

Guidelines for MA Theses

FILM STUDIES
School for Studies in Art and Culture

Carleton University

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Appendix 1:

Format of Thesis Title Page

I

Overview

Students should consult the Masters and Doctoral Thesis Preparation Guidelines and the Thesis Examination Policy documents from the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs which is the definitive source for graduate regulations. Both are posted on the website: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/>

The guidelines that follow are provided to augment the Graduate Faculty publication.¹ They are in no sense the final word. You should direct any further questions to the Film Studies Graduate Supervisor, your thesis supervisor or the graduate secretary. Ask early. Don't wait until your time has expired or you are totally tied up in red tape before asking for assistance.

¹ This document was prepared by Prof. Natalie Luckji for the Art History graduate program. Some parts of it have been modified to conform to the requirements of the Master's program in Film Studies. Section 5 contains materials from the Thesis Examination Policy issued by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral.

A. Theses

1. Introduction

Your thesis is the most important part of your M.A. program. It will be the critical test of your success as a graduate student, and recommendations for further study or for employment will be based heavily on it. A main purpose of your courses is to provide the academic background and research skills necessary for a satisfactory research project.

There is a tendency for students to concentrate during the Fall and Winter terms on course readings and assignments, and to put off decisions about the thesis until late in the Spring term, resulting in the loss of the summer as a constructive research period. The effective definition of a topic demands a good deal of thought, reading and preliminary research; it cannot be done quickly and therefore must be begun early. Faculty also need to know their commitments in advance. Students trying to define a topic during the summer, without having secured the prior agreement of a supervisor, are apt to find that no one is available until September. It is considered normal to complete the M.A. with a thesis in fewer than six terms, but only if a topic and supervisor have been arranged and serious work on the thesis proposal has begun at the end of first year.

For all of these reasons, Film Studies requires that students select a thesis topic no later than the middle of the second term of registration for students enrolled full-time and no later than the middle of the fifth term of registration for students enrolled part-time.

By the end of the second term (**May 15**), full time students will be asked to submit a full thesis proposal to the Graduate Supervisor. Part-time students should submit this proposal six weeks after the end of the fifth term.

Proposals will be assessed and approved by the Graduate Supervisor in conjunction with the members of the graduate studies committee. Recommendations for changes will be communicated to students and potential thesis supervisors. Approval from this committee is necessary before a thesis may proceed. If you are using material (documents) in private hands or interviewing people, you will need to follow the Ethical Guidelines of Carleton University that require the presentation of a permission form to be signed by those concerned. <http://carleton.ca/curo/ethics-and-compliance/ethics/>

The thesis proposal is intended to ensure not only that you start thinking about your project in good time but also that you get early advice in planning it. Topics most commonly arise from seminar papers, directed reading courses or from interests that students bring into the program. In the first two cases, a student's preference for a supervisor is usually clear, but in the other case it may be more difficult to know where to begin. Ask the advice of the Graduate Supervisor. It is seldom wise

to choose a topic on which faculty expertise is not available: unless appropriate outside supervision can be arranged, you may be left with less direction than M.A. students generally need. (The University cannot pay for outside supervision.)

If you find yourself short of ideas about topics or approaches, or if you are unsure about what sort of thing is expected, consult some of the recently completed theses on Film Studies topics kept in the graduate administrator's office. Wherever possible, try to build on your own seminar courses or directed reading coursework.

A thesis has an upper limit of 100 pages of text, not counting the bibliography and notes, and is rarely shorter than 80 pages - roughly 25,000-30,000 words.

A thesis, while it must be carefully circumscribed in scope, must address itself to a question of substantial academic interest not already satisfactorily examined in the literature. It must accomplish a thorough and scholarly investigation of its subject and make a significant contribution to the study of it. A thesis must have a thesis: that is, it must place before the reader a proposition, an argument or hypothesis which it attempts to demonstrate or test.

When you are drafting a proposal, you may have only a tentative thesis or may not have made a choice between possible alternatives; but in its final form your work must be unified by and directed towards a clear central proposition or hypothesis. Not only must such a central idea be present, you must convince your examiners that it is in some way original; you must convince them that you have argued for it clearly and supported it with sufficient data; and you must convince them that the result is worth the serious attention, if not necessarily the agreement, of mature scholars in your field.

2. Preparing a Thesis Proposal

You should understand from the beginning that a thesis proposal is not a mere declaration of interest in some topic, but the definition of a manageable research problem and of the way in which you intend to deal with it. It is a normal experience to find that your proposal must be revised before approval.

