

Thesis Timeline for MA Liberal Arts: American Studies, Film Studies, and Humanities Concentrations

Click [here](#) to download a PDF of the **Thesis Timeline**.

Step 1

Discuss your anticipated thesis topic with a faculty member who would be an appropriate major professor for the project. This should be someone with whom you have taken courses and who knows your work. If you are having trouble developing a topic or finding an appropriate major professor, discuss your thesis idea with the Graduate Advisor.

Choose a major professor who has graduate faculty status in HCS. In consultation with the major professor, select two additional HCS faculty members to serve on your thesis committee. (**NOTE:** It is possible to have a committee member from outside HCS. Consult your major professor and the Graduate Advisor to this end.) Discuss your thesis project with these additional faculty members and ask them if they are willing to serve on your committee.

Once three members agree to serve on your committee, **complete the [Graduate Thesis Committee Form](#)**, acquire faculty signatures, and submit it to the Graduate Advisor.

If you are a full-time student, Step 1 should be completed in your second semester.

Step 2

Write your thesis proposal in close consultation with your major professor. The Research Seminar, taken during the fall semester of your second year, provides a framework for writing this document. The proposal should contain the following: title page with signature and date lines for all committee members, statement of purpose, literature review, sources and methods, organization, and substantive working bibliography. Click [here](#) for a PDF of the **Thesis Proposal Guidelines**.

If you are a full-time student, begin work on your thesis proposal in the summer after your first year, registering for thesis hours with your major professor, as appropriate. You should plan to defend your thesis proposal early in the fall semester of your second year.

Step 3

After your thesis proposal has been approved by your major professor, he or she grants you permission to **schedule an oral defense of the thesis proposal**. Every effort should be made to ensure that all members of the committee are present at the thesis proposal defense. Committee members should be given at least one week to read the proposal in advance of the defense.

Because the thesis proposal defense serves as the required master's level comprehensive exam, you should be prepared to answer questions that assess your knowledge of the secondary sources in your thesis proposal bibliography.

Following a successful defense, your major professor and other committee members sign and date the title page of your thesis proposal. (Click [here](#) for a sample title page.) Submit this title page to the Graduate Advisor along with a copy of your proposal and the Graduate Thesis Committee Form (if not submitted previously). Your major professor submits the MA Proposal Defense Form.

NOTE: You are not permitted to apply for graduation or defend your thesis in the same semester that you defend your thesis proposal.

Step 4

Write the thesis with your major professor's guidance and regular input from your committee members. Typically, thesis projects are **40 to 80 pages long**. Keep the Graduate Advisor informed of your progress and share drafts of your thesis with the other members of your committee. (**NOTE:** While you are not required to meet with your committee members as regularly as your major professor, you must give them opportunities to read, comment, and make suggestions throughout the writing process.) Your final thesis draft must be acceptable to all committee members before you proceed to the thesis defense.

Click [here](#) for up-to-date information on deadlines, requirements, formatting, and more from the ETD Resource Center.

Step 5

During the semester you wish to graduate, you must register for at least 2 credit hours.

Be aware of the following deadlines:

- Deadline for applying to graduate (typically, late January or early February)
- Deadline for ETD Online Registration (typically, January)
- Latest possible dates for thesis defenses (typically, early March)
- Deadline for thesis submission to the Office of Graduate Studies (typically mid-March)

Consult the Graduate Advisor with any questions regarding these deadlines. Click [here](#) for a link to USF's Master's Thesis Process Checklist.

Step 6

When your major professor believes you are prepared to defend your thesis, he or she **arranges the oral defense**. **Share the final draft** of your thesis with your committee members at least one week prior to the defense. Defenses are open to the public and other faculty members and students are especially encouraged to attend.

The final thesis must include a title page with signature and date lines for your major professor and committee members. Bring the [Thesis Certificate of Approval Form](#) to your defense. Your major professor brings the Successful Defense Form and Graduate Assessment Form.

After a successful defense, give the Successful Defense Form to the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Assessment Form to the Graduate Coordinator. You are responsible for submitting the Thesis Certificate of Approval Form to the Office of Graduate Studies. You are also responsible for sending your major professor an electronic copy of your final thesis for the required plagiarism check.

To graduate in spring semester, you must defend your thesis in early March. If you wish to postpone graduation to the summer or fall term, consult with your major professor and the Graduate Advisor.