

Guide to Writing the M.A. Thesis

FIRST, Ask yourself, WHY A THESIS? Possible answers, among others:

1. Burning desire to write and contribute your perspective to the academy
2. Academic exercise of discipline to prepare you for a PhD program
3. In order to enhance your chances to get into a PhD program

I. The first step is to **choose your field**...Latin American or Spanish, French, Caribbean, Morphology, Italian, Semantics, etc.

II. **Choose your area:** medieval, renaissance, colonial, 19th century, early 20th, contemporary, etc.

******CHOOSE A THESIS ADVISOR** in the field and area of most interest to you. It is very important that you establish a dialogue with a professor as early as possible in your career. Your Thesis Advisor will help you shape your ideas and plan your research project. If you are not sure with whom you should work, you are advised to meet with your program's academic advisor and he or she can guide you to the right person.

III. Choose a theme

One that is "doable" in a 70-80 page monograph. Again, this is done in consultation with your thesis advisor. Most themes come out of seminar discussions and readings, so it is advisable to write down potential ideas that come to you as you advance in your studies. Sometimes brilliant ideas come up in what at first seems like just a minor observation! Research and development of ideas should begin no later than the summer after student's first year.

IV. **Thesis Proposal** (Usually presented by the end of the third semester, *after the student has passed his or her oral exams*)

- A. Statement of topic
- B. Justification of why you want to do the topic
- C. Review of scholarship on topic-author
- D. Explanation of methodology to be used...theoretical construct
- E. Critical bibliography

Note: An "Advancement to Candidacy" form must be completed and forwarded to the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters after the proposal has been accepted by your committee.

V. Thesis Committee

After advisor has approved the proposal, the committee reviews it and it is defended. The Defense is an oral presentation of the ideas to be developed and an opportunity for the committee to give you feedback.

VI. Thesis Structure

- A. Introduction...restates the proposal and lays out the structure of the thesis.
- B. 2-3 chapters...develop the topic.
- C. Conclusion...elaboration of your results and conclusion as to the significance of your research...its contribution to scholarship.

VII. Writing the thesis

Advisor approves chapter by chapter and the final version goes to the committee, where it is defended. (Usually written over winter break and the fourth semester.

VIII. Thesis Defense

Oral presentation of thesis and an opportunity for committee to clarify ideas. (The defense must occur in time for the student to turn in final copy to the university. (Fall and Spring deadlines are usually in the middle of November and April). Often, thesis students present their final version for an August graduation, but student must plan ahead with faculty since most are not here in the summer. (August graduation deadline is around July 15). Consult FAU's academic calendar for exact deadlines.

IX. Final copy sent to chair and dean, and then to the graduate school. Our dean requires at least two weeks for reading the thesis, so plan accordingly. See the university's [Graduate Thesis Guide](#) for the University mandated rules for thesis formatting, paper quality, etc.

X. Graduation!!! (be sure to apply for graduation one semester before your planned graduation)