

**HELMS SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT**  
**Preliminary Master's Thesis Research Proposal**

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I have prepared this document to request permission for enrollment in **688: *Thesis Proposal*** (for students on a 2021-2022 DCP) OR **689: *Thesis Proposal and Research*** (for students on a DCP prior to 2021).

I understand that by enrolling in 688/689, I will be expected to complete original research according to the expectations established in the Helms School of Government Graduate Thesis Guide.

I understand that before being admitted into 688/689, I must complete and submit this "Preliminary Master's Thesis Proposal" along with the "Application for Enrollment in Thesis Course" form. I also understand that I must obtain all necessary approvals before being enrolled in 688/689.

Student Name (PRINT): \_\_\_\_\_ LUID: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Chair Approval: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Reader Approval: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed Title:** [ENTER PROPOSED TITLE]

**Purpose Statement for Proposed Study:** In one page or less, explain your rationale for pursuing this line of study. Identify the research program or scholarly conversation to which you want to contribute, trace key developments within that research program that are relevant to your proposal, then describe how you intend to continue or contribute to the development of that research program within your study.

**Proposed Research Question(s):** Present one or more well-formulated research questions. A well-formulated research question:

- (a) asks about the relationship/ differences between two or more variables,
- (b) is stated clearly and in the form of a question,
- (c) is testable (i.e., possible to collect quantitative data to answer the question),
- (d) does not pose an ethical or moral problem for implementation,
- (e) is specific and restricted in scope (i.e., the aim is not to solve the world's problems), and
- (f) identifies exactly what is to be solved.

A good research question also clearly identifies the sample population. In addition, it should be noted that the research question implies the research design and statistical analysis. For quantitative research questions, state the null (H<sub>0</sub>) and alternate hypotheses (H<sub>a</sub>). For mixed methods research designs, group together and label the research questions as either qualitative or quantitative research questions. Finally, a well-formulated research question is a question. Be brief, concise, and clear!

**Proposed Research Methods:** Explain the research design (qualitative/quantitative/mixed methods) and the specific design under each of these categories of designs you propose to use to pursue each research question(s). What data will be relevant to addressing your question(s)? How will you gather that data? (Pay attention to challenges and costs for collecting this data, including any requirement for IRB approval.) How will you analyze those data? (Pay attention to the appropriate quantitative or qualitative techniques you intend to use.) What special research or analytical methods will be necessary to analyze that data? Are there any other peculiar issues that your research may present?

**References:** Using the most recent APA edition, present a list of references relevant to your preliminary proposal. Remember this is a preliminary proposal, so you are not expected to have completed an exhaustive literature review by this point. Instead, you should reference enough related literature in the "Purpose Statement" section to demonstrate to the Program Director and/or prospective Chair and Reader that you are familiar with the most important, and the most recent, work in the research program to which you intend to contribute. This will likely be 10-15 sources. In addition, you should reference enough literature in the "Proposed Research Methods" section to demonstrate to the Program Director and/or prospective Chair and Reader that you are familiar with the most important research methods being employed, and that you have thought carefully about why you are proposing to employ one particular method over the alternatives. This may be another 10 sources.