

Instructions for writing a Research Thesis Proposal

Modern Languages and Literatures: Spanish

Once a student has been given permission to undertake this project, the process of writing a Masters Thesis begins with the Research Thesis Proposal. Ideally, the proposal will be approved by the end of the first year of fulltime study. The proposal should follow MLA style guidelines, be no longer than two double-spaced pages, include the appropriate scholarly or professional sources for the ideas, questions and background information provided, and should include the following sections:

- Thesis Statement
- Research Methods and Initial Outline
- Conclusion
- Bibliography

Thesis Statement

The basic function of this section is to articulate a topic a student proposes to explore (i.e. a social event, process, a literary work or works, film, an intellectual idea), and the questions, issues or problems related to that topic the student plans to address in the thesis. The core of the statement may take the form of a hypothesis the student will approach, of a proposition or argument the student intends to support, or of a problem or question the student wants to address. This section places the thesis topic in a larger context by explaining its historical origins (where did it come from?) and its intellectual, social, and / or artistic context (what conversation, debate, or line of inquiry does it participate in?). It also describes the sub-questions or themes that relate to the topic.

Research Methods and Initial Outline

In this section, the student will identify (a) the primary resources needed to explore the topic mentioned in the thesis statement, (b) the methods – such as literary analysis, archival research, interviews, data collection – the student will use to gather information, and (c) the strategies by which the student will organize and analyze the information in such a way as to construct a sound argument and to reach and support a conclusion.

Here a brief and initial outline of the thesis will be helpful. Given the 80–100 page range of the Masters Thesis, students should consider dividing their topic into three or four chapters. The main purpose of this section is for the student to demonstrate that she or he knows how to proceed in addressing the thesis topic in a focused approach. The chapters divisions ought to exemplify how the student wishes to narrow the focus of her or his topic.

Conclusion

Here the student should indicate why he or she is interested in the topic at hand or why this study is important, and how it will contribute to the study of literature, film or culture in greater field of Hispanic Studies. This section should summarize what the student hopes to show in his or her research project.

Bibliography

Please include a short list of five to ten primary and secondary sources that will comprise the initial research of this research project.

Please note: all Research Thesis Proposals are subject to approval by the faculty member directing the thesis, any readers on the thesis committee, and the Graduate Program Director.