# MA Thesis Timeline

This document should serve only as a suggested timeline. Students should consult with their first and second readers regarding all deadlines for drafts and final work. In addition, graduate students must abide by the degree deadlines posted by the Graduate School regarding the oral defense and thesis submission dates.

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| **Steps in Thesis Process** | **Fall Semester** | **Spring Semester** |
| *Prior to the semester you plan to enroll in thesis hours….* | | |
| **Locate First Reader** Obtain agreement from a first reader early in term (by approximately) | February 15 | September 15 |
| **Locate Second Reader**  In consultation with first reader, determine and obtain agreement from a second reader by approximately | April 15 | November 15 |
| **Draft Prospectus**  Draft and submit to your first and second readers a prospectus with bibliography by approximately | April 15 | November 15 |
| **Submit Final Prospectus and Thesis Syllabus**  After receiving feedback, revise and finalize prospectus and fill out the “Thesis Syllabus” template. Submit both documents to thesis readers and the Graduate Coordinator for final approval, by approximately | May 10…  …or no later than August 10 | December 10…  …or no later than January 10 |
| *Students cannot register for ENGL 890 until a Thesis Prospectus (with signatures/approval) and a Thesis Syllabus is on file with the Graduate Coordinator. Electric submissions are preferred.* | | |

**While Enrolled in Thesis Hours (6 Credit Hours)**

Students who want to shorten this process, enrolling in only 3 credit hours (or one semester) for their Thesis Hours, should have already completed significant work on the thesis in their prior seminars. The majority of the thesis should thus be drafted, and all committee members identified, at the start of the semester you enroll in thesis hours. Some students may opt to use their summer and winter breaks to do this early drafting work as well.

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| **Steps in Thesis Process** | **First Semester** | **Second Semester** |
| **Conduct Preliminary Research**  You will have already conducted some research in order to write the prospectus; use this time to refine that research—locating the scholarly, theoretical, and/or archival interventions of your project. | Weeks 1-3 |  |
| **Draft First Section**  The length (and subsequently chapters) of each thesis may vary, but typically a thesis is structured in two seminar-length chapters(15-20 pages each) with a brief introduction and conclusion. | Weeks 4-8 |  |
| **Submit First Section to Reader(s)**  Some thesis committees prefer that first readers give initial feedback before passing the (revised) draft on to the second reader; consult with your director to determine preference. | Week 8 |  |
| **Draft Second Section**  As you work on your second section, try to build on your first section’s argument; ideally, the thesis would present a holistic argument—not two separate “case studies.” | Weeks 8-12 |  |
| **Submit Second Section to Reader(s) and Begin Work on Revising First Section**  The revision process should be taken seriously as faculty may have both low order concerns (clarity of argument, prose, etc.) and high order concerns (lack of research, faulty organization, need to refine argument, etc.). | Week 12-16 |  |
| **Locate Third Reader**  In consultation with your chair, locate a third graduate faculty member from outside the department to serve on your committee. Faculty from departments like History, MCLL, Philosophy, Applied Studies, and Women’s Studies have been popular choices in the past. |  | Week 1-2 |
| **Submit Application for Degree with Updated Plan of Study if Needed**  Plans of Study typically include a list of all thesis committee members. The Graduate School has explicit deadlines that must be met. Their timeline is available online. |  | Approximately September 12 for a Fall graduation or February 10th for a Spring graduation |
| **Submit Revised First Section to Reader(s) and Begin Work on Revising Second Section**  At this point, it is common to bring in the second reader (who makes recommendations on the revised draft). You may need to do multiple revisions depending on your writing style and your first reader’s feedback. |  | Week 3-5 |
| **Submit Revised Section Two to Reader(s) and Begin Drafting Introduction and Conclusion**  The Prospectus can often be used, in a revised form, as part your introduction and should reflect your growth in ideas during the thesis writing process. |  | Week 6-8 |
| **Schedule Oral Defense**  This paperwork needs to be filed with the Graduate School and will need the signature of either your first reader or the Graduate Coordinator. Again, the Graduate School has explicit deadlines and procedures; please check with them for more precise dates. |  | By approximately November 15 for a Fall graduation or April 15 for a Spring Graduation |
| **Submit Entire Manuscript to All Committee Members**  If the third reader asks to see drafted work earlier, please oblige them. Some readers prefer to not see the thesis until the minimum days-to-defense requirement (ten days before the defense). |  | Weeks 8-10 |
| **Incorporate Any Final Revisions**  At this point, you should have received final feedback on your full draft and can begin preparing for the defense. Your first reader can give you examples of the kind of questions you may receive and should discuss with you—as well as the other committee members—the defense’s structure. Feel free to contact the Graduate Coordinator for information on common defense practices in our department. |  | Weeks 10-12 |
| **Hold Oral Defense**  We typically schedule the oral defenses in Lindquist. While they can be open to the public, we typically keep them closed, with only the committee members present. |  | By approximately November 15 for a Fall graduation or April 15 for a Spring graduation |
| **Format Thesis and File Thesis**  Format the thesis for filling according to the Graduate School guidelines. The thesis must be filed with the Graduate School by the Final Date of Completion. It must incorporate all recommended revisions and the final paperwork must be signed by all three readers. |  | Weeks 14-15 |