

## **Guidelines, MA English Thesis**

### **Purpose:**

The MA thesis or project represents the culmination of the skills you have been developing in the MA English program. It demonstrates your abilities in close reading, research, theoretical framing, and argumentation, and it shows that you can create a sustained analysis or project that joins a critical conversation on some aspect of literature or literary studies.

### **Scope and Length:**

The thesis should have the scope and length of a scholarly article— about 30 pages in length. You should be contributing an original idea or angle to the field that inserts yourself in a critical conversation. If you are opting for project-based learning, your 30-page thesis should include your research question, project design, documentation of the project itself, and a critical/reflective analysis and evaluation of the project.

What a traditional thesis demonstrates:

- That the student is capable of deep research; including how to find and assess sources, how to integrate sources into the argument, and how to synthesize arguments made by several different critics. Demonstration of research ability is the primary objective of the Master's thesis.
- That the student has advanced level knowledge of this particular topic that would enable them to teach their subject area to an undergraduate-level audience. This is demonstrated in the thesis through deep, rich research, synthesis of ideas, and analysis of texts.
- That the student is aware of the scholarly conversation in their subject area and knows how their idea fits into this conversation.
- That the student can contribute an original idea. although the idea does not have to be groundbreaking
- That the student can generate and sustain an argument over a long research project
- That the student can identify and use an appropriate critical methodology

- That the student can closely analyze primary texts to make a deep and prolonged argument

What a project-based thesis demonstrates:

- That the student is capable of deep research; including how to find and assess sources, how to integrate sources into the argument, and how to synthesize arguments made by several different critics. Project-based theses may explore what other projects have been implemented that are similar in scope and purpose and will use a literature review to justify the project's design and purpose. Demonstration of research ability is the primary objective of the Master's thesis.
- That the student has advanced level knowledge of this particular topic that would enable them to teach their subject area to an undergraduate or community-based audience. This is demonstrated in the thesis through deep, rich research, synthesis of ideas, and analysis of texts, as well as a rich understanding of audience, context, and positionality for community-based projects.
- That the student is aware of the public and/or scholarly conversation in their subject area and knows how their idea fits into this conversation.
- That the student can contribute an original project idea, although the project idea does not have to be groundbreaking
- That the student can document, measure, analyze, and evaluate the project and its impact over a duration of time
- That the student can identify and use an appropriate critical methodology to frame the project
- That the student can make use of primary works of literature in a project-based context