

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE M.A. THESIS IN LITERATURE

1) DESCRIPTION OF THE M.A. THESIS IN LITERATURE:

- a) The M.A. thesis in literature is an essay of fifty to sixty pages that demonstrates competence in scholarly techniques (critical, historical, or linguistic), in bibliographic materials involved in the topic, and in methods of documentation.
- b) The M.A. thesis can take the form of presenting literature in the context of another area of study:
 - i) For example, cultural studies, history, science, race, ethnicity, gender, class, politics, the environment,
 - ii) or a study of the development within genres of at least two literary periods or national traditions of literature written in English,
 - iii) or a study that places the work in the context of another genre (for example, critical theory, film, biography).
- c) Depending on the student's interest, the thesis can be a study which takes into account alternate readings and demonstrates an understanding of contextual studies, for example: a feminist, new historicist, or revisionist reading of a single text.

2) THE CALENDAR:

- a) The semester before the thesis is written students select an advisor from the English Department faculty under whose supervision they will write the proposal for their thesis.
- b) Students should consult the Program Director if they are uncertain about choosing an advisor.
- c) Before any substantial writing is undertaken on the thesis itself, the student will submit a thesis proposal to the advisor for approval.

- d) The advisor serves as first reader for the thesis.
- e) The second reader for the thesis is the seminar leader of English 699: Research and Thesis, the course in which students are enrolled during the semester that they write their thesis.
- f) The thesis writing seminar is the capstone course in the M.A. program, and students should register for this course after they have completed all other course work for the degree. However, students who have completed 27 credits may register for one other graduate course while they are writing their thesis.
- g) The student will then forward two copies of the approved proposal to the Program Director for distribution to the members of the Graduate Committee for approval.
- h) Once the Committee approves the proposal, the student will be authorized to enroll the following semester in English 699: Research and Thesis, a thesis writing seminar.
- i) If a proposal is rejected, revisions will be indicated. The students will revise accordingly and re-submit.
- j) Students who plan to write their thesis during the fall semester should submit their proposal to the Program Director by March 15th.
- k) Students who plan to write their thesis during the spring semester should submit their proposal to the Program Director by November 1.
- l) Students submit two final copies of their thesis during the last week that the thesis writing seminar (English 699) meets.
- m) One of the copies should be in a spring binder to be kept on file in the office of the Program Director. The other copy is for the first reader.

3) THE PROPOSAL:

- a) The proposal should consist of a short essay of 750-1000 words that presents the following:
 - i) The subject and purpose of the thesis.
 - ii) State clearly and concisely what kinds of ideas that will be explored
 - iii) What is being proven
 - iv) What problems are being raised.
 - v) In other words: indicate in the best way possible, at this early stage, what will be written about, what will be said about it and why.
- b) Present state of research.
 - i) Discuss what is known about the topic at this point, and familiarity with relevant secondary resources.
 - ii) Describe what is considered to be original about the topic in light of what has already been said about it.
- c) Tentative topic outline.
- d) Show how the selection and arrangement of material fulfills the overall purpose.
- e) A preliminary selective bibliography.
- f) List what books and other research materials will be needed.

4) STYLE AND FORM:

- a) Students receive specific instruction and support about style and form during the thesis writing seminar.
- b) For citations and Bibliography, follow the MLA Style Guide in both the proposal and the thesis.

5) EVALUATION:

In consultation with the Thesis Advisor, the Seminar Leader provides a summary evaluation of the thesis and a letter grade for English 699, Research and Thesis.