



**Lakehead**  
UNIVERSITY

**Social Justice  
Studies**

# Research and Creative Project Guide

Social Justice Studies, Lakehead University.

Guidelines for the 2024-25 Academic Year (July 1-June 30).

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Please direct any questions to [admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca)

## Introduction

The Research Project Stream and Creative Project Stream are described in detail within the [SJS Program Handbook](#). This document elaborates on the timeline students should follow to successfully complete a project on time. The document clarifies when and how you should identify and start working with a project supervisor, and it breaks down the elements of the actual project proposal. Each spring (April or May), the program will host a day for students to share their work. This document explains presentation expectations and includes a resource section.

### Who should do a research or creative project?

Students who have earned an average of 80% in their first or first and second semesters of coursework are eligible to complete a research or creative project. Students must be able to find an appropriate supervisor who has the expertise and capacity to support a research or creative project. Students must finish any incomplete courses before submitting their research proposal.

## Timeline

All students officially enter the SJS Program in the Coursework Stream. Some students will enter The Program with a specific research or creative project in mind, others will enter with a general sense that they want to conduct a research project or work on a creative project, but their ideas will still be in process. Either option is fine. During the first semester, however, all students will be asked to take the first step towards one of our stream options, including Research or Creative Projects.

- Students who enter the program with a clear research project in mind and an 80% average from undergraduate or recent studies are strongly encouraged to prepare a proposal for Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) or Ontario Graduate Studies (OGS) funding, typically due in the first few days of December.
- November 30, year 1: complete the Social Justice Studies internal [stream selection](#) form.
- February 15, year 1: complete the Soc J [supervisor selection](#) form to formalize the student-supervisor relationship. Students pursuing SSHRC or OGS funding will need a supervisor by Oct 15 of their first semester.
- April 15, year 1: complete [change of program](#) form. The document indicates a \$50 fee; write “please waive the change fee” as part of your rationale for the change.
- June 1: complete [research project or creative project](#) proposal, and any requested revisions by June 30th. You can also submit Sept. 15 and January 15, but the June 1 review is the ideal submission time. Proposals are submitted to the Academic Review Committee (ARC) via the [admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca) email address.
- If working with human subjects, your supervisor must initiate a Research Ethics Board (REB) review. You will have to earn your TCPS 2 Certificate to be included on the review. Use the [Romeo Research Portal](#) to complete the REB process.
- Students and supervisors should develop a work plan with manageable milestones after proposals have been approved and REB approval granted.
- Date TBD each April or May, second year: Research and Creative Activity Day (presentations by students). Alternative dates throughout the year are possible.

- April 1: complete project to supervisor and second reader.
- April 15: supervisor [evaluation](#) and [change of mark](#) form submitted to Program.

This list of dates describes the ideal schedule for managing research and creative projects. The university will announce official deadlines, particularly for completing the Winter semester, from year to year. Alternative schedules and deadlines can be worked out between students and supervisors. Research projects that have not been significantly started by mid-October of the second year are likely to extend beyond the Winter semester deadline. Students may complete their research or creative projects over the summer of their second year, but will have to pay full tuition for that 6th semester, and they must ensure that their project director and reader are available in the Spring/Summer semesters.

Students who complete their work at a time other than April of their 5th semester will be asked to either join the April presentations or record a presentation of their work and share that with the program Academic Review Committee for program review and assessment purposes.

Presentations can be emailed to [admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca)

## Supervisors

Your project supervisor will be your key academic advisor and mentor during the second year of your program, and may even play an important role as advisor or mentor during your first year if you come into the program with a project already established or in development. If you do not have a supervisor in mind during your first semester, please take advantage of program events (meet and greets, colloquiums, workshops, guest presentations in SocJ 5030) to establish a connection with an appropriate advisor. Also work with the Program Advisor to find the right supervisor for you.

- Each project requires a primary supervisor and an internal second reader. Second-reader roles can range from engaged throughout to only final evaluation—that will depend on the project, the supervisor’s recommendation, and the second reader’s availability.
- Supervisors and readers must come from [the list of approved supervisors](#).
- Students should work with the SocJ Program Advisor to identify possible supervisors, and students should begin discussions with potential supervisors towards the end of the first semester and early in the second semester. Establishing this relationship early in one’s studies is challenging but very important for the timely completion of research and creative projects.
- February 15 is the target date to complete [the supervisor selection form](#). It will be very difficult to complete a research project or creative project on time if a supervisor is not secured by April 1 of the first year.

