

# Thesis Proposal Guidelines

## Guidelines for Theory/Research Based Thesis

- **Title:** Suggest a title for your proposal
- **Thesis statement:** Your thesis statement should articulate the main idea of your entire project. It can also be thought of as the *angle* or *point of view* from which you present your material.
- **Research questions:**
- **Literature Review:** (see the next section of this document for what this entails)
- **Theoretical framework:** Articulate the relevance of the theory or theories you suggest to use in your proposal/thesis
- **Method:** Articulate clearly the type of method or methods of analysis you will be using
- **Bibliography page:** Include the sources you used in your proposal. Include a list of additional sources relevant to your topic.

## Guidelines for Film/Video Projects

Students wishing to produce a film or video for their culminating creative project theses are expected to demonstrate a high degree of technical and aesthetic achievement. Although there is no prescribed length for these major artistic projects, the following should be used as guidelines: **For live-action (narrative or documentary) projects: 15-35 minutes.** Note: 15-20 minute films/videos tend to be more acceptable for festivals. Students wishing to produce film/videos longer than 35 minutes **must get special permission** from the Graduate Studies Coordinator.

**For animation projects: 5-15 minutes.**

**ALL Film/Video projects** proposals must include the following

- Synopsis or Summary of the project
- Production Concept (Students should be able to defend the project in terms of film history, criticism, theory, and aesthetic choices)
- Literature Review (Students should include an annotated bibliography of the films, videos, and written work that have influenced their choices) – For more details, see the Review of Literature section of this document.
- Preliminary Script (narrative) or treatment (documentary)
- Proposed Budget
- Proposed Pre-Production, Production, and Post Production Schedule

Final versions of all of the above material should also be included when the project is completed, in addition to the film/video itself. These written materials will constitute the bound portion of the student's project.

Additional written material that must accompany the **final project** includes:

- A section on Marketing Concepts (who is the intended audience and demonstrate how the film/video is ready for the market)
- A Narrative that describes the challenges the student has faced as well as what he or she has learned.

- A production notebook that includes a detailed account of all aspects of production. This could include such elements as research completed, location scouting, notes on the writing process, lists of crew and collaborators, etc.

Students wishing to produce special advertising or marketing commercial, info-mercials, and/or training films/videos that are less than 15 minutes in length are expected to submit other ancillary materials in addition to **ALL** of the requirements described above. These materials might include:

- A series of 15 – 30 second video PSA's and/or commercials  
Radio PSA's;
- Print Advertising Copy (a specific thematic campaign) with at least 5 examples;
- Poster for the Video
- A sample newspaper insert (4 pages) that promotes the project
- Applications for mobile devices
- Examples of Press Releases
- Social Networking campaign (individualized by App., or SN Channel)
- Comprehensive website to include media (video/audio/live discussion/help line, etc).
- Other materials as recommended by the thesis/project director and committee

## **Guidelines for Screenplay Thesis Proposals**

### **Pre-thesis requirements**

The thesis screenplay should become at least the second acceptable screenplay the student has written. Prior to submission (4 weeks minimum) of the thesis proposal, the student should present to his/her proposed thesis advisor an acceptable feature-length screenplay written prior to the thesis proposal.

This feature-length narrative screenplay may be the result of successfully completing work in the Graduate Screenwriting course. Or, it may be satisfied by a screenplay written in another course or out of academia. This work must be deemed to be of acceptable quality by the thesis advisor before the student may proceed to the formal thesis proposal.

### **Include in your proposal:**

- A brief synopsis of proposed screenplay. You will expand this section of the proposal with a longer treatment later in the proposal. Include here (briefly):
- Theme (what will the movie say?)
- Plot (general chain of events that provide story infrastructure)
- Characters (Who are the primary characters, what is their problem/need?)
- Mise-en-scene (what is the environment(s) that the story exists in? How will you use location as –character?)
- Images (what will be unique in the image you create to tell the story?)
- Write the 1 – 3 sentence –tagline that best sums up your story and that can be used as the quick-pitch for the project.
- Statement of vision
- Briefly explain –why you think this script should be written. How will this work contribute to the field of cinema? How are the idea (theme) and/or approach (structure/form) unique, or how does it bring new light to the familiar?

- Express the uniqueness (voice and vision) that you intend to bring to the screenplay.
- Who are you? (In a short essay tell who you are and how the art of screenwriting, and this proposed screenplay in particular, will aid the evolution as you as an artist/professional, and as a human being.)
- Research and Development (In a few paragraphs describe the major influences (writers and works) on your thesis. You will expand this portion of the proposal in the bibliography section where you will cite specific books, screenplays, individual screenwriters, and films used in the development of this work. Within the context of the work (i.e., personal, historical, political) explain the types of research that you will conduct to aid in the creation of the screenplay.
- 5-15 page script treatment.
- Supplemental support materials (at discretion of thesis advisor)
- Design the poster. If this screenplay were to make it to the screen, create the poster/box art that would best sell the product? Note: You will not be judged on graphic art skill, however make it a professional looking design.
- You may also include additional supportive materials such as storyboards, production design materials, or other production plans.
- And then what? As a screenplay is not a terminal product, but a means to an end, upon completion how do you intend to get it out there (i.e., competitions, festivals, submissions to agencies, self production, etc.)?
- Bibliography

## Literature Review

All projects and theses require some form of literature review. The format of a review of literature may vary from discipline to discipline and should be addressed in the proposal. A review may be a self-contained unit, an end in itself, or a preface to and rationale for engaging in primary research. A review is, in many cases, a required part of grant and research proposals and often a chapter in the thesis.

Generally, the purpose of a review is to analyze critically a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of prior research studies, reviews of literature, and theoretical articles. In Media Studies, a review of the literature could include written work as well as films, videos, screenplays, and web sites.

**In the introduction** to a review of the literature you should:

- Define or identify the general topic, issue, or area of concern, thus providing an appropriate context for reviewing the literature.
- Point out overall trends in what has been published about the topic or conflicts in theory, methodology, evidence, and conclusions; or gaps in research and scholarship; or a single problem or new perspective of immediate interest.
- Establish the writer's reason (point of view) for reviewing the literature; explain the criteria to be used in analyzing and comparing literature and the organization of the review (sequence); and, when necessary, state why certain literature is or is not included (scope).

**In the body** you should:

- Include group research studies and other types of literature (reviews, theoretical articles, case studies, etc.) according to common denominators such as genres,

qualitative versus quantitative approaches, conclusions of authors, specific purpose or objective, chronology, etc.

- Summarize individual studies, articles or films with as much or as little detail as each merit according to its comparative importance in the literature, remembering that space (length) denotes significance.
- Provide the reader with strong "umbrella" sentences at beginnings of paragraphs, "signposts" throughout, and brief "so what" summary sentences at intermediate points in the review to aid in understanding comparisons and analyses.

**In the conclusion**, you should:

- Summarize major contributions of significant studies, articles, films, videos and other media to the body of knowledge under review, maintaining the focus established in the introduction.
- Evaluate the current "state of the art" for the body of knowledge reviewed, pointing out major methodological flaws or gaps in research, inconsistencies in theory and findings, and areas or issues pertinent to future study.
- Conclude by providing some insight into the relationship between the central topic of the literature review and the particular area of study that constitutes your thesis/project and (possibly) the larger area of study that encompasses the discipline, profession, or knowledge base.

**Note: Even documentary film projects, comprehensive web designs, animation, and marketing projects require a literature review!**