



Art History MA Thesis Guidelines, August 2014

The following is a set of guidelines intended to assist art history graduate students in conceptualizing and completing the thesis requirement for the MA degree. The department reserves the right to refuse to allow a student to do a thesis if that student has not demonstrated the ability to undertake independent research and writing at the time of his or her 18 hour review.

A master's thesis is a piece of original scholarship written under the direction of a faculty adviser in the School of Art & Design. It takes the form of a publishable journal article (see details below).

Thesis Adviser

It is up to each student who plans to write a thesis to seek out a major adviser. The thesis adviser must be selected from the tenure-track faculty members in the art history program. The adviser is a crucial part of completing the degree and should be a professor whose area of specialization is closely related to the thesis topic. Optimally, the student will have an established relationship with the desired adviser, developed through prior coursework.

Faculty are not obliged to advise theses but are generally willing to do so for students who have demonstrated their ability to complete an intensive research and writing project.

Thesis Committee

A master's committee consists of at least three faculty members. Once an adviser has agreed to work with you, you must then ask two additional faculty members to serve on your committee, at least one of which must be tenure-track in the Art History department. One of the committee members may be selected from outside the School of Art and Design, from another discipline within the School of Art and Design, or from non-tenure-track faculty in art history. Students should be cautious about soliciting committee members from visiting faculty, recognizing that the obligations of visiting faculty are necessarily of limited duration. Visiting faculty can provide valuable feedback and insight to the thesis but are not obliged to continue their participation after their contract with the University expires. If, however, a student is confident of completing the thesis in a timely fashion and wishes to have a visiting faculty member on her committee, he/she should absolutely do so.

Typically, the committee members review an initial proposal of your topic in the fall and review a complete draft of your thesis in the spring. While your adviser will be your chief contact during

the research and writing process, you should stay in touch with the other members of the committee so that they are aware of pending completion dates.

Thesis Proposal

The thesis proposal is a document of 3 to 5 pages, supplemented by a bibliography. The proposal is a narrative description of the thesis research that the student intends to undertake. It is developed in consultation with the student's thesis adviser and should articulate the thesis statement, review published literature on the topic, describe the methodology to be used, and lay out a timetable to completion. It is essentially a plan for completion that signals to the adviser and other committee members that the student is ready to complete the thesis and degree.

Thesis Format

Your thesis will take the form of a publishable journal article, approximately 9000 words in length (including notes). Typically, a publishable article is organized around one significant new idea that is demonstrably related to prior scholarship. In consultation with the adviser, the student will identify a peer-reviewed journal suitable for the chosen topic, and prepare a thesis using the style guidelines of that journal. Some journals require different word lengths; students will consult with their advisers to determine if a significant deviation from 9,000 is warranted.

It is not a requirement of the MA degree that students submit their thesis for publication.

Students should also note that there are certain formatting requirements that GSU requires of every thesis prior to final submission. It is the student's responsibility to undergo a thesis format review with the Graduate Office of the College of Arts & Sciences.

Thesis Submissions and Deadlines

It is expected that the thesis adviser will read and offer commentary on preliminary drafts of the thesis. The student and adviser should work out an arrangement concerning the number and frequency of preliminary drafts. When the draft has reached an appropriately finished stage, the student, in consultation with the adviser, will submit a final draft to the committee.

Deadlines for final submission of the thesis are set by the School of Art and Design and by the College of Arts and Sciences. Students are responsible for keeping track of their progress and the applicable deadlines. Master's candidates should plan to submit a final draft of the thesis (with bibliography and illustrations) to committee members for review AT LEAST four weeks prior to the School of Art and Design deadline. This is to provide ample time for committee members to read the document and suggest any final revisions, as well as time for the student to complete those revisions.

Students must provide committee members with copies of thesis documents. It is the responsibility of the student to see that committee members have legible illustrations and adequately completed citations and bibliography in order to evaluate the thesis.