

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
PhD with Course Work Program

Guidelines for Writing Concept Paper-2025

Office of the Dean
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
2025

1. Introduction

Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FoHSS) Dean's Office, in conjunction with the Central Departments at the University Campus, awards MPhil and Ph. D. Degrees to the eligible candidates. Candidates aspiring to pursue an MPhil or PhD must take the entrance exam conducted by the Dean's Office. After passing the entrance exam, candidates are admitted to the MPhil-PhD program based on merit. All admitted candidates must complete two semesters of coursework (totaling 24 credit hours) in the respective central departments in the physical mode. After completing 24 credit hours of coursework, candidates may either write an MPhil dissertation (Course Code 720, 6 credit hours) or join the PhD program with coursework. Only five candidates per department are eligible for admission to the PhD program in the concerned subject, based on merit.

The candidates who get admission in the PhD with course work program in the Dean's office have to submit a brief concept paper to the Dean's office. After submitting the Concept Paper, students are assigned one Supervisor and one Co-Supervisor on the recommendation from the concerned department by the Dean's Office to supervise them in preparing two sets of reading list- at least 50 entries for each: **I. Course Codes 721 Primary Study Areas: Major Corpus of the Study, History, Empirical Studies,** and **II. Course Code 722: Concepts/Theories/Models/Methods.** After collecting, comparing, contrasting and categorizing the authentic, reliable and valid scholarly sources, students, under the instructions and guidance of the Supervisor and Co-Supervisor, have to draft two scholarly papers synthesizing the sources of the reading lists.

The purpose of these guidelines for writing concept paper provides PhD students with essential information about how to prepare and submit Concept Paper in a format acceptable to the Dean's Office. While these guidelines help maintain uniform standards regarding the essential components and documentation style of preparing Concept Paper, they also allow enough

flexibility to satisfy the acceptable practices of each academic discipline. The primary objective of these guidelines is to ensure consistency, uniformity, and accuracy in drafting the Concept Paper.

2. Steps to be Followed

The following steps are to be sincerely followed:

- Select your study area as per your interest as well as having wide academic scope.
- Select specific study area and sources for the primary texts/study area.
- Explore the researchable problem(s) from the primary data.
- Read some previous studies made on the primary texts/study area critically.
- Identify the tentative research gaps.
- Show your point of departure that differs from previous studies.
- Decide tentative research design and paradigm, methods of collecting data, tools and processes of analyzing the data.
- Establish your purpose to shape the ways you want to argue and form your thesis statement.
- Think about the significance of your study within the context of existing scholarship.
- Formulate a tentative title of your study
 - i. Title should be intelligent and telling.
 - ii. Must have key variables/concepts of the study which foreground your argument.

3. Typical Organization of Concept Paper

A. Introductory paragraph

- Introduce your promise sentence (issue(s) to be raised, primary texts/study area and perspective to be used)
- Substantive narratives of your primary texts/study area as per your title.
- Tentative theoretical insights.
- Your major argument (thesis statement) of your study.

B. Define the key variables/terms of your title with authentic sources.**C. Statement of the Problem:**

Write answers of these questions succinctly.

- i. What problem(s) did you feel while going through the primary texts/study area?
- ii. How does your personal problem become research problem?
- iii. What research gap did you explore/identify?
- iv. What is your point of departure that differs from the previous studies?

D. Research Questions:

The following research questions will seek answers to address the problem that I have felt while going through the study area:

Generally

- i. What . . .? (Issue(s) to be raised from the primary texts/study area?)
- ii. Why . . .? (Reasons for selecting the primary texts/study area and issue(s) raised?)
- iii. How . . .? (Representation/present status of the issue(s) in the primary texts/study area?)

E. Research Objectives

Generally,

- i. To identify/explore . . .
- ii. To examine/assess/investigate . . .
- iii. To analyze/scrutinize . . .

Note: There should be correspondence between title, statement of the problem, research questions and research objectives.

F. Significance of the Study

Write answers of these questions succinctly:

- i. What new knowledge will your study add within the context of existing scholarship?
- ii. How will your study be an innovative one?
- iii. What new avenues does it open for the potential researchers and general readers?

A sample of Concept Paper

Title: The Rhetoric of National Ethos in the Life Narratives of Obama, Yew and Koirala

Introduction

The study will examine the rhetoric depicted in the selected narratives in exploring and analyzing civic national ethos of the United States of America, particularly manifested in Obama's *The Audacity of Hope* (2006), Singaporean civic national ethos reflected in Yew's *The Singapore Story* (1999) and *From the Third World to the First* (2000) and Nepali national ethos constructed in B.P. Koirala's *Atmabrittanta: Late Life Recollection* (2001). Particularly, the study will revolve around the discursive formation of American, and Singaporean common aspirations specifically reflected in the respective life narratives. Ultimately, the researcher will draw the insights of these figures to analyze the rhetoric of the Nepali national ethos constructed in Koirala's life narratives. The researcher argues that the rhetoric of evoking national ethos with the assumptions of unifying civic national imagination in the narratives of Obama and Yew are explicit whereas, Koirala struggles to crystallize his version of Nepali civic national ethos in his narrative. This means the rhetoric of civic nationalism in Obama and Yew's life narratives are vivacious and manifested but the same in terms of Koirala is dissipated.

