

The Thesis Option: New and Old Catalogues

Winthrop University Department of English

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Note: These guidelines serve as the “syllabus” for ENGL 695 and ENGL 696. Individual advisors can feel free to stipulate additions to these guidelines to facilitate students’ learning in the process of writing this document; if they do so, a copy of the stipulations should be filed with the Graduate Director for reference.

The most sophisticated piece of scholarship a student produces during the M.A. program, the Master’s thesis demonstrates that the student can generate a recognizably professional project. Students who choose the thesis option will take six “thesis hours” during their final two semesters; these hours replace six hours of normal course credit for the M.A. in English. Normally we expect that students who undertake the writing of a thesis will have demonstrated strong research and writing skills in their first 18 hours of graduate work; usually, a GPA of 3.3 is expected for a thesis candidate, though exceptions can be made by the Graduate Director after consultation with your teachers and the Graduate Committee. By decision of the department’s Graduate Faculty, you may not enroll in any thesis hours while you have incompletes on your transcript.

The thesis should range between sixty and eighty pages, including at minimum five chapters (including the introduction and conclusion) and an appropriate Works Cited listing; the length can be greater, but generally should not exceed 100 pages. Students who are submitting a creative writing thesis (e.g. a collection of short stories or poems) are expected to include a critical preface to their work, discussing appropriate theoretical and/or technical issues, sources of influence, and other relevant matters, as might be expected in a published edition of their works. The length of a creative writing thesis will depend on the nature of the work produced; the writer, Thesis Director, and Graduate Director will confer early in the writing process to make sure that the intended work will be of acceptable length. In all cases, the thesis is expected to demonstrate the level of scholarly rigor commensurate with the completion of an advanced academic degree, both in terms of its deployment of appropriate secondary scholarship for the topic and in terms of its appropriateness as a piece of finished academic writing.

The creative thesis should typically range between fifty and one hundred pages for prose, and thirty to sixty pages for poetry. The thesis may consist of a collection of short stories, poems, or essays. Longer forms such as novels, novellas, or memoirs are also appropriate. The creative work must connect in a cohesive way (thematically, stylistically, by plot, characters, setting, etc.) toward a book-length project. Students must include a thesis-driven critical essay of at least fifteen pages that integrates relevant creative writing theory research, sources of influence, and other relevant matters with appropriate documentation and bibliography. It should be modeled after professional creative writing craft and theory essays, like one might find in *Writer’s Chronicle* or *Poets & Writers*. Students should have at least one third of their thesis drafted by the end of their first semester of registered thesis hours. In all cases, the thesis is expected to demonstrate the level of scholarly rigor commensurate with the completion of an advanced academic degree, both in terms of its deployment of appropriate secondary scholarship for the topic and in terms of its appropriateness as a piece of finished academic writing.

The student must find a faculty member to serve as Thesis Director. Only members of the Graduate Faculty may supervise a Master’s Thesis. This faculty member must *in advance* agree to supervise and evaluate the thesis, along with two other faculty members who will serve as second and third readers. Your other readers should be members of the Graduate Faculty, but in appropriate circumstances any

member of the tenure-track faculty may serve as a thesis reader. Normally, your readers will be faculty members from the Department of English; however, in appropriate circumstances, you may request a tenure-track faculty member from another Winthrop department (or in very special) from another accredited institution to serve as readers of your thesis. Consult with your director and the Director of Graduate Studies if you have questions about the eligibility of a faculty member to serve on your committee.

ENGL 695 (All Catalogues)

Students who are seeking to pursue the Thesis Option need to register for ENGL 695 in their second to last semester. They **must** submit the "Application to Register for Thesis Hours" when they are advised for the first semester of thesis work. The completed "Thesis Supervision" form **must** be submitted to the Graduate Director before a student can register for ENGL 695. The Thesis Director will be the professor of record for both semesters of the student's work. The Director may use plus-minus grading, whole letter grades, or S/U grading, at her/his discretion; this choice is indicated on the Thesis Supervision form. The form will also record whether the thesis director is to receive a bound, print copy of the final thesis. **(State law requires that an archival copy of the thesis be deposited in Dacus Library. The Graduate School can provide you details for that submission.)** Students should become familiar with the Graduate School guidelines for formatting and margins as early as possible, submitting all drafts of their work in that format.

- ∅ During ENGL 695*, the student's **minimum** tasks are to receive approval of the Thesis Proposal and Bibliography (see guidelines) from his or her Thesis Director and the Director of Graduate Studies in English, typically no later than mid-semester break, as well as to complete one chapter of his or her thesis for distribution to their entire committee and make a solid beginning on the second chapter. In conjunction with the Director, the student will choose and obtain the permission of two other appropriate faculty members to serve as readers on his/her thesis. Before receiving a final grade in ENGL 695, the student must submit the "Record of Thesis Committee" form to the Graduate Director. The Thesis Director may confer with the Graduate Director about assigning a grade for ENGL 695.

