

SEWANEE SCHOOL OF LETTERS  
ABOUT THE M.A. THESIS

M.A. students may choose to complete a thesis in lieu of two final courses. The M.A. thesis is an original scholarly composition, 40 to 60 pages in length. You should consult a copy or digital version of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* as you prepare your thesis.

The M.A. thesis, whatever its subject and approach, should reflect some form of substantial and original commentary on literary texts. It should also set its interpretation of texts within some broader and revealing context. It must draw deftly—and selectively rather than exhaustively—on previous critical commentary, always invoked so as to enhance rather than to supplant your own argument. Because your thesis topic might well derive in some manner from your previous studies in the School of Letters, you will likely wish to discuss possible topics with more than one School of Letters instructor before looking to present a thesis proposal or enlisting an advisor for this project.

Though work on the thesis may begin at any time after required course work has been completed, the thesis proposal process begins during the term in which you complete your eighth course. The Thesis Registration Form is due by September 1.

Thesis work carries six hours of graduate credit, so you should register for six hours of ENGL 599. Normal tuition and fees apply. You may register for thesis hours in the Fall, Spring, or Summer terms. You will register for all six hours in the same term. Fall and Spring registration dates will be announced via email. All balances must be paid before you can be cleared to graduate.

You will not need to constrain your writing process precisely to the semester in which you register: you may, for instance, register for all six hours in the Fall term but continue to work and confer with your advisor during the Spring. You must, however, complete the thesis during a year in which you receive credit for ENGL 599, and must have completed or be registered for your final hours of ENGL 599 by the time the Thesis Defense takes place. A student who registers for six hours of ENGL 599 has, essentially, a claim on two semesters of their thesis advisor's time and attention.

## M.A. THESIS REGISTRATION GUIDELINES AND PROCESS

The thesis proposal can be anywhere from two to five pages in length and should include:

- The topic to be studied, and a thesis statement about that topic
- An explanation of the academic significance of the topic
- An outline by chapters, including an introduction and conclusion
- A preliminary list of relevant primary and secondary sources you plan to consult on the way to preparing your final list of works cited

You will begin by consulting with the director to discuss whom you might choose to be your thesis advisor. Any professor in the School of Letters, whether present or former, can serve as your thesis advisor, though normally none will be able to work with more than two advisees at a time.

Now that you have received a Thesis Registration Form, you will fill it out and return it to the director. They assume you have already discussed your plans with your would-be thesis advisor. Return the completed Thesis Registration Form to the director by September 1.

It is the School of Letters Director's responsibility to appoint a second reader, but you may suggest a School of Letters faculty member for that role. The first reader will be your thesis advisor.

SEWANEE SCHOOL OF LETTERS  
ABOUT THE M.F.A. THESIS

All M.F.A students must complete a thesis. This is a substantial creative manuscript: a novel, a sustained nonfiction narrative, a collection of short stories or essays, or a collection of poems. Length for the M.F.A. thesis may be anywhere from 80 to 200 pages of prose or 40 to 50 pages of poetry.

It is permissible and even expected for the M.F.A. thesis to enlarge upon work you have already begun to compose, both in the setting of the School of Letters workshops and otherwise. But the thesis offers you that rare occasion to develop your writing—with an eye toward publication—into something more substantial, original, and crafted than your previous experience of composition may have allowed. You should select a thesis advisor who can supply you not only with encouragement and affirmation but also with a fair measure of challenge and constructive criticism.

Though work on the thesis may begin at any time after required course work has been completed, the thesis proposal process takes place during the term in which you complete your eighth course. The Thesis Registration Form is due by September 1.

Thesis work carries six hours of graduate credit, so you should register for six hours of ENGL 599. Normal tuition and fees apply. You may register for thesis hours in the Fall, Spring, or Summer terms. You will register for all six hours in the same term. Fall and Spring registration dates will be announced via email. All balances must be paid before you can be cleared to graduate.

You will not need to constrain your writing process precisely to the semester in which you register: you may, for instance, register for all six hours in the Fall term but continue to work and confer with your advisor during the Spring. You must, however, complete the thesis during a year in which you receive credit for ENGL 599, and must have completed or be registered for your final hours of ENGL 599 by the time the Thesis Defense takes place. A student who registers for six hours of ENGL 599 has, essentially, a claim on two semesters of their thesis advisor's time and attention.

## M.F.A. THESIS REGISTRATION GUIDELINES AND PROCESS

The thesis proposal can be anywhere from two to five pages in length and should include:

- The genre(s) of your manuscript
- Form(s) to be undertaken (i.e., novel; collection of stories, poems or essays, etc.)
- An informal outline of pieces or chapters to be included, if applicable

You will begin by consulting with the director to discuss whom you might choose to be your thesis advisor. Any professor in the School of Letters, whether present or former, can serve as your thesis advisor, though normally none will be able to work with more than two advisees at a time.

Now that you have received a Thesis Registration Form, you will fill it out and return it to the director. They assume you have already discussed your plans with your would-be thesis advisor. Return the completed Thesis Registration Form to the director by September 1.

It is the School of Letters Director's responsibility to appoint a second reader, but you may suggest a School of Letters faculty member for that role. The first reader will be your thesis advisor.

SEWANEE SCHOOL OF LETTERS  
PREPARING THE THESIS

After your thesis has been completed and approved and your degree conferred in May, you will present final copies of your thesis in both paper and electronic form. These should be delivered to duPont Library by September 1.

