



Guidelines for Proposing, Writing and Defending a Thesis

Procedures for thesis option

1. A **student must file intention** to attempt thesis no later than completion of 12 graduate journalism hours.
2. **Before the completion** of 24 graduate hours, a student must select a thesis chair and receive approval from that chair to proceed with thesis. At that juncture, two additional journalism faculty members are chosen to form the thesis committee. The committee must approve the thesis proposal. The members will be suggested by the student but must be approved by the chair and the thesis chair and the graduate director.
3. **Before enrolling in thesis hours**, the student must pass the comprehensive exam.
4. **By one month prior** to beginning official thesis hours, the student must submit and obtain approval for the thesis proposal. It is advised that the student write the proposal during the first three thesis hours and submit to the committee for approval. The student then will complete the thesis during the second three thesis hours. It is possible and sometimes advantageous for a student to register for six hours of thesis work to be completed in one semester.

For students planning to write a thesis

1. **Read the procedures** for gaining thesis approval.
2. **Form a thesis committee**, which must comprise three members of the journalism faculty. It is not mandatory that a student include an outside member to the committee, but a professor in the student's minor may be invited to serve on the committee. This committee should be formed in advance of writing the proposal.
3. **A proposal and thesis should follow** the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th edition. See the following URL site for helpful illustrations: <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citmla.htm>. The proposal should include :

- A brief literature review in which the author explains how his/her project is situated in terms of research that has already been done;
- any relevant theoretical positions;
- the author's assumptions and/or limitations (especially true in qualitative research) and possibly include his/her own assumptions;
- a clearly stated "question" or "problem" to be addressed in the thesis;
- the intended methodology(ies) clearly explained and rationalized;
- hypotheses if a quantitative research methodology has been selected;
- bibliography;
- text written in present or future tense sentences.

4. The thesis should include:

- All of the above as revised to suit the thesis committee;
- a clear explanation of the methodology used;
- a clear narrative explaining the findings;
- a summary of conclusions and suggestions for future study;
- a brief statement of limitations;
- bibliography;
- text written in past tense.

5. Thesis enrollment:

- Students must enroll in JOUR 5950 (3 hrs or 6 hrs).
- Ideally, a student would form his/her committee and make a thesis proposal one semester (3 hrs), then during the semester of writing the thesis, enroll again in JOUR 5950 (3 hrs).
- However, it may be advantageous for the student to accomplish both proposal and thesis writing during one semester, therefore enrolling in JOUR 5950 (6 hrs).

6. Defending the thesis:

- Students will schedule a defense of the thesis to be held at least three weeks before the end of the semester in which the student plans to graduate.
- The defense is open to the academic community, and the date, time and location of the defense will be published at least one week before the defense. No public comment will be allowed during the defense.
- The student will make a brief statement explaining the results of the thesis. The committee members will then question the student as long as they deem appropriate.
- At the conclusion of the defense, the committee will meet privately to discuss the thesis. The committee will vote to accept, accept with revisions or reject the thesis. If the committee votes to accept the thesis with revisions, the committee chair will be charged to approve those revisions on behalf of the committee. If the committee votes to reject the thesis, the chair will provide the student with a written explanation no more than one week after the defense.

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