



Creative Writing Thesis Overview and Guidelines

The following guidelines have been composed to assist you in preparing for and carrying out your creative writing senior honors thesis project. This will ensure your work develops your creative elements while meeting research and writing requirements for the Honors in Major designation. Your thesis director remains your primary point of contact for decisions regarding form, structure, and content.

The creative writing thesis has two components: 1) critical introduction and 2) original creative writing in a single genre (poetry, short fiction, creative non-fiction, play, novella, portion of a novel) created after the approval of the thesis prospectus.

While the length of the creative writing section depends largely on the genre and nature of your project, some suggested guideposts include: a poetry collection (30 pages); a short story collection, creative non-fiction, play, or novella (60 pages); a portion of a novel (80 pages with a detailed outline of the rest of the work). More important than length is quality of thought and writing. The critical introduction must be 15-20 pages.

Prospectus Guidelines for Creative Writing Thesis

If you wish to pursue a creative writing thesis, include the following components in your 3-5 page prospectus: 1) Project description (3-5 paragraphs) explaining the project's genre, subject, and scope; 2) An artist's statement (3-5 paragraphs) explaining at least five important influences that have shaped your perspective in relation to the project; and 3) Bibliography including the five influences you mention and at least five secondary craft or criticism sources.

Creative Writing Thesis Critical Introduction Guidelines

The critical introduction will synthesize the work of many sources to generate an analysis of your own creative writing.

The genre in which you are working has a history. In preparing to write the critical introduction, first conduct research with the help of your chair and library liaison to identify the key writings which outline this history. From the list that emerges, think about the sources which are most relevant to your project. Ask: which sources allow for a good historical overview of my genre and subject matter, and which sources provide important theoretical specificity? Which thinkers, theories, or artistic movements am I "writing with" and which am I "writing against"? All of these will be useful for your critical introduction.

After you have identified and vetted 8-12 potential craft and/or criticism sources for your critical introduction, read each source and compose an annotated bibliography. List each source in alphabetical order and write a 5-7 sentence annotation under each one. The annotation should include 1) your summary of the key ideas the source offers and 2) your explanation of the creative project's connections to the source.

On the basis of your annotations, you will be prepared to begin writing your critical introduction. The central aim of this introduction is to situate your creative writing project within the artistic traditions you are engaging.

Orient your readers with a literature review that details the main historical, theoretical, and artistic thought on your genre and subject matter. Show how the aesthetic choices you make extend on or depart from this thought by analyzing your own creative writing in terms of the literature review you set up. Finally, reflect on the meaning of your work. What effect on the audience do you ultimately wish to achieve in this project?

Creative Writing Thesis Defense

Along with the traditional thesis defense, students pursuing a creative writing honors thesis must reflect on their writing process in their presentation and also perform a formal reading of a key excerpt from their final creative work.