

PROPOSALS: FEEDBACK, COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS

- 1) **FORMAT:** Always type everything. Always staple your own work! Avoid funny fonts, big margins, etc. Print all work DOUBLE-SPACED and SINGLE -SIDED to make commenting clearer.
- 2) **SPECIFICITY:** Most of you have done a good job starting to get more specific in your topics, though many are still very vague. It's crucial to get specific, since you can NOT say everything about such large topics in 10-12 pages... though you can make some perceptive, interesting observations on a few narrow things!
- 3) **COMPARISONS:** For those of you who do not yet have a very set, specific paper topic, I recommend a *comparison* as the best (and easiest) way to obtain an interesting paper where you can do good research and still say something original. You are NOT writing a mere report or summarizing what other people have said on a single subject: you should try to discover something new and interesting, something that a comparison will do almost automatically if done correctly.
- 4) **USE WORLDCAT & AVERY INDEX:** Find more books and articles!!! Use the sources (books, articles, etc.) you ALREADY have, to find more. Look in the bibliography of each book for more books and articles, and then look for those at CMU, or use Worldcat, Avery Index, and Inter-Library Loan (ILL) to get them here. Especially useful are also footnotes to those chapters or paragraphs that deal with the exact subject you're researching. If you find something that "right on", it should usually lead you to more source material on that issue, building or architect! Avoid textbooks or broad surveys as research materials, as they tend to be very superficial!
- 5) **THESIS STATEMENT / OPENING LINE:** Be sure the first line of the proposal, and certainly the research paper is a well-stated summary of your main idea or argument. First impressions count: the first sentence of your paper should grab the reader, and basically tell the reader what SPECIFICALLY your paper will be about. Do NOT start a paper with generalities or broad statements about the time period or the state of the universe.
- 6) **GRAMMAR – Grammar ALWAYS counts.** Be sure to proof-read everything you hand in, no matter how informal it seems. If English is not your first or strongest language, be sure to get some help from friends or from the writing help center on campus. Good architects have to learn to communicate well and effectively, this includes writing! You'll have to work extra hard to get your paper written, but it will be worth it in the long run!
- 7) **VERB TENSE – History is written in the past tense...** it deals with stuff long ago, and so our papers should use the past tense for most things!
- 8) **FOOTNOTE:** You should footnote every IDEA OR QUOTE you take from someone else, even in a proposal. Never use quotes without creating a footnote! You need to give credit to other authors and writers if they thought of something first or you are presenting evidence. If not, it is plagiarism, a serious university offense! Be sure footnotes are formatted properly (see Barnet book).
- 9) **BIBLIOGRAPHY FORMAT:** Always use proper format, as described in Barnet, A Short Guide to Writing About Art. List alphabetically by author:

Book Format:	Author, <u>Book Title</u> . Place: Publisher, Date. E.g. Curtis, William. <u>Modern Architecture Since 1900</u> . New York: Prentice-Hall, 1996
Edited Book:	Author, ed. <u>Book Title</u> . Place: Publisher, Date. E.g. Conrads, Ulrich, ed. <u>Programs & Manifestoes</u> . Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1960.
Journal Article:	Author, "Article Title," <u>Journal Name</u> vol.# (Date): pages. E.g. Bletter, R.H. "Expressionism & New Objectivity," <u>Art Journal</u> 43:2 (Summer 1983): 108-120.
- 10) **SUBJECTIVITY:** Try to avoid overly subjective papers like whether something is good or bad, effective or not... That's a subjective thing: historians try to be objective. You can, however, measure whether people in the past thought it was good or bad by reading their reactions to something, and then reporting about objectively!
- 11) **GOOD BOOK / BAD BOOK:** Be sure you're using "good" books... Avoid large coffee table books and those published by non-academic presses. Avoid old books like those published before you were born. Most knowledge gets updated and revised every generation. Be sure to use the latest scholarship in your paper.
- 12) **PROFESSIONAL STYLE:** You're writing an academic paper: avoid the first person "I." Don't tell me what you're going to do, just do it.
- 13) **READ THE BOOKS FIRST:** Finally, avoid just writing down titles of books and writing off the top of your head (many of you did this for the proposal!). Read/skim the books, know your subject a bit before you start...

