

English Honors Theses

English majors who are interested in developing their critical or creative writing are highly encouraged to write a senior honors thesis. Many students find that writing a thesis is their most rewarding and meaningful academic experience. We encourage all interested and qualified students to apply to the honors workshop. Interested students should be familiar with the requirements below and begin to think about possible topics during their junior year.

Eligibility

To be eligible to write a senior honors thesis, students must:

- have and maintain a 3.3 or greater GPA overall and in their English courses;
- have taken the Literary Theory course (EGL 302);
 - this course is only offered once a year during winter term
 - this course is designed to introduce students to critical approaches and questions they may use to write a thesis, whether scholarly or creative;
- submit a 3-page thesis proposal and writing sample piece to
by Friday of third week of Spring Term (information in addendum)

Note: Proposal submission is competitive and does not guarantee acceptance. A committee of English department faculty will review the proposals and contact accepted students by **Monday of seventh week** in time to register for fall.

Students interested in writing creative theses are highly encouraged to make the most of all of the Creative Writing workshops offered by the English Department prior to thesis work

Requirements for accepted thesis students

To prepare for writing a senior thesis, you must:

- begin your thesis research over the summer;
 - accepted students will be paired with a “Special Field Reader,” a faculty member whose specialty relates to your chosen topic/field
 - you must meet with your field reader by the end of spring term
 - special field readers will work with accepted students to develop a summer reading and research list to complete before the first day of fall term
- take the Senior Honors Seminars (EGL 402 and 403) your senior year;
 - this two-term course runs fall and winter term. It is designed to teach students how to research and write a thesis in a collaborative atmosphere
 - the instructor is the Director for all the honors theses
 - 402 and 403 constitute the 13th and 14th courses toward an English honors degree; they do not replace the 12-course requirements (including Senior Seminar-WS) for an English major
- Complete your thesis by the last week of winter term. Present it at STEINMETZ.

Completion of a thesis does not guarantee honors. In order to earn honors, college policy requires that students receive either an A or A- on their theses and maintain a 3.3 cumulative GPA overall and in their English courses. The director and special field readers determine the thesis grades.

Double-majors and Interdepartmental Majors

The above requirements apply to all students, including double majors and ID majors.

Guidelines for Writing Thesis Proposals

The key to writing a successful proposal is to begin by choosing a topic you find intellectually stimulating and engaging. This topic should not be chosen lightly, so begin thinking about possible topics in your junior year. Make sure to choose a manageable project: one that can be effectively researched and written in two terms. (Creative writing students should consider the genre in which they would like to work, central themes they would like to explore in their project, and what kinds of experiences they would expect to have as their focus.) Speak with faculty members about the topics that interest you most and ask for advice about texts that relate to those topics. Although it is not required, some students find it is helpful to read some secondary materials in their chosen field prior to writing the proposal. Students may wish to run a draft of their proposal by a faculty member for informal feedback before the final submission. Proposals may not be revised and resubmitted, so it's important to submit a strong proposal.

When writing **the 3-page thesis proposal**, students should:

- in the header, include your GPA overall and in your English courses;
- in the opening paragraph, define your anticipated thesis or position on this issue;
- define possible subtopics to be explored;
- list pertinent primary and secondary materials you have read and others you anticipate reading in the future;
- provide as much detail as possible about your project;

While creative writing students may not have a thesis statement, they should explain what they hope to do in their work, providing a proposed plot and set of characters for a dramatic piece or work of fiction or a range of subjects and formal considerations for poetry

Be absolutely sure to state clearly the central issue/topic you would like to investigate further

**Critical and creative projects should be accompanied by writing samples in the appropriate genre.

Example of a Critical Project—A proposed critical project on women in Jane Austen novels is too vague. A stronger proposal will choose a specific topic and texts, such as examining marriage in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. Define possible subtopics you might use to explore this issue (marriage, women's roles and family life in early 19th-century England, etc.). List materials you have already read and/or anticipate reading.

Most importantly, define your anticipated thesis/position on this issue. We recognize that this is a preliminary position and may well be revised once you begin writing your honors thesis.

Example of a Creative Project—A proposed short story cycle on rock music is too vague. A stronger proposal will describe a few key characters and elements of the rock environment you wish to investigate further. Define possible subtopics you might use as you consider the characters and their setting (influence of music on culture, relationship between rock music and violence, dialogue of expectations between fans and performers, etc.). List materials (CDs, videos, musicians' autobiographies, music reviews, etc.) you have already read and/or anticipate reading, and provide a list of works that will serve as models of style or approach. (If your subject is not one requiring outside research, then your list will draw on the available range of work that you will read in order to broaden your sense of what is possible in the genre.) You should indicate a sense of the style you would expect to use in dealing with your material; although, this may change as your thesis develops.

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Addendum:

Spring 2026 deadline is Friday, 17th April by 5pm

Submit proposals as a MS-Word attachment to an email sent to englishchair@union.edu.

Acceptances or rejections will be communicated on or before **May 12th**

Note: Although you are encouraged to confer with English faculty about your proposed project, conferring does not guarantee that you will work with a specific professor. Assignments of special field directors depend on many factors, including faculty availability and distribution of work.

