



(2015)

Appendix I- Written Thesis Guidelines for MFA Students

Purpose, Strategies and Deadlines

The MFA in Studio Art culminates in a final thesis exhibition/presentation of studio work accompanied by a written thesis. The written thesis critically addresses the work in the exhibition/presentation.

Purpose

The purpose of the written thesis is to examine your thesis exhibition/presentation and provide context for understanding it. Your goal is to create a rich, multi-layered document that provides new and useful insights into the work.

Throughout your time in the graduate program, your studio work has been influenced by a wide range of factors, such as: theoretical, historical and critical readings in seminar; independent readings of your own; art history course material; theory course material; elective studio courses; elective academic courses; feedback from professors; feedback from peers; discussions in graduate seminar; guest artists and guest critics; exhibitions of other artists' and designers' work; publications of other artists' and designers' work. All of these influences have contributed to your intellectual enrichment while in graduate school and have impacted your thesis work in some way. You can now draw on them to write your thesis.

Your thesis should be useful to a reader. It can provide insights into such issues as:

- What you hope to communicate to your audience
- Who you see as your audience.
- How you came to make the work
- Your creative process in executing the work
- How you made the choice of materials and how they respond to the ideas in the work
- Why the work is important for you to make
- What bigger ideas are driving the work
- What influenced your approach to the work
- How your approach changed or developed while making the work
- What critical and theoretical issues are explored or addressed in the work
- Who are the thinkers, writers, artists, designers that influenced the work and how did their influences play out in your work

- How you –locatell your work in the bigger picture of art and design

Writing a thesis forces you to take a stance on your work. It requires you to state your intent. It pushes you to be clear about the content. It asks you to articulate how your work actually functions. A thoughtful analysis of your work supported by solid research material will give your stance substance. Linking your work to ideas, issues, and concerns that are at play in the broader world will create context. This will –locatell your work and give it relevance. So, the goal of your written thesis is to support your position on your work — to —defend it,|| as it is said in the world of academia.

Strategies

The approach to thesis writing is as diverse as the individuals making the work. Some thesis are philosophical in nature, while others are linked to a cultural/political/social critique. One thesis may be personal and diaristic in nature, while another may ground their arguments with references to literature and poetry. There are no fixed methods. Whatever the approach, your task is to provide a thoughtful, intelligent, and informed position on your thesis project that is supported by clear arguments. Ask your chair to provide you a list of previous theses in your area that are considered exemplary. Read these before your first semester of thesis.

First Semester

- Verify all arrangements for the date and location of your thesis exhibition or presentation.
- Record your daily thoughts about your thesis work.
- At your first thesis committee meeting, submit a general outline of your written thesis and your initial bibliography of research sources. Include those that you have researched in the past and those that you intend to research as you write.
- After each committee meeting, sit down and write a response to the committee’s feedback. Then go back to your outline and develop it a bit more based on your writings and your committee’s feedback.
- Be open to and active in reading anything and everything as you work on your thesis. Read, read, read.
- Begin writing your first rough draft. And don’t stop. Just keep writing throughout the entire semester. You will be writing numerous drafts with significant edits, each leading you closer to a final draft. The initial goal is to get some material to work with – so write. Look for recurring themes, connections, and critical issues in your work. When identified, research these ideas further so you can draw upon this knowledge as you write.
- At the last committee meeting, submit your adjusted outline, the expanded bibliography and a rough first draft of your thesis.

Second Semester

- Submit a second draft at your first committee meeting. This time have a second reader review your draft for feedback before submitting it to your committee. This draft should be void of grammatical error and have a cogent structure that reflects your outline. Your draft submission should now include:
 - Properly formatted title page

- Table of Contents
 - Body of thesis with proper endnotes
 - Bibliography
- Submit your drafts to your committee's mailboxes **one week prior** to each committee meeting. Your committee can then bring their comments to the meeting. Send an email alerting them to your draft in their boxes with a request for comments at your upcoming meeting.
 - Arrive at a final draft well before the Graduate Office due date. You will need time to print the thesis on the proper paper, collect committee signatures and, very importantly, produce the visual support material that must accompany your thesis, such as slides, slide inventory list, CDs, DVDs, etc.

When stumped, some possibilities for getting started

- Discuss your working method to date, including what you value about it.
- Discuss the evolution of your work. Note where you began in graduate school, how your work changed, what caused the changes, and how it evolved into what it is now.
- Discuss points of discovery, points of major change, confrontations with new perspectives and new questions. Examine issues that were enlightening in your discussions, critiques, and readings.
- Discuss your work visually. Simply provide an exacting visual description. As you describe you are offering/creating an interpretation. Be aware of this. Aim to further it.
- Discuss your intent. Discuss what you want to communicate with the work, what you want the viewers to get from the work, what you hope to provoke with the work. Define for yourself your intended audience for the work.
- Discuss your influences. You are not working in a vacuum. You've been inspired and provoked by others. Who are they and why did their work, their ideas, strike you as important, as meaningful? Think about design research by others, design criticism, art history, philosophy, fiction, poetry, scientific theory, contemporary theory and criticism, other schools of thought, whatever. It's all there for you to latch onto as a building block. Who are your kindred spirits? What binds you to them?