It is pertinent to define the concepts of 'rhetoric', 'ethos' and 'national ethos' in the context of this study. Rhetoric is an art of verbal communication or act of producing discourses. According to Aristotle, rhetoric is an art of persuasion through logic. Steven Lynn defines rhetoric as an act of making argument and persuading other effectively; it "also refers to the strategies that people use in shaping discourse for particular purpose" (14). The act of articulating common aspirations of the general public by the selected life narrators through their life narratives is defined as 'rhetoric' in this context.

Stepping on the philosophic foundation of Aristotle's the art of rhetoric and on rhetoric the study will anatomize the selected life narratives to see how the authors use the mechanics of rhetoric to generate national ethos in the light of the latest developments in the science of rhetoric. Ideas of rhetoric developed by Georg Campbell, Kenneth Burke, Wayne C. Booth, Jennifer Richard, Steven Lynn and Wendy Olmsted will serve the purpose of understanding the mechanics of rhetoric and its application in the contemporary times particularly in the formation of national ethos in this context.

'Ethos' is essentially one of the instruments of rhetoric as per the Aristotelian discourse of rhetoric. In this context, it is the unique character, sentiment, moral value, creed, or guiding principles of an individual, society, institution or nation in a literal sense. It was originally used by Aristotle to define the custom or character of a man and was also used to distinguish one person or society with the other. There can be several forms of ethos like religious ethos, business ethos, etc. however this research is about national ethos.

'National ethos' in this regard means, secular common aspirations of the people living within the territory of a nation state. The study observes how a common dream, guiding principle and the common goal of the general public are projected as civic national ethos in the aforementioned selected life narratives. It is the study of the rhetoric of a national myth of Richard Rorty's 'dream country' which Jim Cullen quotes. Rorty claims that: "You have to describe the country in terms of what you passionately hope it will become, as well as in terms of what you know it to be now. You have to be loyal to a dream country rather than to the one to which you wake up every morning. Unless such loyalty exists, the ideal has no chance of becoming actual "(vii).

Rorty signifies the notion of national ethos, that according to him should dwell in the imagination of a common citizen in the form of a dream country. This study aims to examine the way the authors play with the idea of national ethos and seek how the notion of a dream

country is created in the life narratives of the political leader rhetorically; in the unique contexts of the respective countries the leaders belong to. The concept of a nation and nationalism are ever debatable terms especially when they are defined in relation to the cultural, racial, ethnic and tribal issues and identities. However, this research will seek the rhetorical construction of neutral and secular ethos based on the common aspirations of the general public as the national ethos or national myth in the current context of globalization in the selected life narratives. The type of such national ethos is categorized into the idea of 'civic nationalism'.

Sashi Tharoor defines 'civic nationalism' based on the principles of modern democratic institutions and the notion of constitutionalism which ensures the freedom of speech and equality of all despite the differences in ethnicity, caste, creed, region, gender and so (32). Further, he defines civic nationalism as "a concept that drives those states that derives their political legitimacy not from ethnicity, religion, language, culture . . . but from the consent and civic participation of their citizens, as free members of a democratic polity" (31). The philosophical foundation for this version of nationalism was laid in the writings of John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762).

Fundamental concept of these philosophies is that legitimacy of the modern government and nation-states must be based not on any cultural ground but on the 'general will' of the people living within the jurisprudence of a government or a country. Rousseau defines this 'general will' using the terms like 'collective being', 'common good' and 'common interest' (170-75). General will of the common public is the collective consensus to live together and aspire for the common welfare of the country.

Civic nationalism ingrained in the 'general will' of the common people is the modern version of nationalism developed in the West which was evolved and dispersed worldwide

since the watershed moments like The Declaration of Independence, The French Revolution and all the way from the World Wars and decolonization to the present. Some of the key thinkers and philosophers that succeeded the ideas of civic nationalism beyond Locke and Rousseau are; Jurgen Habermas, Ernest Renan, Benedict Anderson, Hans Kohn, Eric Hobsman, Ernest Gellner and so. Hence, the aim of the study is to delve into the idea of civic national ethos evolved through these thinkers into the rhetoric of the selected life narratives of the former statesmen from Nepal and abroad.

Moreover, the analysis of the national ethos of Renan's type corresponds with the concept of the 'American Dream'. The researcher will also take references from Jim Cullen's concept of 'American Dream'. Cullen argues that the national ethos of the United States is "essentially a creation of collective imagination" (6). Nationhood and national ethos are actually abstract and mythical concepts that govern the imagination of the people. Thus, the researcher will examine how the life narrators assume common ethos of the people as the national ethos in the contexts of Obama, Yew and Koirala's life narratives.

