Writing a Proposal: The Beginning of the End

Writing a proposal for a book contract, article publication, conference paper or honors thesis is making your pitch based on the contribution of the idea—its novelty, timeliness, or appropriateness. In our own immediate context of an honors program, your research may have an intrinsic value to you that you simply place in a context of a larger community. Helpful to you as an investigator, the proposal, albeit infinitely changeable, helps you organize your work.

Seven Parts for the Perfect Proposal

1. Statement of and Justification for Research Problem
2. Thesis Statement
3. Explanation of Suggested Title
4. Proposed Method of Research
5. Tentative Outline
6. Brief Explanation of Outline
7. Preliminary Bibliography

- **Statement of and Justification for Research Problem**
  - Lead off with a captivating first sentence, related to the angle of your thesis.
  - Review what has already been thought about your subject in order to establish what you will be developing as a new idea, new approach, or new emphasis.

- **Thesis Statement**
  - Narrow, narrow, narrow. The more you limit yourself in the beginning of your search, the more you will actually be able to define, clarify, and develop.

- **Title Explanation**
  - Apart from its simply being different, the title needs explanation of its own merit.

- **Proposed Method of Research**
  - Explain your critical approach, perhaps referencing critics and theorists with whom you concur, defining key terms as needed. Avail yourself of the grammatical appositive, the renaming of a term immediately following it (such as this!)

- **Outline & Explanation**
  - See the diverse level of specificity/purpose in examples of Lemons & McCormack.

- **Bibliography**
  - As needed, include interviews, websites, films, letters, articles, and, of course, books.

Professional Format

Looks aren't everything, but in this case, they are extremely influential. Take care of all details. Format your proposal for this audience: Barbara Pemberton, Kent Faught, Scott Jackson, Rachel Pool, Daniel Inouye, Margarita Pintado, Sara Hubbard, Bethany Hicks, and Stan Poole.

The deadline for bringing a HARD COPY of your proposal to Dr. Pemberton (BBB 101) is:

**Wednesday, February 19th, by 5:00 pm**