ENGL 696 (Catalogues before 2017-18) and ENGL 694 + ENGL 670

In catalogues before 2017-18, the second semester of thesis is fulfilled by ENGL 696 (3 credits) with the thesis supervisor as the instructor of record. In catalogues dated 2017-18 and later, the thesis director will be instructor of record for ENGL 670 (0 credits) and the student will also take ENGL 694 (Graduate Studio/Capstone) (3.0 credits) with its own instructor of record. Early in the second semester of the thesis project, students **must** schedule an appointment with the Associate Dean of the Graduate School to have sample printouts of their title page, Table of Contents, a chapter first page, and a body page of the thesis checked for compliance with the Graduate School's presentation standards. Do NOT wait until just before the submission deadline to do this; it will cost time, aggravation, money, and possibly your opportunity to graduate if you have not formatted your materials properly. If the Graduate School rejects the formatting of your final thesis, it will be your responsibility to have it reprinted or corrected, so checking in advance is very important!

- ∅ During ENGL 696** or ENGL 694+ENGL 670, the student will complete and defend the thesis by the approved deadline, usually in the 13th week of the semester. (Students completing a thesis must also complete oral comprehensive examinations, which are scheduled separately.) **The**

final draft for the defense must be submitted to the entire committee at least a week before the defense date.

The defense date should be planned **before mid-semester break** and the actual defense must take place **no later than three working days before the Graduate School's submission deadline** to allow time for late revisions, appropriate manuscript preparation, and obtaining signatures; remember that the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences may wish to read the complete thesis before approving it. Part of the learning involved in writing a thesis is developing the time- and project-management skills needed to produce a work on this scale; observe these deadlines carefully!

Important Note: The Graduate School generally requires that completed theses be submitted about three weeks before the end of the semester. Students should consult the calendar on the Graduate School website before scheduling their work for ENGL 696 or ENGL 670.

Even More Important Note: Your Director and committee will need time to read and respond to each chapter, and they must find this time in between dealing with their own assigned courses and other departmental and university responsibilities. Make sure that you discuss how much time they will need to read material during your ENGL 695 and ENGL 696/670 semesters; many thesis drafts arrive on readers' desks in the midst of advising, committee work, and student research paper conferences, all of which can slow down the process of returning material to you. If you establish a calendar with your director and readers, you'll all have clear expectations of when material will be submitted and how long the turnaround time may be.

*** Students may not enroll in ENGL 695 or ENGL 696/670 for thesis credit while having any outstanding incompletes in other courses.**

****Students who receive a "C" or lower in ENGL 695 may not take ENGL 696 or ENGL 670 for thesis credit.**

Thesis Proposal Guidelines

Due Date: Check "Important Dates" but generally no later than the Friday before midterm break)

In order to complete your thesis in an efficient and thorough manner, you must complete a Thesis Proposal during your first semester of thesis hours (ENGL 695). While the form below requires signatures only from your Thesis Director and the Director of Graduate Studies, you are expected to distribute your Proposal to your entire committee.

Your proposal should include an essay of between five and seven pages, and a working bibliography of at least 15 secondary sources correctly documented in MLA format (you should anticipate the number of sources to increase dramatically through the course of your project.) Your essay should include the following:

REQUIRED FORMAT

Your title should be left justified in the top left corner of your essay, with spaces below for the approval of your Thesis Director and the Director of Graduate Studies in English.

"Clipping the Furies' Wings": Women's Ways of Knowing in "The Yellow Wallpaper," The Awakening, and The House of Mirth"

(Your Name)

_____, Thesis Director

_____, Director of Graduate Studies

Your proposal must include the following:

Title of the Thesis

While this may be a working title, a title indicates that you have considered the significance of your work and how it fits within the existing scholarly work on the subject.

Problem, Question at Issue

In your introduction, you are to lay the foundation for your study, explaining the question that has arisen regarding your field of study. Questions you might address include the following: How did this issue arise? What issues relate to the one you have chosen? Why is yours significant? This portion should demonstrate that your interest in this subject is more than superficial, indicating your enthusiasm for and commitment to the project.

Review of Literature

This section should survey those works that have already addressed the issue in some manner or those scholars who have examined topics that closely relate to your topic. If appropriate, trace the history of scholarship for your question at issue. Questions you might address include: How have other scholars approached the topic? Is their work satisfactory or helpful? What are the flaws and oversights that exist in current research? Finally, be sure once again to reiterate how your study will fit within the overall scholarly conversation about your subject.

Plan of Action

While you will certainly not have completed your research by this time, it is important for you to indicate that you do have a plan of action for completing your project. Questions you might address include the following: What are other areas of research do you need to pursue? Why are those steps necessary? How will you obtain the works that are not currently available in Dacus? In addition to your research, how do you envision your writing process? In other words, at one point will you feel prepared to begin drafting your first chapters?

