A word (or two) about MAAPE thesis proposals

You’ll need to address the following questions in your thesis proposal: What is the main claim you will be exploring and defending in the thesis? What are the methodologies you will be making use of? What arguments will you be putting forward? What is important about the claims you are making?

A helpful template for your thesis proposal is:

1. Title
2. Introduction: Provide a clear and succinct statement of your topic and the central claim you will be defending.
3. Background: Present the philosophical terrain in which the problem you are addressing arises. Who are the seminal authors, and what are the key texts and positions which serve to “set the stage” for your study? This part of the proposal should help you to establish the context for and importance of your thesis.
4. Methodology: What method of inquiry will be guiding your work? Possibilities include analytic argumentation, phenomenological investigation, critical textual analysis, and empirical research, among (many) others.¹
5. Chapters: Provide a description of the chapters you expect the thesis to contain.
6. Timeline: Set projected dates for completion of each of the chapters of the thesis. As you construct your timeline, keep in mind that a full draft of the thesis must be provided to your committee members before midterm of the semester in which you are enrolled in Thesis B (Phil 5399B) and expect to graduate.
7. Bibliography

The final version of your proposal should be 8 to 15 pages and be formatted in accordance with either MLA or Chicago (Turabian) guidelines. (A very helpful resource, RefWorks, is available through the university library: http://www.library.txstate.edu/about/departments/ref/refworks.html)

Caveat: Producing a thesis proposal and the thesis itself is a prolonged and painstaking task not to be undertaken by the “faint-hearted” (or undisciplined) student. DON’T choose to write a thesis simply because you plan to go on to doctoral work in the field. Though you will need a writing sample when applying for doctoral programs, an excellent one can be developed from a course paper or in an independent study course. You do not need to have written a thesis in order to be a strong candidate for a PhD program, and not having written a thesis says nothing about your likely success in doctoral studies. Consider whether the additional coursework you would undertake as a non-thesis track student might better prepare you for your future graduate studies than would writing the thesis.

And do recognize that you are not ready to engage in a thesis project if you just have a general idea of an area of inquiry that you’d like to pursue (or an idea or two that you might like to develop). We strongly suggest that all thesis-track students develop a firm grasp on their topics prior to taking Phil 5399A. You can do this by devoting a course paper or papers to your topic or by undertaking an independent study (Phil 5388) with a member of the graduate faculty well-versed in your area of interest.

¹ Any research involving human subjects (e.g., questionnaires, interviews) must be approved in advance by the Texas State University IRB (Institutional Review Board). You (and your advisor) must complete online training before submitting your proposed study for IRB approval. For further information see “Tips for MAAPE students”.