Department of English, Chapman University

SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR MA THESIS WORK

First Semester (Fall): Enroll in ENG 556: Introduction to Critical Theory, which includes an overview of the Thesis process and an introduction to faculty who can direct a Thesis.

Second Semester (Spring): A student who wishes to write a thesis on a topic that is not addressed in the student’s regular coursework must enroll in ENG 599: Independent Study or ENG 682: Student Research with an appropriate faculty member (the faculty instructor will advise on the appropriate course number). Such a preparatory course should be taken before and not concurrently with ENG 597B: MA Thesis. Summers and Interterms are also good times for engaging in the reading and research that will culminate in the MA Thesis.

Third Semester (Fall): Submit Thesis Proposal to the requested Thesis Director.


THESIS PROPOSAL

Due Date
Fall: November 20 / Spring: April 20
The Thesis Proposal must be submitted to the potential Thesis Director. The Thesis Proposal is due the semester before the student plans to enroll in ENG 597B: MA Thesis.

Statement of Purpose
The proposal must include a 250-500 word statement of purpose that outlines the thesis project and provides a working bibliography. The proposal should be submitted on the MA Thesis Proposal Form, which is available in the Department of English.

Proposal Approval
Within three weeks of receiving the Thesis Proposal, the Thesis Director should indicate to the student in writing that the Thesis Proposal is approved or indicate what revisions are needed before resubmitting. If the Thesis Director is unable to take on the student, he or she should suggest an alternative member of the literature or rhetoric faculty to which the student should submit the Thesis Proposal.

Thesis Reading List
At the discretion of the Thesis Director, during the semester after the Thesis Proposal is submitted and approved, a required reading list may be given to the student. When readings are assigned, those texts can be used as reference during ENG 597B and the defense.

THESIS REQUIREMENTS

Thesis Course Enrollment
During the semester in which the student intends to complete and defend the Thesis (usually the last semester of study), the student must enroll in ENG 597B with his or her individual Thesis Director.

Thesis Committee Form
The Thesis Committee form must be submitted to the Department of English within the first three weeks of the semester during which the student is enrolled in ENG 597B. The student should request two additional faculty members to serve on his/her thesis committee. All three committee members must sign the form agreeing to serve on the Thesis Committee. The committee will consist of the Thesis Director, the Second Reader, and the Third Reader. The Third Reader is not required to participate in the Thesis Defense. The Chair of English will be available to serve as Third Reader for all MA theses (unless the Chair is serving as Thesis Director or Second Reader).

The Thesis Director must come from the full-time literature and rhetoric faculty. The Second and Third Reader may be any member of the full-time English faculty or, with permission of the Thesis Director and the Chair of English, a full-time faculty member of another department or an adjunct instructor in English. No faculty member can serve as a member on more than six committees in a single semester and, especially if directing one or more thesis projects, should limit participation to four.

Thesis Contents & Page Limits
The thesis should be 6,000-10,000 words. The appropriate length will be determined in consultation with the Thesis Director (and the word count does not include the endnotes and bibliography). The Thesis must demonstrate the following MA Program Learning Outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate the ability to situate their projects within broader historical, critical, social, cultural and/or philosophical contexts
- Students will demonstrate a polished writing style (free of major mechanical errors) that enables them to present ideas and evidence at a high scholarly level
- Students will demonstrate in-depth knowledge of key critical/theoretical debates relevant to their topic.
- Students writing about literary texts will attend to relevant literary movements and genres.

With the permission of the Chair of English and the Director of Graduate Studies, students can develop alternative Thesis Projects, including Digital Humanities Projects.

The MA Thesis Assessment Rubric will be used to evaluate all thesis projects.

Thesis Format
The thesis formatting guidelines are available at Leatherby Libraries as the Dissertation/Thesis Checklist. For an MA Thesis, some guidelines are optional; check with the individual Thesis Director and the library's Thesis Administrator with any specific questions about formatting.

