

WRITING A THESIS PROPOSAL

General Advice

An honors project is a significant undertaking, so it is important to choose a topic that promises to hold your attention and to reward your time and effort. Your topic is likely to have arisen from the writing and research you have done in your classes.

We are interested in hearing *both* about the texts, media, theoretical frameworks, questions, and themes that have inspired your thesis topic *and* about your relevant writing and research experience.

Form and Guidelines

In roughly 3 double-spaced pages (+ a bibliography or writing sample), your proposal for English 498 should describe your project, your preparation, and what you hope to accomplish over the course of the project.

Below are separate guidelines for proposing a critical thesis and for proposing a creative or combination critical/creative thesis. If you hope to pursue a project that combines critical and creative approaches, please attend to the relevant questions in both categories, and note the writing sample requirement below.

Guidelines for Writing a Critical Thesis Proposal **Required preparation:** coursework relevant to your topic **Recommended preparation:** a 400-level seminar

You should think of your proposal as a writing sample that demonstrates your ability to make a cogent argument about both your project and your preparation. Your proposal, *written in prose form*, should address the following questions (not necessarily in this order):

- How did you come to your topic?
- What questions drive your inquiry? What are some questions or themes that have arisen in a particular course, or across courses, which you would like to explore more fully?
- What independent reading and research do you need to pursue to help answer these questions?
- What are the methods, theoretical frameworks and materials that you think can help you to answer these questions?
- Is there a scholarly or critical conversation in which you want to participate or intervene? Are there particular critical models that you think will motivate your proposed work?
- Where is the project now? Is it a germinating idea? Has it arisen from a seminar paper? What are your goals for new reading and research over the summer?
- How has your previous coursework prepared or motivated you to consider writing a thesis? What challenges do you foresee, based on this experience?

Optional: Have you had conversations about your project with a particular English professor? Is there an advisor with whom you would like to work? The department cannot guarantee that you will be assigned the advisor you request, but we welcome you to include those requests.

Bibliography

If you are proposing a critical project, you must also append a brief (one page) initial bibliography of relevant primary and secondary sources to demonstrate your awareness of the critical conversation around your project and your ability to gather a set of relevant texts and/or media. This list can include texts you have already read and those you plan to read during your thesis research. We recognize that your project and sources will change and adapt over time.

Guidelines for Writing a Creative or Combined Creative/Critical Thesis

Required preparation: at least one Creative Writing course,
in the genre of your proposed thesis

Recommended preparation: two or more Creative Writing courses

Your proposal, *written in prose form*, should answer the following questions:

- What questions or experiences drive your motivation to write a creative thesis? What are the abiding interests that have shaped your writing so far, in your courses and beyond?
- What story or stories do you want to tell, and in what form – stories, linked stories, poetry, memoir, a novella, a hybrid-genre project, or a combined creative/critical project? If you propose a collection of stories or poems, what might link them: theme? characters? place? style?
- What Creative Writing courses have you taken? How has your coursework prepared you to consider writing a creative thesis? What experience have you had writing in this particular genre, and what do you think your strengths and weaknesses are at this point?
- Are there particular creative and scholarly authors, texts, media and/or performances that you consider models and motivations for your proposed work?
- Where is the project now? Is it a germinating idea? Has it arisen from a previous creative project? What are your goals?
- What independent reading and research do you want to pursue as part of your creative project?
- What formal or stylistic challenges do you anticipate? What challenges have you faced as a writer which could help or hinder your ability to do independent work?

Optional: Have you had conversations about your project with a particular English professor? Is there an advisor with whom you would like to work? The department cannot guarantee that you will be assigned the advisor you request, but we welcome you to include those requests.

Writing Sample

If you are proposing a **creative** or **combined creative/critical** project, please include a recent sample of your work as a writer, preferably in the proposed medium, which demonstrates your preparation for writing a creative thesis. Your writing sample should be no more than 10 pages.

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