Statement of the Problem

Obama claims that the words, Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness are their starting points as Americans. He further claims that, these words "describe not only the foundation of our government but the substance of our common creed" (53). He asserts that, the core values of individual freedom "orient us, set our course, each and every day" (53). Moreover, Lee Kuan Yew asserts that 'communal bullying', 'intimidation' and "traumatic experience of race riots" has been the key catalyst coaxing Yew and his colleagues "to build a multiracial society that would give equality to all citizens, regardless of race, language, or religion" (xiv). He stresses his determination of civic national ethos and claims that, "it was an article of faith which guided our policies" (xiv). However, B.P. Koirala claims, in his memoir *Atmabrittanta: Late Life Recollection* (2001), that the key reason behind the crisis of

the national existence of Nepal is the lack of nationality. He further states, in his historical address to the general public in 1976 that, “mere politics of crude slogans have dismantled the national unity for last sixteen years” (173-74). While going through these narratives, it is usual that public figures and political leaders like Obama, Yew and Koirala employ the rhetoric or national building in their memoir, autobiography and personal narrative to unify the diverse general public into a common ground and coax them to advocate the common good of a nation thereby forming the national dream and common aspirations. While going through Obama and Yew, their rhetoric has produced positive overtones of unifying effect in terms of civic national ethos in their narratives, however it appears faint and feeble in Koirala’s.

It is necessary to carry out academic research on examining the rhetoric of national ethos engendered by the life narratives of the public figures so that the academia be informed how national ethos are formed and are instrumental in national integrity. It also helps to understand the nature, development and dynamics of statesmanship which are manifested in different contexts and forms in the life narratives of the public figure and political leaders of a high stature. Furthermore, this helps to understand how influential leaders demonstrate statesmanship to integrate the general public together to form a common dream and to direct them towards the desired directions intervening into the civic national imaginations by way of such statesmanship.

Research Questions

The following research questions will seek answers to address the problem:

- i. What form of national ethos have been evoked in the life narratives of Obama, Yew and Koirala?
- ii. Why does the rhetoric of Nepali national ethos appear feeble and fragmented in Koirala and unifying and visible in Obama and Yew?

- iii. How has national ethos been evoked, contested and manifested in the life narratives of Obama, Yew and Koirala, and what do they imply as per their contemporary national context?

Research Objectives

The key objectives of this study are:

- i. to explore and identify the forms and dynamics of national ethos evoked in the life narratives of, Obama, Yew and Koirala,
- ii. to investigate the factors constituting feeble rhetoric and fragmented national ethos in Koirala and unifying, visible and strong rhetoric of national ethos in Obama and Yew,
- iii. to analyze how national ethos been evoked, contested and manifested in the life narratives of Obama, Yew and Koirala, and what do they imply as per their contemporary national contexts.

Significance of the Study

National ethos of the people is essentially reflected in the art and literature of the respective nation. Life writings, like autobiography, memoirs and personal narratives are significant genre of literature into which the ethos of the narrator and the people is reflected. Even after undergoing the series of sociopolitical revolutions in 2007 B.S, 2046 B.S, and 2062/63 B.S, Nepali national ethos is fragmented and blurred. Similarly, there is the dearth of research on national ethos and its impact upon the general public. The research gap is that adequate researches have not been done upon the ideas and dynamics and implication of national ethos mirrored in the contemporary Nepali literature and art. Millions of youths prefer leaving the country for education, jobs or better future persistently in the recent decades and usually the traffic is one way. There are personal narratives of repulsion of each individual leaving the country. Therefore, rationale of this sort of research lies in critically

analyzing and contextualizing the development of statesmanship necessary for the country like ours through the study of best practices of the others which is deficient.

This study is significant since it examines and analyze the rhetoric of national ethos manifested in the life narratives of selected political leaders and public figures. It helps the reader understand how a successful leader generates the sense of common feelings that people of a particular nation share through the rhetoric of his/her life narratives. It further helps to assess and understand these dynamics through the study of the life narratives of the specified foreign leaders against the backdrop of Nepal.

Note: This concept paper has been developed on the basis of the PhD Dissertation Proposal entitled “The Rhetoric of National Ethos in the Life Narratives of Obama, Yew and Koirala” prepared by Mahendra Bhusal, a PhD candidate carrying out his study under the supervision of Jib Lal Sapkota, Professor at the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu.

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Appendix A: The Title Page (Sample)

TITLE OF THE CONCEPT PAPER

A PhD Dissertation's Concept Paper

Submitted to

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University

For the Approval of the Research Committee

By

CANDIDATE'S NAME

PhD Reg. No. 062/15

TU Regd. No. . . .

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Kathmandu, Nepal

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