This proposal should have the following elements:

- Abstract (no more than 150 words)
- Statement of the problem
- Relationship to existing scholarship
- Objectives and method
- Chapter breakdown
- Preliminary bibliography

2.1. Abstract

This is your thesis statement. It is a short synopsis of your main argument, identifying your central topics and outlining the questions you intend to discuss. This will be the statement that you may wish to present to prospective supervisors.

2.2 Statement of the Problem

Begin with a general statement of the problem. You cannot expect in an opening statement to go into details, but you should state the overall area of interest, the nature of the problem itself, the range of subject matter that you think relevant to it and the limits beyond which you do not intend to go. Normally this statement should also include a list of films that will most likely be discussed in the course of your thesis.

2.3. Relationship to Existing Scholarship

Once the problem has been identified, review the existing literature that bears on it.

Some of the studies in your bibliography will be of special importance, either because they address your problem directly or because they employ concepts that you mean to adopt or from which you dissent. Your proposal should include systematic comment on those studies. In providing a critique of the works in question, you should outline the intellectual framework in which your topic will be approached and the depth to which it has been investigated. Your comment should end by explaining in general terms, the relation between the works reviewed and your proposed study. Which of them do you mean to accept or reject; what is there about the problem that they have left undone; how do you expect that you will be able to go beyond them? If you cannot answer those questions, you have not yet defined a viable problem for research.

2.4. Objectives and Method

With your problem identified and its relation to previous work described, you can now be specific about the objectives of your proposed inquiry. You should go into some detail about the questions you mean to ask, the hypotheses or arguments you plan to adopt, the method of analysis by which you hope to sustain your hypotheses or arguments and the availability of evidence amenable to that method.

2.5 Chapter Breakdown

Arrange your project into chapters by providing a short summary of the contents of each. It may be helpful to indicate what films will be analyzed in each of the chapters, and if possible, noting their relevance to the questions and arguments discussed in each individual chapter. See Section 4.2 for an explanation of what you are expected to include in your introductory and concluding chapters.

2.6 Preliminary Bibliography

List the main sources for your project. This bibliography should include the studies mentioned in the section dealing with existing scholarship as well any other that are directly related to your argument and approach. Use the Chicago Manual of Style for proper referencing of these materials. See Section 3.2 below for general guidelines.

The details of your plans will of course be tentative, subject to revision as your research proceeds. It would be exceptional for your thesis to correspond entirely to your original proposal; you should expect research to lead to refinements in topic and approach. If you deviate significantly from what was originally approved, then it is prudent to submit an amended proposal. If you are in doubt about the need for a statement of amendment, check with your thesis supervisor or the Film Studies Graduate Supervisor.

Drafting your proposal should not be an isolating experience. The Film Studies Graduate Supervisor and your intended supervisor will both have to see it in the end and should be consulted at the beginning. Make use of any other advice you can get, bearing in mind that "make use of" does not mean "accept uncritically".

3. Critical Apparatus

Every work relies on other publications on the same or related subjects (secondary sources) and on manuscript collections, archives, films or videos, screenplays, personal interviews, books, reports and others (primary sources.) Notes, bibliographies, appendices, tables, charts, graphs and so on, are collectively known as the critical or scholarly apparatus of a thesis. The necessity for them arises from two central conventions of scholarly reporting.

The first convention is that the sources of any work must be clearly declared. That is the purpose of notes and bibliographies: the notes give the source of statements made in the text, and the bibliographies show the range of sources that have been consulted. Don't confuse their functions by trying to make extensive reference in your notes to related studies that are not the source of specific statements in the text. This is the scholarly equivalent of "name dropping."

Include such further references only if there is some disagreement or ambiguity to the clarification of which they contribute. Taken together, the notes and the bibliography enable readers to identify the origin of your statements, to check their accuracy and to judge the thoroughness of your research. Since we are certifying your abilities as a researcher/scholar in this process, these are central to it.

The second convention of scholarly reporting is that the organization of a study must be made clear. Theses are therefore to be arranged in chapters, with titles and numbers, listed in a table of contents. Chapter titles and the main title itself should

unambiguously indicate their subject matter. Appendices, tables and any other form of information set apart from the text must be titled, numbered and listed.

In addition, University regulations require you to provide an abstract, which is not to exceed 150 words. Since its object is to facilitate reference by other scholars, it should be a synopsis of your main argument, identifying your central topics and conclusions.