Caveat

Writing a thesis is a process, just like the creative process of making studio work. You have to put in the time so it can develop. Start early, when the demands for a final product are not so pressing.

Use Chicago Manual of Style. The best guide is *A Manual for Writers of Terms Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian.

Be prepared to write at least 4-6 drafts before you reach your final draft.

Be Smart

If your writing skills are not so strong, secure free writing assistance from the Writing

Center on campus. Do NOT rely on your committee for this. The role of the committee is to respond to the content issues of your thesis, not grammatical corrections.

Deadlines for Submissions

IMPORTANT: Make these submissions one week prior to your theses committee meetings so your committee can bring feedback to your meetings. Submissions should be hard copies only to your committee's mailboxes with an email follow up.

First Semester:

1st Committee Meeting: Outline and initial bibliography

2nd Committee Meeting: Extended outline and additions to bibliography

3rd Committee Meeting: First rough draft of body of thesis

Second Semester:

1st Committee Meeting: Second draft proofed by your second reader

2nd Committee Meeting: Third draft with formal title page, table of contents, bibliography, image inventory list

3rd Committee Meeting: Final draft with signature page ready for signatures

Note about the thesis exhibition/presentation: The content of your thesis exhibition or presentation must not deviate significantly from that which has been pre-approved by your thesis committee. Any significant changes must be approved by the majority of your committee prior to the opening of your exhibition/presentation. If your exhibition/presentation begins with significant changes that have not been approved by your committee, the exhibition/presentation would be allowed to proceed but could be deemed by the majority of your committee to be insufficient in satisfying your thesis exhibition requirement. If that should occur, you will not receive your MFA degree until the exhibition requirement is met. In addition, if a second exhibition or presentation is required, you will be responsible for securing a location and covering any expenses incurred in the presentation. This second exhibition or presentation venue must be for a duration and in a location approved by the committee.

The semester prior to the first thesis semester (generally the 2nd semester of the second year)

- Plan ahead for your thesis year: check the College of Arts and Sciences' Graduate Office website, The Office of the Registrar's website, and the School of Art and Design's website for important information about graduation. Note: All deadlines are 5PM for the date stated, unless noted otherwise.
- **IMPORTANT:** Per graduate faculty policy, the art history faculty are not available for thesis advisement during the summer, nor can you sign up for thesis hours.
- Check with the Office of the Registrar for Graduate Application Deadlines.
- Select a Thesis Chair and make an appointment to go over coursework and Graduate Review Record. Print out the list of courses you have taken from Go Solar. Take the printout to this meeting. If there are any deviations from required

course work, the Chair must email the School's Graduate Director with approved changes.

- Make an appointment with the Graduate Director after meeting with Thesis Chair. Bring Go Solar print out.
- Take comprehensive exam. Download Art History Comprehensive Examination Guidelines from the Art History website
- Download Art History Thesis Guidelines from the Art History website: <http://artdesign.gsu.edu/graduate/admissions/master-of-arts-in-art-history/>
- Select Thesis Committee
- Send email to the School's Graduate Office. Include: the committee selection, proposed date of graduation, and current contact information.
- Prepare thesis proposal. Thesis proposal must be approved by thesis committee before enrolling in AH 8999 (Thesis Research)

Thesis Semester(s) 6 hours, required

- Meet with Thesis Chair a minimum of three times a semester.
- Download and read Thesis Guidelines from the College of Arts and Sciences website: <http://www.gsu.edu/~wwwgas/>

Last Semester

- If there are any new deviations from required coursework, have Thesis Chair email Graduate Director with approved changes.
- Check that thesis guidelines have not changed. You are responsible for changes.
- Send electronic thesis as a word processed file to the College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Office for formatting review by their deadline.
- Double-check all deadlines. Any deadline missed may cause a postponement in graduation.
- Thesis Committee deadline for submission of final draft is one month before the School of Art & Design's deadline.

- School Thesis and Graduation Audit deadlines are earlier than the College's. The School's Graduate Office will post deadlines by the end of the first month of the semester for fall and spring graduation. In general, expect to complete the thesis a month before finals.
- The content of the thesis must not significantly deviate from what was pre-approved by the thesis committee. Before making significant changes, seek approval from Thesis Chair.
- Once the thesis is completed, have the committee sign the thesis signature page and the Graduate Review Record.
- Have Thesis Chair email Graduate Director with confirmation that all coursework for the degree and the thesis are complete.
- Send electronic thesis as a PDF file and drop off the Graduate Review Record and the thesis signature page to the School's Director by his/her deadline, room 117.
- Turn in Graduate Review Record, with all signatures to the School's Graduate Office, room 124.
- In order to secure access to the webserver, submit the electronic thesis and signed signature page to the College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Office by the deadline (75 Poplar Street, Suite 800). Any project submitted after the deadline will be processed for the following semester's graduation.
- Upload the Thesis electronically.
- The deadline is strictly enforced.

