

THESIS GUIDELINES FOR HISTORY M.A. STUDENTS

TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH *THESIS AND DISSERTATION PREPARATION GUIDE*
AVAILABLE ON THE UCA GRADUATE SCHOOL WEBSITE

THE THESIS IS THE CULMINATION OF YOUR WORK AS A MASTERS STUDENT. AS SUCH IT SHOULD REFLECT THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE YOU HAVE ACCUMULATED. THE FOLLOWING GUIDE WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH ANSWERS TO COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND SPECIFICS REGARDING WRITING A THESIS FOR THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT. PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT YOU MUST HAVE A 3.5 MINIMUM GPA AT THE TIME YOU ENROLL IN THE FIRST THESIS CLASS (HIST 6301). IF YOU STILL HAVE QUESTIONS AT THE END OF THIS GUIDE, PLEASE SEE THE COORDINATOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES OR YOUR THESIS ADVISOR.

STEP 1: PICK A TOPIC AND ADVISOR

WRITE ABOUT SOMETHING YOU ARE INTERESTED IN! YOUR THESIS MUST BE AN ORIGINAL ARGUMENT OR NEW INTERPRETATION ON AN EXISTING ISSUE. THIS ARGUMENT SHOULD BE CLEAR TO THE READER. YOU WILL ALSO NEED TO HAVE A SECTION WHICH DISCUSSES THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE TOPIC YOU HAVE CHOSEN. BE SURE THAT IT IS GROUNDED IN PRIMARY SOURCES KEEPING IN MIND THAT YOU WILL NEED TO HAVE ACCESS TO THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, DO NOT PICK A TOPIC WHICH WOULD REQUIRE TRAVEL TO AN ARCHIVE IN MEXICO UNLESS YOU KNOW YOU WILL BE ABLE TO GO THERE.

ONCE YOU HAVE DECIDED ON A TOPIC, APPROACH THE PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT WHO WOULD BE THE LOGICAL CHOICE TO GUIDE YOUR RESEARCH AND WRITING AND ASK IF THE PROFESSOR WOULD BE WILLING TO BE YOUR THESIS ADVISOR.

EACH PROFESSOR IS GOING TO DEAL WITH THEIR THESIS STUDENTS DIFFERENTLY. WILL THE STUDENT OR THE PROFESSOR SET UP DEADLINES FOR WHEN CHAPTERS WILL BE TURNED IN? WILL YOU MEET REGULARLY? DOES THE PROFESSOR WANT TO HAVE YOU REVISE CHAPTERS AS YOU WORK, OR ALL AT THE END BEFORE IT IS GIVEN TO COMMITTEE MEMBERS?

STEP 2: WRITE A THESIS PROSPECTUS

BEFORE YOU CAN ENROLL FOR 6301 (YOUR FIRST THESIS COURSE) YOU MUST SUBMIT AT LEAST A FIVE PAGE, DOUBLE-SPACED, TYPED THESIS PROSPECTUS TO THE COORDINATOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES. IT SHOULD INCLUDE: WHAT YOU PLAN TO WRITE ON, WHAT SOURCES YOU PLAN TO USE (SOME EXAMPLES—IT DOES NOT NEED TO BE EVERY SOURCE YOU MIGHT POSSIBLY USE), A BRIEF IDEA OF HOW IT FITS INTO THE HISTORIOGRAPHY (IF KNOWN), AND WHO YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO HELP GUIDE YOU AS THESIS ADVISOR. IT ALSO NEEDS A BIBLIOGRAPHY ATTACHED.

WHEN THE CHAIR, COORDINATOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES, AND YOUR THESIS ADVISOR HAVE APPROVED YOUR THESIS PROPOSAL, YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED BY EMAIL AND ENROLLED IN 6301. YOU SHOULD ALSO DISCUSS WITH THE COORDINATOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND THESIS ADVISOR TWO OTHER POTENTIAL PROFESSORS IN THE DEPARTMENT WHOSE FIELDS WOULD MAKE THEM IDEAL TO BE ON YOUR COMMITTEE. YOU MUST ALSO COMPLETE THE INTENT TO WRITE A THESIS FORM (IN APPENDIX B OF THE UCA *THESIS AND PREPARATION GUIDE*).

STEP 3: FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

BEFORE YOU CAN ENROLL IN 6301 YOU WILL NEED TO SHOW PROFICIENCY IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. YOU WILL NEED TO INFORM THE COORDINATOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES WHICH LANGUAGE YOU WILL SHOW PROFICIENCY IN SO A TEST CAN BE PREPARED FOR YOU. YOU WILL BE GIVEN ONE TO TWO PAGES FROM AN ACADEMIC JOURNAL TO TRANSLATE WITH THE HELP OF A DICTIONARY IN THREE HOURS. 85% ACCURACY WILL BE COUNTED AS A PASSING SCORE. IF YOU FAIL THE EXAM YOU MAY RETAKE IT TWICE MORE, BUT YOU MUST WAIT ONE MONTH BETWEEN TEST DATES. AS YOU ENROLL IN 6301, YOU ALSO NEED TO REVIEW YOUR RECORDS TO BE SURE YOU HAVE MET ALL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS AND FILL OUT A PETITION FOR GRADUATION. THIS MUST BE COMPLETED EARLY ON IN THE SEMESTER YOU PLAN TO GRADUATE. THE DEADLINE CHANGES AND IS AVAILABLE ON THE GRADUATE SCHOOL WEBSITE.