Timeline

After examining the schedule recommended by the Graduate School for completing your thesis (see Graduate Webpage), as well as concerning your own course work and research schedule, develop a timeline for your project. Specify when you will have each section of your thesis completed, when the first draft of the entire project may be completed, etc. Make sure you have discussed the appropriateness of this timeline with your Thesis Director as well. *Remember that your readers will need ample time (approximately two weeks) to read and respond to your work as you plan this schedule.*

Conclusion

For your conclusion, summarize your expectations and reiterate the significance of your project. Summarize in general the areas of research you plan to pursue, and once again state how your thesis will contribute to the overall field. Finally, describe your plans for the thesis beyond graduation—how will you use it? Do you plan on attempting to publish any parts of the thesis? Will you present some of this work at conferences? How will this work further your teaching?

Working Bibliography

Your working bibliography is intended to demonstrate that you have begun a thorough review of published, peer-reviewed literature relevant to your topic, and that you are capable of conducting more than a convenience search for material. This bibliography must consist of at least 15 secondary sources, correctly documented in MLA format. Not all these sources may be used in the final thesis if your topic does not require them; we expect that the Works Cited for the final thesis will be far more extensive than this. If your director requests it, the working bibliography may be accompanied by brief annotations about the content and potential usefulness of each source for your research.

Thesis Supervision Form

This form must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies
before the student can enroll in ENGL 695 (during Registration).

Completed by the student:

Student Name _____

Student ID # _____ Date _____

I intend to register for ENGL 695 in _____ (semester) _____ (year).

I have asked _____ to serve as my thesis
director and instructor of record for ENGL 695/ENGL 696.

Completed by the Director:

I have agreed to direct this thesis. We have discussed the following important points:

- The thesis will be graded using the (circle one) plus/minus whole letter grade S/U system.
- I do / do not (circle one) expect to receive a bound printed copy of the final thesis.
- We have reviewed the guidelines for ENGL 695 and ENGL 696 and discussed selection of readers, the importance of meeting deadlines, the expectations of work completed for each course, and a proposed area of content for this thesis. The writer is aware that s/he is expected to comply with all these guidelines.

(Supervisor's Name)

(Date)

Approved:

(Graduate Director or Chair)

(Date)

Record of Thesis Committee

This form must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies before the final grade is awarded in ENGL 695.

Student Name _____

Student ID # _____ Date _____

Supervisor _____

Instructions: The thesis writer should discuss with her/his director which faculty members would make good readers for the thesis, then ask each potential reader if he/she is willing to serve. If willing, the faculty reader should sign below, as well as indicating any special requirements for reading the thesis (e.g. hard copy only, etc.). Make a copy of the completed form for the thesis director's records and submit the original to the Director of Graduate Studies.

I have agreed to serve as a faculty reader on this thesis. We have discussed the writer's schedule for submitting work, including the requirement that a final complete copy of the thesis must be presented to me at least one week before the scheduled defense date.

- Special requirements (please indicate N/A if none have been agreed to):

(Reader's Name)

(Date)

I have agreed to serve as a faculty reader on this thesis. We have discussed the writer's schedule for submitting work, including the requirement that a final complete copy of the thesis must be presented to me at least one week before the scheduled defense date.

- Special requirements (please indicate N/A if none have been agreed to):

(Reader's Name)

(Date)

Committee Approved:

(Graduate Director/Dean)

Date

Candidate's Name _____ Date _____

Rubric for the Oral Defense of a Master's Thesis in English

3 = Pass with distinction

2 = Pass

1 = Failure

	Score
1. The candidate effectively presents orally the findings of her/his research and critical analysis or creative effort, including communicating effectively in Edited American English.	
2. The candidate displays mastery of professional standards of grammar, mechanics, and usage accepted in the scholarly community in both oral presentation and the written thesis.	
3. The thesis demonstrates that the candidate can sustain a high standard of written expression in lengthy critical, pedagogical, or creative works.	
4. The thesis contains critical, creative, or pedagogical content that would be publishable in a venue appropriate for the material.	
5. The candidate displays mastery of the correct use of standard reference tools, the proper handling of primary and secondary sources, and proper documentation of all sources.	
6. The candidate demonstrates mastery of appropriate critical perspectives (such as the formalist, structuralist, and post-structuralist approaches). (NB: This standard will only be applied to the critical preface to creative writing theses.)	
7. The candidate displays mastery of the standard terminology of literary, rhetorical, and/or pedagogical analysis used in scholarly writing. (NB: This standard will only be applied to the critical preface of creative writing theses.)	
<p>Totals</p> <p><u>Tabulation:</u> Add the scores for all seven items and divide by the number of items; the candidate's average score must be at least 2.0 for a pass and at least 2.5 for a pass with distinction (total of 18). Unanimous agreement of the raters is required for a pass with distinction score.</p>	
<p>The candidate shows other <u>strengths/weaknesses.</u></p> <p>Specify:</p>	