Note: The signatures of the committee members on the signature page signify School approval of the final document. However, approval by the Office of Graduate Studies constitutes the official approval of the College of Arts & Sciences.

The semester prior to the first thesis semester (generally the end of the second year)

- Plan ahead for your thesis year: check the College of Arts and Sciences' Graduate Office website, The Office of the Registrar's website, and the School of Art and Design's website for important information about graduation. Note: All deadlines are 5:00PM for the date stated, unless noted otherwise.
- **IMPORTANT INFO FOR STUDIO MAJORS:** Per graduate faculty policy, studio faculty are not available for thesis advisement during the summer, nor can you sign up for thesis hours.
- Check with the Office of the Registrar for Graduate Application Deadlines. The application is available online at www.gsu.edu/es/graduation.html.
- Select Committee members. Consult with the area coordinator in your major before doing this.
- Send email to the School's Graduate Office. Include: the committee selection, proposed date of graduation, and current contact information.
- If applicable to your discipline, set date for thesis show with the Gallery Director (if you plan to exhibit in the campus gallery). Talk with your committee if you plan to exhibit off campus.
- Please note: Exhibition, presentation, or screening of thesis work must open before the last day of classes during the semester of graduation.
- Download Graduate Review Record from Art and Design webpage or pick one up outside the graduate office door (Room 124).
- Make an appointment with Thesis Chair to go over coursework and the Graduate Review Record. Print out the list of courses you have taken from Go Solar. Take the printout to this meeting. If there are any deviations from required coursework, the Chair must email the school's graduate director with approved changes.
- Make an appointment with the Graduate Director after meeting with your Thesis Chair.

Thesis Year (Two Semesters)

Art Education	6 hours, required
Studio	12 hours, required

First Semester Thesis

- Meet with thesis committee a minimum of two times each semester. Meet with Chair (with or without committee) one additional time each semester.
- Take Graduate Review Record to each meeting. Faculty will fill out and return.
- Download Thesis Guidelines from the College of Arts and Sciences website.

Second Semester Thesis

- If there are any new deviations from required coursework, have thesis Chair email The Graduate Director with approved changes.
- Check that thesis guidelines have not changed. You are responsible for changes.
- All thesis will need to be submitted electronically. A hard copy of the signed cover page needs to be turned into College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Office.
- Studio majors – Printer-generated originals may be substituted for photographs in the text. Before purchasing paper for these images, check with The Graduate Director for the currently approved papers and printers, as not all papers or printers are acceptable.
- Double-check all deadlines. Any deadline missed may cause a postponement in graduation. Check with the College of Arts and Sciences, the Registrar, and the School of Art and Design for deadlines.
- School Thesis and Graduation Audit deadlines: the School's deadlines are earlier than the College's. The School's Graduate Office will post deadlines by the end of the first month of the semester for fall and spring graduation. For summer session (Art Ed only), the deadline will be posted during the first week of class. In general, expect to complete the final and formatted thesis a month before finals.
- The content of the thesis exhibition, presentation, or screening must not significantly deviate from that pre-approved by the thesis committee. Before making significant changes, seek approval from a majority of your committee. This must occur prior to the opening of the event.*

- Once the thesis is complete and the exhibition, presentation or screening has occurred, have faculty sign off on the Graduate Review Record.
- Have Thesis Chair email the Graduate Director with confirmation that all coursework for the degree and the thesis are complete.
- Send electronic thesis as a PDF file and drop off the Graduate Review Record and the thesis signature page to the school director by his/her deadline, room 117.
- Turn in Graduate Review Record, with all signatures to the School's Graduate Office, room 124.
- Submit the electronic thesis and signed signature page to the College Graduate Office by the deadline.

Deadlines are strictly enforced. Any project submitted after the deadline will be processed for the following semester's graduation.

Note: Each student must assume full responsibility for the correct form of the thesis. The signatures of the committee members on the title page signify School approval of the final document. However, approval by the Office of Graduate Studies constitutes the official approval of the College of Arts & Sciences.

* If significant changes to the thesis exhibition, presentation, or screening are not approved by the thesis committee, the work will be allowed to proceed but could be deemed by a majority of the committee to be insufficient in satisfying the thesis requirement. If that should occur the student would not graduate until that requirement had been met. In addition, if a second thesis work were required, the degree candidate would be responsible for securing a location and covering any expense incurred in the presentation of that work. This alternative venue must take place for a duration and in a location approved by the thesis committee.