STEP 4: WORK ON YOUR THESIS

CONSULT WITH YOUR ADVISOR AS YOU WORK ON THINGS LIKE LENGTH (AT LEAST 60 PAGES), HOW MUCH HISTORIOGRAPHY SHOULD BE INCLUDED, SOURCES TO CONSULT, ETC. REMEMBER THE

THESIS IS AN ARGUMENT—KEEP THAT IN MIND AS YOU START WRITING. A DETAILED OUTLINE IS PROBABLY A GOOD IDEA TO CREATE—NOT ONLY TO BE SURE THAT YOUR COMMITTEE DOESN'T SEE ANY OBVIOUS HOLES BEFORE YOU START WRITING AND SO THAT YOU CAN WRITE CHAPTERS IN CHUNKS (WHICH WILL HELP YOU STAY PRODUCTIVE—YOU CAN WRITE FIVE PAGES OF A CHAPTER THAT YOU HAVE READY AND 7 PAGES OF ANOTHER AND WHEN YOU GET ALL THE PIECES OF A CHAPTER DONE, THEN MAKE SURE IT FLOWS TOGETHER AS ONE PIECE).

BE SURE YOU ARE USING THE *CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE* (TURABIAN) FOR CITATIONS AND ARE QUOTING PROPERLY. PLAGIARISM WILL BE DEALT WITH SEVERELY. ALSO, REMEMBER THAT ANY IMAGES YOU USE MUST HAVE A CITATION.

STEP 5: COPIES TO COMMITTEE & DEFENSE DATE

KEEP IN MIND THAT YOUR FINISHED THESIS WILL BE DUE TO GRADUATE SCHOOL ON THE FRIDAY BEFORE STUDY DAY. YOU SHOULD PLAN THAT IT WILL LIKELY TAKE YOU THREE TO FOUR WEEKS TO MAKE THE REVISIONS YOU GET FROM THE COMMITTEE. YOU NEED TO GIVE YOUR COMMITTEE ONE MONTH TO READ THE THESIS, SO YOU NEED TO PLAN TO HAVE YOUR THESIS READY TO GIVE YOUR COMMITTEE ABOUT TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE END OF THE SEMESTER. ONCE YOUR ADVISOR GIVES YOU PERMISSION (I.E. ONCE YOU HAVE MADE THE REVISIONS) PRINT OUT HARD COPIES FOR EACH OF YOUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND DELIVER THEM. YOU ALSO NEED TO MEET WITH THE COORDINATOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES TO SET UP A DATE FOR YOUR DEFENSE. THE COORDINATOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES WILL EMAIL YOUR COMMITTEE AND FIND A DATE/ROOM FOR YOUR DEFENSE AND NOTIFY YOU.

STEP 6: DEFENSE

TO PREPARE FOR YOUR DEFENSE YOU SHOULD RE-READ YOUR THESIS AND REVIEW THE HISTORIOGRAPHY. YOU SHOULD ALSO BRING A COPY OF THE THESIS TO YOUR DEFENSE FOR YOURSELF TO HAVE AS A REFERENCE. TYPICALLY, QUESTIONS WILL FOCUS ON YOUR ARGUMENT, SOURCES, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND HOW YOUR WORK FITS INTO THE LARGER SCOPE OF THE HISTORY OF THAT PERIOD; YOU SHOULD ALSO EXPECT TO BE ASKED THE “SO WHAT” QUESTION—WHY IS YOUR WORK IMPORTANT/SIGNIFICANT TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE HISTORY OF THAT PERIOD.

STEP 7: FINAL COPIES

ONCE YOUR COMMITTEE HAS SIGNED OFF ON YOUR THESIS YOU NEED TO PRINT OUT **THREE** COPIES TWO ON TWENTY POUND, ACID FREE PAPER. TWO WILL BE PLACED IN THE TORREYSON LIBRARY AND ONE WILL BE KEPT IN THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT. IF YOU WOULD LIKE A COPY FOR YOURSELF, MAKE AN EXTRA ONE—THE LIBRARY WILL EVEN BIND IT FOR YOU FOR LESS THAN \$10. YOU MUST CHECK THE GUIDELINES CAREFULLY REGARDING MARGINS, FORMATTING, ETC. AS THE GRADUATE SCHOOL WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY THESIS WHICH IS INCORRECTLY DONE AND YOU WILL HAVE TO REPRINT IT (20 POUND PAPER IS NOT CHEAP!). THE GRADUATE SCHOOL WILL DO A ROUGH CHECK ON PLAIN PAPER IF YOU WANT BEFORE YOU PRINT OFF THE OFFICIAL VERSION. THERE IS ALSO A DISSERTATION ROUTING FORM THAT MUST ACCOMPANY YOUR THESIS WHEN YOU TURN IT IN TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, AND THE COORDINATOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES WILL HELP YOU GET ALL THE APPROPRIATE SIGNATURES FOR IT. KEEP IN MIND THAT THE FINAL VERSION IS USUALLY DUE TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL ONE WEEK BEFORE STUDY DAY.

IF FOR ANY REASON YOU NEED MORE THAN TWO SEMESTERS TO COMPLETE YOUR THESIS, YOU WILL NEED TO ENROLL EVERY SEMESTER, INCLUDING ONE OF THE SUMMER SESSIONS IN HIST 6101—PER THE GRADUATE SCHOOL'S REQUIREMENTS.

GOOD LUCK! WRITING A THESIS CAN BE REWARDING AND FUN. DON'T LET IT SIT ON YOUR SHELF COLLECTING DUST; PRESENT PART OF IT AT A CONFERENCE AND/OR ASK YOUR ADVISOR HOW TO TURN IT INTO AN ARTICLE AND SUBMIT IT TO A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL!