

## 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.

### Process for Capstone A Project:

1. **Identify and develop a topic and method of inquiry.** Generally, a student should have an interest he or she wishes to pursue before deciding to write a thesis rather than the reverse.
2. **Find a director and second reader** for the thesis. Generally, the director is a faculty member in the department with whom the student has worked before, who has confidence in the student's ability to write a thesis, and who has some expertise in the topic of the thesis. A faculty member is not obliged to accept a student as a thesis advisee and will generally only do so when convinced that both the thesis project and the director-student match are good ones. The second reader should also be chosen, usually in consultation with the director, for his or her knowledge of or interest in the topic of the thesis.
3. In consultation with the director, **develop a proposal** for the thesis to be approved by the director and second reader and submitted for additional approval to the department's Graduate Committee. *The proposal is designed to assure that the student's plan for the thesis is appropriate, and the student may not proceed with the thesis until the proposal is fully approved;* submitting the proposal after completing substantial work on the thesis may result in much of that work having to be discarded and re-done. See below for more details.
4. After the Graduate Committee approves the proposal, **register for ENG 599**; this step requires permission of the Department Chair.
5. **Write the thesis**, typically over a period of one to two semesters, in regular consultation with the director. Students should expect the writing process to involve considerable additional research, reading, and revision; first drafts are rarely acceptable. The thesis, including documentation, should be formatted according to the current MLA style guidelines.

6. When the thesis is complete, **prepare an abstract** of no more than 500 words.
7. **Submit the thesis and abstract to the director and second reader for approval.** The student should submit the thesis at a date which allows adequate time—as defined by the director and second reader—for the thesis to be carefully read and, if necessary, revised or corrected before the School of Graduate Studies' final submission deadline.
8. Complete the thesis per guidelines of the CCSU School of Graduate Studies, **submit to the English Graduate Committee for signatures**, and then to Graduate College for approval and signatures.
9. The student must make a **public presentation** of the thesis, typically in the antepenultimate week of the semester in which the student plans to graduate. The presentation is in general much like a conference paper, 15-20 minutes in length, in which the student presents the argument, chief evidence, and structure of the thesis. The presentation is open to the public, and is typically attended by faculty members and students who may ask questions concerning the thesis. Typically, the presentation is made after submitting the thesis to the School of Graduate Studies at a date determined by the Graduate Committee. Alternatively, the student may choose to make the presentation before final submission of the thesis to the director and second reader in order to receive feedback from those in attendance.

A proposal is generally eight to twelve pages in length (exclusive of bibliography) and should accomplish the following:

- Clearly identify the **topic** of the thesis, which should be appropriate in the ways described above
- Set out the **argument** of the thesis, making clear its appropriateness to the topic and its relevance and value to the discipline
- Identify an appropriate **critical methodology** and describe how it will be applied to the topic in order to support the argument
- Describe the **structure** of the thesis, including its division into chapters and/or sections
- Demonstrate knowledge of the current **state of the discipline** with regard to the topic of the thesis, including familiarity and engagement with relevant primary texts and scholarship at a level appropriate to this stage of the thesis project
- Include an annotated **bibliography** of appropriate and up-to-date primary and secondary materials consulted and to be consulted, usually comprising at least 10 items at this preliminary stage

## **MA Thesis Organization**

Please refer to the guidelines of the CCSU School of Graduate Studies and the Department of English Graduate Committee for capstone formatting requirements. Remember to number and title the sections:

Cover Page

Abstract

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Series of chapters, usually divided into sections
- III. Conclusion
- IV. Bibliography (MLA format, 20-30 sources)

For further information concerning formatting, please see the CCSU Graduate Studies handbook:

[https://www.ccsu.edu/grad/resources/files/thesis/THESIS\\_HANDBOOK\\_SEPTMBER\\_2017\\_REVISIONS.pdf](https://www.ccsu.edu/grad/resources/files/thesis/THESIS_HANDBOOK_SEPTMBER_2017_REVISIONS.pdf)