

# PROSPECTUS

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CONVIVIAL RESEARCH &  
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ccra.mitotedigital.org

As a small collective dedicated to collective pedagogies, the CCRA currently claims a number of interconnected projects that weave together innovative, community-centered research, learning, and local capacity-building. The CCRA's investment in co-learning spaces generates critical analytical skills, research tools, facilitation techniques, and community service strategies able to address the intersections of environmental regeneration, community well-being, community safety, food sovereignty, and community health. For more info: [ccra@mitotedigital.org](mailto:ccra@mitotedigital.org)

A prospectus is nothing more than a proposal that presents the full scope of a research project. It can be produced at different stages of the research process documenting the progress being made; clarifying the researcher's thinking; and generating new insights to motivate additional research. A proposal is a statement of the intended contribution of the research. It can advance a journal article, book chapter, manuscript, or introduce a larger more comprehensive project. Most importantly, a research proposal must conform to the specific requirements of either a funding or degree granting committee.

A well-crafted proposal serves two distinct and critical purposes. Above all it is a persuasive argument as to why an intended research project deserves funding or approval from a committee – why a project should command the attention of other scholars or researchers in given or related fields. Since the proposal makes a compelling argument about the significance of a project, it must answer, according to Sydel Silverman, three basic questions: a) What is it you want to do? b) How are you going to do it? c) Why is it worth doing?

As a statement of a plan for research, a proposal can assist scholars to narrow

down the scope of a research project clarifying its key elements, including the object of study, research strategy, and information produced. Thus, the prospectus requires a researcher state clearly the reasons for the project, its scope, contribution it makes, and a calendar, or plan for getting it done. Therefore, a prospectus highlights a researcher's achievements that would contribute to or insure completion of the project while also explaining new vistas for investigation.

A prospectus generally observes a number of intellectual obligations common to academe. In what follows we will examine a prospectus paying close attention to its architecture and purpose in order to suggest successful writing strategies. For our purposes we will focus simply on a clearly defined research project organized around an essay, without worrying too much about its final format or destination.

## The Context

A critical if often overlooked portion of the prospectus is the context from which a research project emerges. The context can be twofold: the context that informs the researcher and the context that impacts the selected topic. The first

## Select Resources:

Sydel Silverman, "Writing Grant Proposals for Anthropological Research," *Current Anthropology*, 32: 4 (Aug. - Oct., 1991): pp. 485-489. <<http://www.jstor.org/pss/2743827>>.

Ernesto Chávez, Miroslava Chávez-García and Luis Alvarez, "Preparing a Successful Fellowship or Grant Application," *OAH Newsletter* (August 2000): 7;14 <<http://www.oah.org/pubs/nl/2009aug/pdf/OAHNL-Aug09.pdf>>.

Adam Przeworski and Frank Salomon, "On the Art of Writing Proposals," *SSRC* (1995) <[http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new\\_publication\\_3/%7B7a9cb4f4-815f-de11-bd80-001cc477ec70%7D.pdf](http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%7B7a9cb4f4-815f-de11-bd80-001cc477ec70%7D.pdf)>.

context revolves around the reflexivity of the researcher while the second concerns the social, cultural, political, economic, and historical conditions that impact the problem under consideration. Both contexts should be taken into account in constructing an object of study, strategizing a research agenda, and proposing a final document.

To begin, a successful prospectus situates the project by engaging how the topic has

been treated by other scholars. A critical review of the history of the topic situates the intervention by summarizing the key debates and any theoretical and methodological innovation that define the topic. Depending on the length of the prospectus, the literature review, or analysis of the topic's history, can be a paragraph, an entire section of an essay, or no more than a summary of one or two sentences. It can also be a separate extended document. In each instance it should highlight the different approaches to the topic. A successful literature review examines the field and related sub-fields of the topic, interrogating key questions that have been left unanswered or somehow require revision. Thus, a thorough analysis of the topic's history points to unresolved issues related to key debates that still motivate discussion about it.