3.1 Documentation: Notes

It is neither feasible nor necessary to give a reference for every statement that you make. Much of what you write will be uncontroversial or already well attested. All direct quotations or paraphrases must have references; failure to acknowledge them constitutes plagiarism. That is not merely an error but an offence, subject to penalties which are listed in the General Regulations, section 18 of the Graduate Calendar:

<http://calendar.carleton.ca/grad/gradregulations/administrationoftheregulations/#18>

Notes are also necessary for those statements that are disputed, problematic, novel, textual, historical or statistical, and for those that are critically important for your argument. Notes ordinarily need do no more than give references.

Discursive or explanatory notes are occasionally useful, if there is some question about the reliability or interpretation or agreement of the sources referred to. At times a note may be justified to explain something peripheral to your text but useful to the reader. When such explanations appear necessary and cannot reasonably be fitted into the text, they may go into a note if they can be compressed into a few lines. Otherwise they should be omitted or form an appendix.

The Chicago Manual of Style includes guidelines to two basic systems for notes documenting the text. The humanities (or documentary-note) style is favoured by the arts, literature and history, and the author-date system is used in the physical, natural and social sciences. It is recommended that you follow the first one which uses reference numbers in the text rather than the second that uses parenthetical notes requiring the author's last name and date of publication.

The numbered notes used in the humanities style can be placed at the bottom of each page (footnotes) or grouped either at the end of each chapter (endnotes) or the end of the thesis (back notes.) The endnote system may be preferable since it will make it much easier to submit articles based on your completed thesis to scholarly journals. Either arrangement is acceptable for a thesis, so long as it is appropriate to the kind of sources used and so long as the established conventions are consistently followed.

Nonetheless, you may have reasons to use parenthetical notes of the author-date system as they are simple, convenient for the writer and well designed for citing single published works. But you should keep in mind that they are generally

unsatisfactory for archival, documentary and other lengthy references, and they are not designed for discursive or explanatory notes. If you choose to use this system, make sure you understand the conventions and follow them carefully.

The two systems are not altogether incompatible. In a study based on the analysis of literary or theoretical texts, reference to them may be made within parentheses even if the rest of the citations are in footnote form.² It is equally acceptable to use some explanatory or discursive footnotes when all your other notes are parenthetical. In both systems, those parts of a reference that appear in the immediate text are customarily omitted from the note.

Detailed manuals of practice since 1906 have derived from the *Manual of Style* of the University of Chicago Press. There is a bibliography of them: J.B. Howell, *Style Manuals of the English-Speaking World*. Phoenix: Oryx, 1983. Scholarly journals and publishers characteristically have their own style sheets, which vary from the standard manuals.³ The manual you should use is *The Chicago Manual of Style. The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors and Publishers* (15th ed.) Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003. Alternatively, you may consult the Online edition at <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>. Other manuals recommended are: K.L. Turabian. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 7th ed. 2003 (1937), and R. McK. Wiles. *Scholarly Reporting in the Humanities*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 4th ed. 1968 (1951). In addition to these, *Archival Citations*. (Ottawa, 1983) is also generally recommended: it gives forms of citation for films, tapes, maps, photographs, drawings, paintings and prints, as well as for manuscripts and government records.

The general manuals give models for most of the citations you are likely to need and are organized to make particular cases easy to find, including in the versions you can find online. These guidelines are not intended as a substitute for them, but as an explanation of the rationale behind them.

² References to George Johnston's poem, "Annabelle", might be made as (Johnston 1959: 39), whereas a first footnote reference to it in his collected poems would read: G. Johnston, *The Cruising Auk*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 39. You will recognize this as an explanatory note of about the maximum permissible length.

³ Especially on punctuation and the use of abbreviations, Roman numerals and capital letters. For a note on the formation of such a specialized style, see C. McFarlane, "The Development of French and English Styles for the DCB/DBC's Bibliographies", *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of Canada*, 3 (1964): 27-37. Discursive notes should not be longer than this one.

3.2 Documentation: Bibliography

The bibliography is a list of the sources that you have consulted and found specifically useful, even by dissenting from them. They need not all have been cited in your notes, but their relevance to your text must be clear. Omit standard reference works, and if you are uncertain about any item, omit it.

The bibliography describes your sources more fully than you have done in the notes. The object is to identify sources precisely for any critical reader. Resist the pessimistic assumption that you are addressing only your examiners or only Canadian academics, no matter how realistic that may seem to you at the moment. Primary sources used (interviews, documents, etc.) should be carefully listed with as much detail as necessary, such as the date and place of interviews.

