

The Thesis Proposal: Guidelines and Tips

Each student must present a formal thesis proposal to the thesis committee no later than the beginning of the third semester of study for full time students, or after eighteen units have been completed for part-time students.

The proposal should be 1000-1500 words (not including the bibliography).

The proposal needs to be developed in the context of work with your thesis chair (usually during a 690 independent study). By week five of the semester before your hoped-for defense, you need to submit it to the committee. (Use a draft to find a committee.) By week seven, the committee needs to approve the revised version of this proposal.

The parts of the proposal itself are:

1. Description of the planned project, including:
 - a. Your thesis or purpose
 - b. What traditions/contexts it evolves from (other writers/other critics/genres of lit/theory, as applicable)
 - c. How you will develop it (projected order of parts)
 - i. Brief chapter/section summaries
2. Timeline for submission of chapters/hoped for defense
3. Bibliography (an annotated bibliography is recommended because it will really help you think about your sources and which ones are relevant to the project and how). A creative thesis will have a bibliography also; it requires a critical/theoretical introduction whose seeds should be in this proposal.
4. Your signed Thesis Committee Membership Form needs to accompany the proposal.

Tips on writing an effective thesis proposal:

- √ Give yourself time to do many drafts. An early draft can be used to invite faculty to become committee members (most will not consider joining your committee unless you have a proposal to show them).
- √ Remember that this is an expository essay, even if your work may be narrative. You need to be very clear about what your purpose or thesis is and provide at least some specifics about how you will develop it. Structure your proposal in the form of specific points (topic sentences) illustrated with examples of what you mean.

- i.e. Chapter One explores the question of how Poe uses diction and allusion to create an imagined reader who is gendered and classed. For example,
- √ You must have some framework of other writers informing your proposal. In other words, while you may well begin by articulating what you want to accomplish in your analytical or creative thesis, at some point before you finish the proposal you will need to do some research to find out what other critics have said on this issue and/or provide a summary of the relevant landscape of creative writing projects that precedes your work. The bibliography should reflect the research, i.e. don't just do a core dump of possible sources but not use any of them in articulating your proposal.
- √ Try to make a reasonable timeline by working with the LTWR Thesis Calendar and anticipating that review of drafts will take time. The usual procedure is for the writer to work only with the thesis chair until a close-to-final draft is done and approved to send on to the rest of the committee. This can be altered based on the preferences and needs of a particular committee. Faculty cannot turn around chapters in a week during the best of times, and these are not the best of times given the furlough—so expect that you will keep working on the next chapter as you wait for feedback on the first one.
- √ This is not a contract: your thesis will evolve from it and may well change. This is okay! However, the purpose for spending time on the thesis proposal and crafting it well is to a) clarify your thinking about the project and b) create the kernel of your thesis introduction.