The literature review evaluates how the topic has been researched by attending to a number of critical tasks. A literature review situates the topic with an analysis of the key issues that inform it. In addition to an assessment of earlier critiques, a literature review analyzes the critical concepts, theories, and methodologies generated in relation to the topic and the debates that animate a field. Thus, the literature review interrogates previous research approaches to reveal where some insights have been successful and others have somehow been incomplete or flawed. A compelling literature review provides an analysis of a sufficient amount of scholarship on the topic not only to intervene in the debate but also to justify further research.

#### State Your Intervention

A compelling proposal clearly states the intervention the research project makes or intends to make in a given field. Additionally, the proposal should make the research strategy, or methodology explicit –how it is that you are able to make the argument you are asserting in relation to the field. Just as important, the prospectus should clearly state the intended results or anticipated impact of the study. Statements regarding the research project's focus, question, methodology, or strategy, and its significance should reinforce how the proposed research substantiates the intervention. Thus, the prospectus offers an argument why the particular approach you are pursuing is worthy of consideration.

It is often useful to summarize key sections or chapters of the project. The summaries of proposed portions of the essay or project should reinforce how each fits into the overall argument. Every statement addressing key elements of the research process should be presented in a way to convince the reader of the significance of the completed and or anticipated research. Thus, the prospectus should narrate how it will contribute to the field.

#### Convince the Reader

Your reader should not need to be an expert in your field or sub-field in order to recognize the sophistication and significance of the intervention being made. The object of study, including the theoretical framework and methodological approach, should be accessible to uninformed readers as well as experts. Consequently, it is advisable to avoid jargon, or undefined terms peculiar to your field, by explaining key concepts and demonstrating how each new conceptual tool works in relation to key portions of the project. Your reader should have a clear sense that your proposal is compelling, coherent, innovative, and significant because it is well organized and a clearly written presentation of a necessary intervention.

#### The Calendar

It is often useful to include a calendar that sets target dates for the completion of specific tasks and the overall project. A reasonable schedule for completion of specific research and writing goals can help to convince your readers of the likelihood of success. More importantly, a calendar will help keep you on track insuring completion of the project. Thus, it should narrate how the research will be completed.

#### The Abstract

At different stages in the research process scholars often provide a brief summary, or abstract, of the project. In some instances approving committees require an abstract accompany the proposal. Abstracts can also be written after the research has been completed to more easily alert scholars to the content of a thesis, dissertation, or journal article. An abstract allows other researchers in the field to assess the potential usefulness of new research approaches or findings quickly and easily.

## Uni-Tierra Califas



Universidad de la Tierra Califas (UT Califas), one of the CCRA's primary projects, facilitates a number of interconnected spaces of co-learning that invite de-professionalized intellectuals, community-based scholars, and convivial learners to co-generate diverse knowledges and movement building resources from within the community. The UT Califas "campus" extends Universidad de la Tierra Oaxaca and Universidad de la Tierra Chiapas" in Mexico to make possible strategic exchanges of local folks whose community involvement and intellectual itineraries would benefit from travel and research between the Bay Area and other increasingly relevant global sites. Locally, UT Califas' commitment to collective pedagogies regenerates community, facilitates intercultural and intergenerational dialogues, and reclaims local commons through an "architecture" that includes a Center for Appropriat(ed) Technologies, Language and Literacy Institute, Theses Clinic, Study Travel Jornadas, and a Democracy Ateneo. Taken together, these projects/spaces facilitate the sharing of a wide variety of strategic, community-oriented technologies, or convivial tools, in the areas of community service, grassroots research, and conjunctural analysis.

### LEARNING SPACES:

Democracy Ateneo

2nd Saturday of the month

@ Casa Vicky (17th St. & Julian St.)

Social Factory Ateneo

4th Saturday of the month

@ Obelisco (3411 E 12th St. Ste. 110)

Tertulia

1st and 3rd Friday of the month

@ Grande's Pizza (4th St. & San Carlos)

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A web infrastructure designed to facilitate locally rooted participatory, action-oriented investigations generated in reflection and action spaces that regenerate community.