If your project changes, your supervisor’s availability changes, or there is any other reason why you might need to switch supervisors, please work with the Program Advisor to discuss your options and re-start the process as needed.

## The Proposal: Research and Creative Project Stream

Deadlines: June 1, Sept. 15, or January 15.

Suggested length: 10-15 pages plus Appendix if needed.

Complete [research project or creative project](#) form and include it with your proposal.

Submit to [admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca)

Drawing on the work you have developed in consultation with your supervisor, please provide the Social Justice Studies Academic Review Committee (ARC) with a proposal for your Research or Creative Project. The ARC functions as an interdisciplinary group of readers who may or may not be familiar with your topic, theories, or methods. Your proposal should convince them that you have clarity in your purpose and a theoretically and methodologically sound approach to your topic. This proposal is meant to give you practice sharing your work with external readers in a succinct way (like you would with an OGS or SSHRC proposal) and incorporating suggestions from outside readers (you will get feedback from the ARC).

In addition to substantive feedback, the Committee has three evaluative options in their response to your proposal: approve as is, approve with revisions, revise and resubmit. This proposal stage also helps you stay on track to finish the program during your second year.

### Research Project Proposal

Your research project proposal will consist of two, possibly three, separate sections:

1. Outline of proposed research.
2. Bibliography and citations.
3. REB Appendix for those working with human participants.

The combined length of the first two sections should not exceed 15 pages. If you plan to work with human subjects, please include the REB appendix, an additional 1-4 pages.

#### **1. Outline of proposed research (6-10 pages, double spaced, 12 pt font, 1" margins).**

Provide a concise description of your proposed research project.

- Provide background information to position your proposed research within the context of current knowledge in the field. This positioning might include identifying your own social location, and it might include a very concise identification of relevant scholarship.
- State the objectives of your project: what question are you trying to answer, what problem are you trying to solve, or what thesis are you trying to defend?

- Outline the theoretical approach to be taken, citing literature pertinent to theories of social justice, and ideally theories that address power and change. Focus on 3-4 key scholars; explain their relevance to your project and the field.
- Outline the research methods to be used, citing methods relevant to social justice research. If your project will require Research Ethics Board (REB) approval, please complete the REB appendix.
- If appropriate, include a short literature review that identifies key scholarly works relevant to your project. If you have covered this literature sufficiently in your theoretical framework or your research methodology section, you do not need to repeat the literature review here.
- Theoretical and methodological approaches can vary significantly among projects in the program, from humanistic to social scientific. In their letters of support, supervisors are encouraged to explain how a student's proposal and planned project align with disciplinary expectations.
- Include a [Gantt Chart](#) or some other breakdown of tasks and timelines for your project.
- State the significance of the proposed research for social justice studies, but also for personal learning and/or development.

In addition:

- Applicants are expected to write their outline of the proposed research independently. Ideas and text belonging to others must be properly referenced.
- Include all relevant information in the outline. Do not refer readers to URLs or other publications for supplemental information.
- Students with research expenses (e.g. travel for field work, participant compensation, equipment, knowledge mobilization, art supplies, or other relevant expense) are encouraged to develop a budget in consultation with their supervisor and submit a [funding request](#) to the ARC either simultaneously or after the research proposal has been approved.

## **2. Bibliography and citations (4 pages; double spaced, 12 pt font, 1" margins)**

Provide a bibliography that includes citations for all works referenced in the research proposal. These citations should be in a format used by the primary discipline of the proposed research (i.e. APA or Chicago for social science projects, MLA for most arts and humanities research projects; other styles are acceptable if they align with the conventions and documentation systems in your field).

Additional relevant items not cited in your proposal should also be included in your bibliography.

You must ensure that all citations are clear and complete so reviewers can easily locate your sources. Please follow citation style guidelines (see list above), including page formatting, closely. The [Purdue Owl](#) has guides to major documentation systems.

### **3. REB Appendix**

If your research will involve human participants, please include an REB appendix. You may complete the REB protocol and include that material here, or use these selected questions as a draft towards full REB completion. You may draw on your proposal (above) to answer the questions that are similar. The selected questions here are NOT a substitute for completing the REB Protocol in collaboration with your supervisor; committee approval of your project and REB draft does not ensure that you will be successful with your first REB Protocol submission.

