Bachelor of Philosophy Sample Thesis Prospectus

(Politics and Philosophy/Political Science)

Title: The Impact of the Soviet Union’s “New Thinking” on the Collapse of East Germany

The intent of my research is to investigate and evaluate the relationship between the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) during the GDR’s final years of existence and to determine how their relationship affected the eventual East German collapse.

The focus of my research will center on the perestroika and glasnost reforms under Mikhail Gorbachev. I will look at the economical, political, international, and social impacts of Gorbachev’s reforms in East Germany. The research will pay particular attention to the East German reaction to perestroika and glasnost, and how that reaction contributed to its own collapse.

L Economic Impact
   a. I will look at trade relations between the Soviet Union and East Germany during these years, as well as trade throughout the Eastern Bloc. In the command economy of the Eastern Block, the extent of trade can easily be linked to political aims. By looking at import/export statistics between the Soviet Union and the GDR, compared with statistics between the USSR and other Warsaw Pact countries, I hope to link the political divergence with an economic divergence that adversely affected East Germany.

Political Impact
   a. The political relationships with which I will primarily concern myself with are at the "elite" level. I will examine how Erich Honecker and the SED (Socialist Unity party) understood and viewed perestroika and glasnost. This area of my research will include their ideological views of Gorbachev's reforms, how they believed the impacts would affect East Germany, and how they saw the SED being affected by the reforms.

3. The International Scene
   a. This area of my research will involve looking at how perestroika affected the relationship between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. I will examine how the Soviet Union's understanding of their relationship with Eastern Europe changed and the implications that resulted. I will also study how the Soviet Union's policy towards Eastern Europe was affected by their broader "Western" foreign policy objectives. Special attention will be given to the German-German relationship along with the Soviet-West German relationship.

4. Social Impact
   a. My research will use the social scene to serve as a setting in which the political events unfolded. I will look at how the SED dealt with the social unrest leading up to the collapse of East Germany. I will also research the contribution Gorbachev's reforms (and East Germany's reaction to the reforms) made to East German societal attitudes. I will
see how the societal effects of Soviet reforms may have been different from that of other east European countries. Economic influences on the social scene will also be researched.

*Research Timeline*

**November 4**
Rough draft of research outline submitted to thesis advisor. This included an outline of the chapters and major subdivisions.

**November 18**
Final draft of research outline submitted.

**November 22**
Deadline for the Bachelor of Philosophy application to be submitted to the Honors College. The members of the faculty committee should be confirmed by this date.

**January 9**
Rough draft of chapter 1 (Introduction) and chapter 2 (Historical Overview) submitted.

**January 24**
Rough draft of chapter 3 (Glasnost, Perestroika, and Foreign Policy) turned in along with chapter 1 and 2 revisions.

**February 14**
Rough draft of chapter 4 (The Impact on East Europe and East Germany) turned in along with chapter 3 revisions.

**February 24**
Rough draft of chapter 5 (Crisis and Revolution) submitted along with chapter 4 revisions.

**March 3**
Rough draft of chapter 6 (Conclusion) submitted along with chapter 5 revisions.

**March 10**
Final rough draft due. This will include the entire thesis as one work (rather than individual chapters) and will include all the changes made to the rough drafts of the chapters.

**April 7**
Final draft will be completed.

**April 14-23**
The thesis will be defended within this period thesis advisor will determine exact dates.