### CONTENTS OF THE COMPLETED THESIS

The thesis should contain all of the required items (in bold), and any of the optional ones that are desired or necessary, presented in the following order:

**Two blank pages**

**Title page, signed and dated by first and second reader**

\*Copyright page, if applicable — i

\***Abstract — ii, iii, iv**

**One blank page — do not print # (v)**

\*Table of contents, if applicable — vi

\*Dedication page, if applicable — vii

\*\***Body of Thesis — (1) but not printed on first page**

\*\*Works cited section, if applicable — Arabic numerals

**Two blank pages**

(\*) a page numbered in Roman numerals.

(\*\*) a page numbered in Arabic numerals.

Non-bolded text may not be applicable in all projects. For instance, M.F.A. thesis projects do not always have works cited pages but M.A. thesis projects often do.

For detailed description of this portion, see Appendix.

### FORMAT

Theses must be typewritten on one side of 8.5 x 11" paper. They must be printed in a clear, readable twelve-point font, preferably Times New Roman. Each page must be numbered consecutively in the upper right corner, within the right margin and one inch from the top of page.

### MARGINS AND PAGE NUMBERS

Thesis margins should be set 1.5 inches from the left and 1 inch from the right, top and bottom. Pages should be numbered on the upper right-hand corner, ½ inch from the top and ½ inch from the right.

## ABSTRACT

The abstract should be a 600-word summary of the thesis and should be approved by your thesis advisor. (The abstract is meant to help researchers who might make use of your thesis.)

## TITLE PAGE

The title page should follow the format indicated in the attached sample. On the title page, place a line over the names of your first and second readers for them to sign. Do not use their professional titles or note that they are your readers. Use only their full names. Each copy of your title page must have a physical signature. Your readers must sign and date each copy of the title page in black ink.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The table of contents—if one is used—should observe the same margin and spacing guidelines as the rest of the thesis.

SEWANEE SCHOOL OF LETTERS  
SUBMITTING THE THESIS

THE DUPONT LIBRARY THESIS SUBMISSION FORM

Your thesis should be submitted using the [Library Thesis Submission Form](#).

On this form, you will be asked for the following information:

- Contact information (Name, email and mailing address)
- Thesis information (title, defense date, the abstract, keywords)
- Thesis submission (pdf or Word)
- Digital Repository Information (see below)
- Formatting and Printing Options (see below)
- Binding (see below)

DIGITAL REPOSITORY INFORMATION

An electronic copy of *either* the completed thesis or the thesis abstract (in either Word or pdf format) will be available on DSpace, a digital repository. Note that the electronic text, once stored, will be accessible to anyone who searches for it online; if you don't want the full text of your thesis to be accessible, there is an option on the form to release only the abstract.

PAPER COPIES

The University requires three copies of your thesis, one for the Library, one for the Archives, and one for the School of Letters Office. If you choose to print your thesis copies yourself, they should be printed on 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> by 11 inch white, acid free, quality bond paper of at least 20-pound weight and no less than 25% cotton content. Paper of this quality is designed to endure long-term library use. Print on only one side of the page. Be sure there are no smudges or extraneous marks on these copies.

Alternatively, you may order printed copies through the Print Services Department of the University. Information regarding ordering paper copies is on the Library Thesis Submission Form.

PERSONAL COPIES

You may have personal copies of your thesis bound for a fee per copy. The Library Thesis Submission Form includes information for ordering personal copies. Understand that delivery times may take several months.

## BINDING PROCESS

The Library will have the three required copies bound at no charge to you. If you want additional copies for your personal use, you can indicate this on the Library Thesis Submission Form.

## COPYRIGHTING YOUR THESIS

If you wish to have your thesis copyrighted, information about copyright registration can be found on the U.S. Copyright Office's website: <http://www.copyright.gov/>. A copyright page must be included in your thesis with the following information centered at the bottom of the page remembering the 1-inch margin at the bottom:

line 1 © Copyright by  
line 2 Your Full Legal Name  
line 3 All Rights Reserved  
line 4 Date; month and year of Graduation (example: May 2014)



## APPENDIX

The following is a detailed description of each section of the Contents of the Completed Thesis, found on page 5.

### Breakdown for each section of Thesis

**Two blank pages** — no print or pagination should appear on these pages.

**Title page, signed and dated by first and second reader** — no pagination.

#### Beginning of consecutive Roman numerals

**Copyright page** (if applicable) — if included, this page should begin with Roman numeral “i”.

**Abstract** — these page(s) are marked with Roman numerals. This will be page “i” if you do not include a copyright page; otherwise, it begins as page “ii” with additional pages following the same numbering scheme.

**One blank page** — no print or pagination appears on this page. This page does not have a printed page number, but is treated as a numbered page.

**Table of contents** (if applicable) — marked with Roman numerals.

**Dedication page** (if applicable) — marked with Roman numerals.

#### End of consecutive Roman numerals.

#### Beginning of consecutive Arabic numerals.

**Body of Thesis** — marked with Arabic numerals. The first page of the body of the thesis has no printed page number. The second page is marked with Arabic numeral “2” and so forth.

**Works Cited Section** (if applicable) — marked with Arabic numerals which correspond with the last page of the body of the thesis. For instance, if the body of the thesis ends on page 222, the works cited section begins with Arabic numeral “223”.

#### End of consecutive Arabic numerals

**Two blank pages** — no print or pagination should appear on these pages.

End of Thesis