1. Who will be your RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS? Describe the required characteristics and number of participants.
2. DATA COLLECTION: Explain the method of data collection and analysis. Explain exactly what will be expected of participants (length of time commitment, etc.). You DO NOT need to develop all questionnaires and research instruments at this time, but you will be asked to do so when completing the REB Protocol.
3. RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES: Describe how potential participants will be selected and contacted.
4. HARM and/or POTENTIAL RISKS to PARTICIPANTS: (a) State clearly any potential harm or risks—physical, psychological, injury to reputation or privacy, and breach of any relevant law—for participants or for third parties (those affected by the research but who are not active research subjects); (b) If there is any apparent or potential harm or risk, clearly explain all steps that will be taken to reduce this.
5. DECEPTION: If deception is part of the research program, the researcher must: (a) State clearly why no alternative methodology, which does not involve deception, can fruitfully be used to answer the research question; (b) Provide evidence that the participant is not put at risk by the deception. If appropriate, provide a debriefing letter to participants disclosing the deception.
6. BENEFITS to PARTICIPANTS and/or SOCIETY: Describe in detail the potential benefits of the research for both participants and to general knowledge.
7. INFORMED CONSENT: Clearly outline the measures that will be used to ensure the informed consent of all research participants. Cover letters and consent forms ARE NOT REQUIRED at this time, but must be attached as

appendices on Lakehead University (or NOSM if appropriate) letterhead when you complete your REB Protocol.

8. **CAPACITY TO CONSENT:** Capacity refers to the ability of prospective or actual participants to understand relevant information presented about a research project, and to appreciate the potential consequences of their decision to participate or not participate (TCPS 2, Chapter 3, Section C). Will the research participants sufficiently understand the nature of the research project, and the risks, consequences, and potential benefits associated with it?

Yes

No

If "No", please state why this vulnerable group is necessary to the study, and elaborate on the consent process (i.e. parental consent, caregiver consent).

9. **ANONYMITY and/or CONFIDENTIALITY:** The researcher must outline the procedures that will be used to guarantee confidentiality and/or anonymity for participants. Participants who wish to be named and to waive their right to privacy and confidentiality must provide written evidence.

You will need to complete the TCPS 2 Tutorial: Course on Research Ethics (CORE) before completing the REB Protocol in conjunction with your supervisor. The Academic Review Committee (ARC) intends for this REB Appendix to provide you with a good first draft towards your REB Protocol. You are not required to complete the TCPS 2 Tutorial before submitting your proposal to the ARC.

Upon successful completion of the REB Protocol, please submit a copy of your approval letter to [admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca) in order to document your successful completion of the REB process.

All materials can be emailed to [admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca) and they will be circulated to the Academic Review Committee.

- Subject Line: Research or Creative Project Proposal from **your name.**
- Brief email requesting a review of your proposal.
- Attachment 1: [research project or creative project](#) evaluation form.
- Attachment 2: Research Project or Creative Project Proposal.
- Attachment 3: Supervisor's Cover Letter. (See instructions below).

# Creative Project Proposal Guide

Students doing major research projects and major creative projects in partial fulfillment of their MA in Social Justice Studies should display substantial consideration of their project at the proposal stage. For major projects involving research on human subjects, part of the proposal package will include a draft of an application to the Research Ethics Board, which has the benefit of demanding that students develop a multidimensional consideration and presentation of research methods.

As with any proposal, **it is not expected that the proposal will be perfect.** Rather, the purpose of this document is to encourage the candidate to ask deeper and more systematic questions about their creative work so as to render it an academic exercise including planning, research, execution, analysis, and evaluation.

- The following list of questions is intended to guide a wide range of students through the conceptualization, planning and development for a creative project for submission as the capstone element in the MA program.
- As this template necessarily needs to anticipate a wide range of potential projects in a wide range of forms, the candidate will need to **take care to translate the questions into a form that speaks to their particular project/approach.**
- The committee is cognizant of this challenge and encourages responses that make the most of the opportunity for reflection that the questions afford to articulate the proposed project as clearly, concisely and completely as possible.
- It is expected that responses to each question will be at least **one substantial paragraph in length.** While longer answers may be acceptable, the committee appreciates brevity. In terms of page length, this proposal is likely to be 10-15 pages long.
- Works referenced in the proposal (see Influences and Criticism below) should be properly acknowledged in a reference list or works cited. Please use the citation style you and your supervisor consider the most appropriate.

