

THE PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

The Preliminary Statement is designed to aid you in your initial efforts to focus and organize your research and in clarifying your thesis, framework, and operating questions. It should help you narrow a broad and general topic to a manageable and interesting topic and to begin to frame the specific questions that will guide your research. It is a four-to-six page document that provides an early version of your research project, its guiding question, thesis, or hypothesis, and links it to the themes of the program. The first seeds of your final paper should be found in this statement. It is designed to provide your preliminary focus and set the direction for your further investigations.

To do this, you need to address the following questions: What is your basic question or argument, and why is it important to understanding one or more of the broad issues covered in this program? Why is it important to you as a group? Be sure to thoroughly discuss this among yourselves to make sure that each group member has a shared understanding of the purpose and direction of your proposed research. This is critical in avoiding later confusion and misunderstanding.

Your answer to these questions should be the basis for a carefully written first paragraph of your Preliminary Statement. Remember that this statement is “preliminary,” and your research will deepen and your focus will sharpen (perhaps shift) as you proceed. It is important now, however, to provide as much information as you can in this document. The more ideas, information, and focus you provide at this stage will give your group some shared data and assumptions upon which to proceed and will help the faculty in seeing that you are well launched.

Be as precise and focused as you can in providing the following information:

1. Indicate your broad topic and its significance and interest.
2. State your thesis or working hypothesis as clearly as you can at this point. The focusing this requires should enable you to make your topic doable by selecting a particular aspect of it and taking an initial stance on that aspect.
3. Raise as many secondary questions as occur to you. These should be questions which must be discussed or answered in order to sufficiently investigate your hypothesis. It often turns out that the real thesis and focus are found in one of the “secondary” questions.
4. Indicate the scope of your project – the time period and why; what geographical region(s) and why; what sets of relationships and why. Be clear regarding the *significance* of these boundaries to your topic.

5. Write a paragraph describing the significance/importance of your hypothesis to the themes raised by the program. This is often the first step in situating your research in a broader and deeper context.
6. Explain, as best you can at this point, how you plan to go about carrying out your research. What will be your methodology? What sort of analytical framework will you use? What concepts, theories, ideas will frame your research? What will constitute your major source materials? What will be the division of labor within your team? How do you plan as a team to build on a shared understanding of your topic and hypothesis?
7. Include your bibliography to date with annotation where possible. Your Preliminary Statement should include enough annotated bibliography to demonstrate that your project rests on a shared core of materials with which all group members will be familiar and that your design and approach are likely to be successful; i.e., that there are adequate source materials and that your questions are probably going to be answerable through a reasonable and practical effort. Note: Your sources need to be drawn from a range of books, periodical literature, and internet resources. Provide the full and proper bibliographic citation for each entry. Follow the format provided in the Chicago Manual of Style.
8. Will you need to gain approval from the Human Subjects Review process at Evergreen before setting out? What other possible access problems do you anticipate and what are you doing to clear them away?
9. If your research project will have an activist/community service element, indicate the group with which you will be working. *Be sure* you have secured an agreement from them that they will take you on and indicate the type of activities in which you will be engaged.
10. Your Preliminary Statement should be at least four-to-six pages, double spaced, typed, carefully proofread beyond the spell check, include page numbers and a properly done bibliography.

PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS ARE DUE XXXX [GENERALLY IN THE 5TH WEEK].