Bibliographic entries give the full titles of books, including subtitles, and the names of any series or commissioning agencies. They specify the edition you have consulted, if there is more than one; and they should give the date of the original edition whenever that is relevant to your use of the book. It is good practice to give the dates and issue numbers with the volume numbers of periodicals, since that makes them easier to find in their usual unbound form. The entry for any multi-volume source should indicate what parts of it you have actually consulted: show volume numbers or opening and closing dates. Providing authors' full given names is standard practice. Except for "UP" (=University Press), "comp." (=compiler), "rev." (=revised), "ed." (=editor or edition), "n. d." (=no date) and "tr." (=translator), abbreviations are not appropriate in a bibliography. Titles in French, or any languages other than English, should be treated in the same way as those in English except that capitalization should follow the conventions of the language of the work.

The form of the bibliography follows the form that you have chosen for the notes. If entries are to accompany parenthetical notes, the author's surname or the name of the corporate author is placed first, with the date of publication immediately after it. The two keys usually given in the parenthetical notes are thus placed first in the bibliographic entry. Entries are ordered alphabetically in a single continuous series, no distinction being made among different kinds of sources. This is the best format as it offers the simplest means of locating all references. Numbering entries is unnecessary.

Normally, it is not recommended to divide the bibliography into sections. Although it can be a useful way of checking how varied and balanced your use of sources has been, distinctions may leave many sources arbitrarily placed. The Chicago Manual of Style, for instance, recommends separating printed works and manuscript sources, with the last arranged either by depository or name of collection. While the separation of books and articles is discouraged in this manual, it is suggested that a work with many newspaper references should list them together, each with its own

run of relevant dates. Be as it may, the best organization is one that is no more complex than is necessary to display the range and variety of your sources.

3.3. Other Critical Apparatus

Your topic may require the inclusion of information that should be set apart from the text because there is more of it than the text can reasonably accommodate. Such information may take the form of catalogue information about films or videos, interview transcripts, production, distribution or exhibition statistics, or other important information that it is helpful to organize separately for ease of reference.

If you want to include illustrations to discuss specific aesthetic aspects, shots from the film or the video are preferable to production stills. See Section 4.3.3g. Illustrations should be grouped at the end of the text, following any appendices and preceding the notes and bibliography. They should be given sequential figure numbers, and these numbers should be inserted in the text in parentheses where the illustrations are discussed. A list of figures and captions should follow the illustrations giving the sources from which they were taken. If these sources are published they should be referenced in the style you have chosen for the text.

4. Standards of Presentation

Your examiners will expect clearly written and logically arranged work. To facilitate their appraisal of your scholarship, they will also expect you to provide an adequate critical apparatus consistent with the advice given above in Section 3. Further, there are some rules specific to the University about the format of your final manuscript.

4.1. Prose Style

You will be expected to write, as you are expected to think, with order, clarity and precision. Good writing should be as easy to read as the difficulties of its subject allow. If what you have to communicate is complex, there are limits to how simple your prose can be. Don't add to your reader's problems, however, by making vague or contradictory statements, by using inflated or formless constructions, or by being incorrect, obscure or idiosyncratic in your choice of words. Errors in grammar or spelling, if only occasional, are less automatically fatal than incoherence in organization and argument or inaccuracy in documentation, but they are nevertheless unacceptable. You may want to consult some of the many guides to English usage that are in print. Writing Tutorial service can also be of help if you need it. The service it provides is free and very good.

4.2. Organization

The organization of your text should reflect the form and stages of your analysis. In your introductory chapter you should review as much of the literature of your topic as is relevant to your treatment of it. It is important however, that you, not the

literature, be in control. While you will go through many stages to decide that framework A. is useful and framework B. useless, you may report on your outcome more briefly. The introduction is also the place to explain your method and to comment on your sources. In addition, it should explain and justify the limits you have set to your inquiry. It should sketch the background of your topic and forecast the argument you are about to develop. Its general objective is to give readers an adequate context in which to approach your substantive chapters. It is helpful to readers if you map out for them briefly where each chapter will take them. Again, a strong storyline helps in organization.

Chapters should be divided from one another in some plainly logical way. Titled sections within chapters may be appropriate, although they are never a substitute for a coherent order of material. Each chapter should mark a step in the advance of your argument and should end by making clear what that step has been.

The thesis should end with an explicit statement of its conclusions as a final chapter. A summary of your earlier chapters is inadequate as a conclusion. You should try to give a unified picture of your research, with an explanation of how your results differ from or add to the work of others. You should distinguish between those conclusions that you regard as firm and those which you admit to be tentative. Finally, you should offer a judgment on the implications of your work and suggest what fresh lines of inquiry may be opened by it.

4.3. Final Copies

Copies of theses are to be submitted for examination in envelopes, not punched, stapled or permanently bound. They must be carefully proof-read, with all but the slightest errors corrected in type. Occasional minor corrections like changes in punctuation may be accepted in ink. Thesis copies become final when amended after examination. On these copies all corrections must be in type.

