

LTWR 600: Research and Critical Methodology
Thesis Proposal Details

Thesis Proposal

A thesis proposal is not a PLAN; it's a document that explains an argument that has ALREADY BEEN DEVELOPED (*though the argument is preliminary and will change as you go!*), identifies the analytical focus in each section, and outlines the major lines of evidence supporting your claims.

It should NOT tell us what you plan to do in order to develop an argument. For example, you shouldn't say, "My thesis will apply post-colonial and critical race theory to *The Awakening*." Instead, go ahead and apply the theory and make the argument: "In *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin participates in what Toni Morrison has called 'Africanism,' simultaneously erasing and relying on the ubiquitous presence of Black servants who do the labor that allows Edna Pontellier the privilege to awaken."

For a creative or hybrid thesis, you should a) explain what your creative project is (i.e., what genre you're working in and what artistic/creative goals you have for your piece) and b) situate your creative project within the appropriate literary traditions and contexts (e.g., discuss how it relates to/draws on/challenges/combines specific genres, authors, approaches, etc.).

The proposal should include the following sections:

1) Overview: This is an abstract of your thesis project. You should assert your argument and provide a brief sketch of the entire project, identifying your primary text/s clearly. The overview should include methodology (Will you survey a lot of texts? Focus closely on one? Do some kind of statistical analysis?) and theoretical grounding (Will you be focusing on issues of language? Issues of identity/difference? Aesthetics? Historical context?). You should also provide some sense of the significance of your project—of why it's needed or what the original contribution is.

Don't tell us that you'll "use third-wave feminist theory": instead, USE IT as you make your claims. So don't say, "I'll be using feminist theory to analyze *The Awakening*." Instead say, "Analyzing Edna Pontellier through the lens of intertextuality (in a third-wave feminist sense) reveals the important role white privilege and wealth play in allowing Mrs. Pontellier to challenge male privilege and thus become the awakened Edna."

For a creative or hybrid thesis, you should describe your project and your artistic/creative goals, as well as gesturing to the most important literary/creative traditions your project engages.

2) Chapter Outline: Provide an abstract of each chapter. In other words, assert the preliminary argument for each chapter and outline the major lines of evidence and/or contexts that seem likely to support your argument. It's ok if these change as you go, but they need to be developed in an initial form for the proposal.

Make sure to indicate clearly the organizing principle for the chapters: For example, will each chapter address a different issue in the same primary text or approach the text from different theoretical

lenses? Will you address different primary texts in different chapters? Will you trace the development of a genre in one chapter and then look at contemporary examples of that genre in another? Your overall ARGUMENT should be what drives your decisions about what to do in each chapter, and there should be a clear relationship linking the chapters.

In a creative thesis, you should have a section titled "Critical Introduction" in which you discuss your project in relation to the literary and creative traditions that informed it and with which it engages. Identify specific authors, genres, and/or traditions that are foundational for the creative work you are doing, and explain HOW your creative project builds on/challenges/subverts/rejects/expands those foundations. Then outline the major sections of your creative project (whether chapters, scenes, vignettes, movements, etc.—or explain why there are no sections), explaining both the form and content of each section.

3) Timeline/Plan for Completion: Provide a timeline for when you expect to complete which work. What will you complete each month? What are your semester goals? When will you give your thesis chair drafts of each chapter/section? When will you have a final draft to your thesis chair? How will you complete the entire thesis in time to defend by your desired deadline?

Parts 1, 2, & 3 should total approximately 1000-1500 words.

4) Bibliography (does not count towards 1000-1500 word length; MLA style; can be annotated)
The MLA-style Bibliography should include 20-30 sources (chapters of books and/or essay collections—more than one chapter from each book is fine, articles from scholarly journals, primary text/s, theory, interviews, academic websites, etc.). Sources should be primarily academic and peer-reviewed, but with newer texts, non-academic sources are also acceptable (such as film reviews, magazine articles, and websites). The bibliography can be annotated if you find that helpful, but that is not a requirement.

For creative projects, sources can include works by authors in similar genres or literary traditions, literary criticism about authors or texts that inform your creative work, relevant theory, and/or scholars discussing creative works and/or traditions.