Your research proposal assignment for 260B is the same as for 260A: propose a research project that will advance knowledge on a question related to work we have studied in the two-quarter sequence.

You are free to write on a different question than your 260A proposal, or to bring a different analytic approach to the same question. By “different analytic approach,” we mean a completely different research design, not just a revised version of your 260A project. For example, if you proposed an individual-level project about party identification for 260A, you should use an institutional approach for 260B. If you have questions about whether your second project is sufficiently different from your first, please ask us.

Your proposal should be roughly 5 pages. It should be organized according to the following steps.

1. **Puzzle/Observation.** Begin with a concrete empirical puzzle about something we observe in the world. The tricky part may be noticing that something we accept as obvious (e.g., there is gridlock) is nonetheless puzzling (because everyone seems to oppose it.)

2. **Theory/Mechanism/Argument.** Explain the logic behind the claim to be tested. How do you explain the puzzle? Why and under what conditions does it occur? What are testable implications? This section should explicitly connect to ideas we have discussed in 260A-B.

3. **Operationalization/Data.** How are you going to measure your theoretical concepts? Where will the data come from? As in 260A, you are encouraged to “dream big,” but don’t ignore challenges and obstacles. You don’t have to solve every problem, but you should consider what a solution might entail.

4. **Hypotheses/Expected Findings.** Hypotheses should be about specific measured quantities, not abstract concepts. If you are planning a regression analysis, what specific coefficients are we interested in?

**FAQs**

1. *Can I write about a project I am already working on or developing for another purpose, e.g. a field paper or part of a dissertation?* Yes. There is, however is a good way and a bad way to do this. The bad way is to start with a document you have already written, and graft a few isolated sentences and or a paragraph referencing assigned readings and the above rubric. The good way is to take the ideas from your existing project and write them up using the course rubric. The good way is more
difficult -- the rubric is intended to force you to consider questions (especially about theory and mechanism) that are difficult

As is always the case, the good way is more work for the writer and less work for the reader.

2. Should I have several hypotheses? No, not unless they are all implications of your theoretical mechanism. Don't make the mistake of substituting a list of vaguely related claims for a single tight implication of a clearly articulated theory.

3. How can I go into enough detail in just 5 pages? You probably can't, unless you give yourself time to revise, condense and tighten your prose after finishing the draft that says what you want it to say. We all tend toward wordiness and bloated prose in early drafts; a final set of edits aimed at reducing words will improve clarity as well as conciseness. Joe Williams's Style: Toward Clarity and Grace (or the textbook version, Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace) describes editing strategies that work well for academic prose (and that are grounded in research about how our brains process written text.)