4.3.1. Number of Copies

The examination of a thesis requires five (5) copies. In the case of co-supervisors six (6) copies are required for both examination and binding. After a successful examination the University will bind two (2) copies on regular bond paper to be sent to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs so that they can be forwarded to the Library to be included in the collection. The cost of binding these two copies is borne by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs and the Library. If audio or video material accompanies a thesis, two copies of it are required: one for the Library and one for Film Studies. Binding costs for additional copies are covered by the student.

4.3.2. Title Page

All Carleton theses microfilmed by the National Library are indexed by University Microfilms International and Canadiana. These are now most often searched online. To ensure the accessibility of the thesis through these online databases the title should contain significant words describing the subject matter of the thesis.

Copyright in theses or dissertations (as in any published material) is protected by international copyright law. The International Copyright Notice including the copyright symbol should appear at the bottom of the title page in the thesis. This consists of three elements:

- a claim of copyright protection (copyright protection)
- name of copyright owner
- year of publication

4.3.3. Form of Final Copies

Information for formatting and preparing the final copies of the thesis may be found at: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/formatting-guidelines/>

5. Defence of a Thesis

When your thesis has been submitted, it will be read by an examining board and you will offer a public defence. Note that observers, while they may attend without notice, may not take part in the examination. Such defences are normal academic practice, but there are some rules specific to the University that you must follow.

Full details of the Thesis Requirements of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs may be found at: <http://gradstudents.carleton.ca/thesis-requirements/>

5.1 Deadlines for Submission of Final Copies

You are required to give your thesis supervisor and graduate program supervisor at least two weeks' notice of the date on which you intend to submit copies for examination. The copies must be received by the graduate administrator two weeks in advance of the actual date of examination of the thesis. Towards the beginning or end of a term, when boards are most often held, an interval of more than two weeks may be more realistic. These timelines are designed to ensure the timely constitution of examining boards, scheduling and announcements. Moreover, one week in advance each examiner must sign a Thesis of Approval Form indicating whether the examination can proceed.

When the thesis is submitted for examination, you must sign the Academic Integrity thesis statement indicating comprehension and adherence to the Carleton University Academic Integrity Policy. For information and links to the policy documents see: TBA

When your defence has been successful and you have received the necessary approval of whatever changes the examiners have required, submit five (5) amended copies (or six (6) in case of co-supervisors) of your thesis to the graduate administrator of the School. It is your responsibility to see that the pages are in order and to ensure that no pages are missing, with all corrections made and any accompanying material included. You must also complete the required forms for digitization by Proquest and for the National Library.

If your copies are submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs before the last day for late registration in any term, you will avoid paying fees for that term.

5.2. Examining Boards

Boards are appointed by the Film Studies Graduate Supervisor, in consultation with the relevant thesis supervisor. Students may suggest possible examiners, but do not have approval over their appointment.

Full details of the Examination Policy of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs may be found at: TBA

The examination board will consist of a chair (the Director of the School for Studies in Art and Culture, or a delegate), the thesis supervisor (or co-supervisor), one faculty member from Film Studies graduate program and one member from another Carleton University Department who has not participated in the thesis research (Internal Examiner.) The Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Graduate Postdoctoral Affairs are *ex-officio* members.

Your board will begin by allowing you up to 15 minutes to make a statement about your project. Be careful to provide a commentary, not a summary. It is usual to begin by explaining how you became interested in your topic and why you think it worth attention. You may also take the opportunity to identify those parts of your work which in retrospect seem to you most important or most securely based, as well as those of which might now be inclined to consider modification. The examiners will regard this opening statement as part of your defence.

There will normally be two rounds of questions. The first will be each examiner asking you questions (and you answering) for about 20 minutes per examiner. The

second will be more conversational. The examiners' focus will be on the text and critical apparatus of your work. They will, however, often be obliged to depart from a strict adherence to that focus in order to test your knowledge of the sources and your grasp of the issues raised by your topic. Boards normally take about 2 hours. You will then be asked to leave while the examiners deliberate.

Their report, of which you will be given an oral statement at the end of the defence, will give separate judgments on your thesis and on your defence of it. They may accept a thesis as it stands or a notation of distinction, and with minor or major revisions. Major changes are subject to the approval of all members of the board, and minor changes only to the approval of your supervisor.

Appendix 1 – Format of Thesis Title Page

(Title Centered)

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by

Name of Author and Degree

A (thesis) submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in Film Studies

Carleton University

OTTAWA, Ontario

(Date of first Submission for formal examination)

Year, Name of Author