you have turned in your prospectus, you will be required to produce a new works consulted page and prospectus. It is therefore to your advantage to formulate your prospectus very carefully before you turn it in.

**This assignment, the fourth of six writing assignments, will be worth 7% of your final grade. On the prospectus you will get credit for: providing historical context and other background information; stating an arguable claim on a topic appropriate to MMW<sub>3</sub>; acknowledging counter-arguments or other differing points of view; outlining the key points of your argument; and indicating a tentative significance, or "so what?" for your thesis. On the works consulted page you will get credit for: providing a complete MLA-style citation for each entry; and including a sufficient number of appropriate sources. Please submit the prospectus worksheet along with this assignment.**

**Please remember that this assignment, like all assignments written for MMW, must adhere to all of the guidelines set out in the MMW Style Sheet.**

**You must complete all six writing assignments in order to pass MMW<sub>3</sub>. Remember to keep the graded copy of this assignment; you will be required to turn in a portfolio containing all of the assignments at the end of the quarter.**