In circumstances when a project involves research on or with human subjects, additional information about the research process and a draft of key aspects of the Research Ethics Board application may also be required. Students should consult with their supervisors to determine what is required.

## Questionnaire

**THEME AND SIGNIFICANCE:** Briefly, outline your proposed project, including the topics and/or themes you are exploring or addressing. What is the significance of this project to questions of social justice?



**BACKGROUND:** What draws you to this project? Is there something about your personal or professional background that draws you to this topic? Does your exploration draw on previous research on this topic or on a previous practice in this medium, genre or form?

**DEVELOPMENT:** How does this project represent a challenge to advance your skills or capacities as a creator? How does it advance you towards your future personal or professional goals, or represent a continuation of your work or activism?

**APPROACH:** Describe the medium, genre or form in which you will be working. Why have you chosen this medium, genre or form? How does this medium, genre or form relate to the subject matter you are addressing? Why this medium/form and not another?

**INFLUENCES:** What other significant creators in your chosen medium, genre or form are your major influences in approaching your project? Upon what aspects of their creative practice are you building your own approach? What sources are you drawing on to study these examples?

**CRITICISM:** What have academic and other critics written about your theme, especially as it relates to your mode, medium or genre in which you are working? How does this criticism influence your practice? What theoretical texts, paradigms and approaches inform your work?

**PROCESS:** Creative practice requires dedication and discipline to experiment, refine, reflect, gain feedback and revisit. Describe your step-by-step methodology. Please provide a brief timeline.

**RESOURCES:** What materials, processes and facilities will be required to complete the work? Do you have access to these and, if not, how will you obtain them?

**RISKS<sup>†</sup>:** Does this project represent any potential risks to yourself or others? These risks might be physical (eg. handling of toxic materials, strain of creative movement) or psychological (eg. stress or stigma to interviewees, pressures on the artist(s)). Identify these and other risks and the steps you will take to either mitigate or accept them.

**ETHICS/ACCOUNTABILITY<sup>†</sup>:** Many creative projects emerge from research with or participation in communities. If this is the case, how is your creative work thus accountable to such communities? How will you obtain consent? If those communities are made vulnerable by systems of oppression (racism, sexism, colonialism), how will the work take care not to increase vulnerability?

AUDIENCE/PRESENTATION/DISSEMINATION: Who is the intended or ideal audience for this creative work? In what form will it reach its audience(s)? How do you plan to reach this audience?

REFLECTION: SJS creative projects must be accompanied by a 20-page artist statement/report that situates the project in relation to the existing body of contemporary creative work. How will you approach this statement and reflect on your creative work?

FORMAL EVALUATION: Please outline the criteria by which you would like your work to be formally evaluated by your supervisor. You should consult with your supervisor to ensure that they can give you the best form of feedback.

OTHER FEEDBACK/EVALUATION: Will there be other criteria for success? Eg. public exhibition, feedback from participants or peers, personal achievement.

† if your project involves consulting or working with human subjects you may need to, additionally, complete an REB application.

All materials can be emailed to [admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca) and they will be circulated to the Academic Review Committee.

- Subject Line: Research or Creative Project Proposal from **your name.**
- Brief email requesting a review of your proposal.
- Attachment 1: [research project or creative project](#) evaluation form.
- Attachment 2: Research Project or Creative Project Proposal.
- Attachment 3: Supervisor's Cover Letter. (See instructions below.)

## **Submission Dates: June 1, Sept. 15, or Jan. 15th.**

Submit your proposal in the summer before you begin your work. The SJS Academic Review Committee will read and evaluate your work. You will receive feedback and votes from the committee. Their options are “Yes-proceed.” “Yes, with project revision ideas.” or “No, please re-submit your proposal.” The committee will complete their review by June 15, Sept. 15, or January 30th, accordingly.

Revisions should be completed within two weeks and be resubmitted to the Review Committee if required. Shortly after you have received your feedback, you will be asked to provide some feedback for the Review Committee:

1. Which ideas / suggestions from the review process have you incorporated (if any).

2. How has your project developed since your proposal (i.e. just a one paragraph progress report).
3. Are you on track, and willing, to present your work on the program's Research Day in April?

