**MA Thesis** **(Capstone A)**

Students who have had their proposal approved and who have completed a minimum of 15 credits with a GPA of at least 3.0 in the English MA Literary Studies Track may register for 599, “MA Thesis Capstone A.”

The master’s thesis is one of the English MA program’s three capstone options, the other two being the comprehensive exam (Capstone B) and the special project (Capstone C, Online-Hybrid Track for Teachers). Whereas the exam emphasizes historical and generic breadth of knowledge, and the special project provides a literature review and detailed case study of a critical or pedagogical issue, the thesis offers the opportunity for in-depth study of a particular author, text, or idea, or small group thereof. The thesis option is therefore recommended for students who possess an established interest in pursuing such a topic as well as the research, reading, and writing skills to do so. The thesis is especially suitable for students interested in pursuing additional advanced education.

An English Master’s Thesis is typically a work of 50-75 pages, and it usually takes from one to two semesters to complete after the approval of the proposal. Thesis topics should be chosen with these general guidelines in mind and should be neither too broad to be manageable nor too narrow to support sustained research and writing. While a thesis need not be an entirely original contribution to the discipline, it should be more than a compendium of familiar ideas: a thesis should bring the student’s own interests into contact with the current state of the discipline and contribute to an ongoing scholarly discussion.

**Theses will be evaluated according to the following criteria:**

* A thesis should have an appropriate **topic**: one that engages with texts, authors,

and issues associated with (or capable of association with) the concerns of the

discipline, and one that is neither too broad to be adequately addressed in, nor too

narrow to sustain, a project of this scope.

* A thesis should have a clear and consistent **argument**—that is, it should be more

than a collation of others’ arguments—and should make clear the relevance and

value of that argument for the discipline’s understanding of the texts, authors, or

ideas in question.

* A thesis should have a coherent and sufficiently scholarly **methodology**, which

may but need not be indebted to or in dialogue with one or more contemporary

modes of literary criticism or critical theory. A thesis should make its methodology

clear explicitly in a section on method and/or implicitly through clear discussion

and consistent application of the methodology and citation of appropriate critical

texts in the body of the thesis.

* A thesis should have a clear and effective **structure** appropriate to its subject,

usually divided into chapters and/or sections.

* A thesis should demonstrate familiarity with the **primary and secondary**

**literature** appropriate to its subject, both through a bibliography and through

engagement with that literature in the body of the thesis.

* A thesis should be **written at the appropriate level**, should be free of

compositional errors and awkwardness, and should be written, formatted, and

documented in accordance with MLA format.

NOTE: Because **the MA thesis proposal** must also be approved by the Graduate Committee and Director of Graduate Studies before the student can register for ENG 599, students are strongly advised to begin working with their thesis adviser during the semester before they plan to enroll in ENG 599 and to submit proposals at least **three weeks** before the upcoming semester begins. Students register in ENG 599 using the Capstone Course Registration Form during the regular registration period, i.e. before the end of the drop/add period of the semester.