Deadline for Scheduling the Thesis Defense
Fall: November 20 / Spring: April 20

After the student has confirmed three committee members and submitted the Thesis Committee Form to the Department of English, the student should email all members of the committee to set an agreed-upon date and time (though the Third Reader is not required to participate in the Thesis Defense). That date and time must be finalized by the dates listed above; the student should then ask the Administrative Assistant in the Department of English to reserve a room for two hours for the defense. Ideally, these arrangements should be confirmed at least four weeks before the defense.
If the Thesis Director, committee members and/or student determine that the thesis is not yet ready for the defense, the student can enroll in a one-unit continuous enrollment class, ENG 598B: MA Thesis II, and defend the thesis during another semester.

**Thesis Submission to Committee**

All readers must receive a copy of the thesis draft by the deadline for scheduling the defense (Fall: Nov. 20/Spring: April 20). The complete thesis must be submitted to all members of the committee at least two weeks prior the defense, unless all committee members negotiate a different timeframe. Faculty on multiple committees may need additional time to prepare for closely scheduled defenses.

**Thesis Defense**

The Thesis Defense provides an opportunity for an in-depth discussion of the thesis, the research that went into the thesis, and how the thesis relates to the larger field(s) in which it is situated. The Thesis Director and Second Reader are expected to prepare no fewer than three questions related to the work (the questions will not be given to the student in advance of the defense), plus a written commentary or marginal notes about the work that the candidate can retain. One of the primary purposes of the Defense is to provide students with detailed feedback on the thesis.

The Thesis Director and Second Reader must complete the required assessment rubrics before leaving the defense. The Thesis Director must collect these forms and submit them to the Chair of English within two workdays of the Thesis Defense.

The Thesis Director must send an email to the Chair of English indicating the name and ID number for the student who completes the defense successfully, as well as the date on which the Thesis Defense occurred.

As time allows, the student may make changes to the defended thesis based on the committee’s suggestions.

**Thesis Submission for Graduation**

Within five days of the successful defense, the student must submit the defended thesis, along with the signed Thesis Approval Form, as a pdf to the Department of English.

Within five days of the successful defense, the student must also submit the defended thesis, along with the signed Thesis Approval Form, in hard copy to Leatherby Libraries. Unless the student orders additional copies, no fee is charged.

Refer to the library’s website for the Steps for Print Submission (for submission procedures and contact info) and for the Dissertation/Thesis Checklist (for formatting), along with templates and FAQs. Contact the library’s Thesis Administrator with any questions. Review by the library of the thesis is a multi-step process that can take up to two weeks; the library may request quick corrections if any formatting errors are found. If the student has not heard from the library’s Thesis Administrator within two weeks, the student should contact that person to confirm the thesis met the library’s requirements.

The library’s Thesis Administrator must email the Chair of English when the final hard copy of the Thesis is submitted and approved; this should be done at least 48 hours prior to Commencement and should include the student’s name, the title of the thesis, and the student’s ID number.

The Chair of English cannot confirm Thesis completion with the Registrar’s Office until the final thesis is submitted to the department office as a pdf and to the library according to their guidelines.
ADDITIONAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES
If a student does not defend the Thesis during the semester in which he or she is enrolled, that student must register for one credit of continuing enrollment to work with the Thesis Director, use other university resources, and defend the Thesis in a subsequent semester.

Refer to the Catalog and to the Registrar’s Office for additional university policies. For example, the university sets deadlines for the Application for Degree Conferral; these deadlines often fall before the semester in which you intend to graduate.

NOTES
Do not submit the only copy of any document. A student should retain a copy of the Thesis Proposal, Thesis Committee Form, Thesis Approval, Thesis (defense copy & final copy), and so on.

Questions about the Thesis guidelines should be addresses to the Chair of English (Dr. Joanna Levin) or the Director of Graduate Studies (Dr. Mark Axelrod). Questions about an individual Thesis should be addressed to the Thesis Director.