If you need to apply for Research Ethics Board (REB) approval, please be aware that this is a time-consuming process and it is a good idea to develop your REB application in conjunction with your proposal. You should not submit your REB until after your proposal has been approved.

## **SJS Research and Creative Project Review Committee Expectations**

The Academic Review Committee (ARC) assumes that students are submitting a proposal for a manageable, two-semester, research or creative project. The ARC assumes the following about these projects:

- A 50+ page paper if you are writing a traditional research paper, although a range of 40-80 pages is acceptable.
- A small number of participants (3-7) if your project includes interviews. Relevant to research and creative projects.
- A short and concise data collection phase if your project involves survey data or other forms of data collection. Relevant to research and creative projects.
- A short and contained field observation time if your project includes conducting field research.

For students doing creative projects, any research components and creative components are similarly short and manageable.

If a student and supervisor are envisioning a longer, more substantial research project, they should make that clear in the student's proposal and the supervisor's cover letter. The SJS Program does not currently have an MA Thesis option available for students, so students are not expected to produce work that would be the equivalent of an MA Thesis. Faculty and students may consider using a [Reading Course](#) to appropriately manage and make visible the work that goes into an ambitious MA research or creative project.

## **Schedule**

Students have 3 opportunities throughout the year to submit their proposals. Meeting these deadlines assures students that they will receive timely feedback from the review committee, and assures that the review committee is fair and consistent in its evaluations. Student proposals and faculty cover letters should be submitted in a single email to the following address:

[admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca)

Materials will be forwarded to the review committee immediately upon receipt. The committee will only be meeting three times per year for initial reviews so it is imperative that students and faculty meet the published deadlines.

June 1 proposal submission.

June 15 (or nearest working day) committee meeting and decisions.

Revisions, if requested, due by June 30th or re-submitted for September 15 review.

Sept. 15 proposal submission.

Sept. 30 (or nearest working day) committee meeting and decisions.

Revisions, if requested, due by October 15 or re-submitted for January 15th review.

January 15 proposal submission.

January 30 (or nearest working day) committee meeting and decision.

Revisions, if requested, due by February 15th or re-submitted for June 1 review.

### **What to include:**

**Students:** proposal, appropriate length and elements determined by the project guides and the nature of the project (see above).

**Supervisors:** a one or two-page cover letter for the review committee. Please include the following:

- A short precise of the project as you understand it.
- A short account of your expertise as it relates to the student's project.
- Your assessment of the feasibility of the project, and any key steps that will need to be taken to ensure the project is feasible.
- The student's readiness to undertake the project.

Supervisors can also provide any contextualizing of the project that might be helpful. For example, if the student is working on a sub-component of one of your larger research projects, that would be useful information to share with the review committee. If supervisors and students are knowingly taking on an project that will seem more ambitious and lengthy than a typical research or creative project, please acknowledge that and explain why the more ambitious project is right for this student and their goals.

Student proposals and faculty cover letters should be submitted in a single email to the following address:

[admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:admin.socialjustice@lakeheadu.ca)

Materials will be forwarded to the Academic Review Committee upon receipt. The committee will only be meeting three times per year for initial reviews so it is imperative that students and faculty meet the published deadlines.

## Presentation of Project

Students pursuing research and creative projects within the ideal time frame will be asked to make a 15-20 minute presentation based on their projects. Presentations will happen in April, which is typically the last month of the Winter semester. Exact dates will be determined from year to year.

The presentations are not a defense, but a sharing of scholarship. Projects may not be completely finished at this time, but presenting from unfinished work can help students receive feedback and encouragement to finish.

Presentations will be open to Lakehead faculty and students on both campuses, although the event will primarily be promoted within the Social Justice Studies program. Presenters are welcome to invite friends and family. Presentations will be live-streamed to both campuses and recorded to assist with program review and assessment.

Students finishing outside of the ideal time frame have three options:

1. They are invited to arrange for their own presentation day and time. The event can be similarly promoted and open to both campuses.
2. They may join the next April presentation day.
3. A presentation without an audience can be recorded and shared with the Program for review and assessment purposes.

## Resources

[OGS / SSHRC Resources](#) (some general advice on writing proposals).

The Lakehead University Library's [Subject Guide to Social Justice](#).

A [complete list of projects](#) from the program, as of July 1, 2024.