

MFA WRITING
THESIS HANDBOOK
2024-2025

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction.....</u>	2
<u>Structure of the Thesis Committee.....</u>	2
<u>Role of the Thesis Director.....</u>	2
<u>Role of the Thesis Reader.....</u>	3
<u>Fall Gateway Presentations....</u>	4
<u>The Thesis Proposal.....</u>	4
<u>Structure of the Review Meetings.....</u>	4
<u>Additional Information.....</u>	4

INTRODUCTION

The Thesis Project required is the capstone of every student's coursework in the MFA program. As the culmination of their four semesters at CCA, the project should demonstrate excellence in writing in one or more of the following genres: nonfiction, poetry, and fiction. Hybrid and multi-genre projects are also acceptable with approval of your Thesis Director.

While the Master's Thesis is yours to conceive, craft, and complete, it must be created in consultation with your primary Thesis Director as well as your Thesis Reader. These mentors oversee the development of your thesis project and serve as members of your degree advancement committee.

Because the field of creative writing is inherently interdisciplinary, we welcome proposals for thesis projects that are innovative in both form and content. Still, the form your project takes must be conceptually sound and must be approved by your thesis committee. The thesis should demonstrate responsible, careful revision representative of graduate-level work and a command of writing forms and craft.

Theses will consist of work generated in MFA workshops and seminars and revised over time to reflect students' strongest work; additional work may be included under the direction of your Thesis Director and Reader.

The Thesis Gateway in the Fall of Year 2 will help students focus their creative visions, articulate their intentions, and identify craft skills they'll need to strengthen as they work toward their completion.

We require that your project be about 100 pages of text for prose and 40 pages of text for poetry. This is exclusive of bibliography and annotations. You will determine the actual length in conversation with your Thesis Director. This is not a time to create a book. This is a draft of pages that may ultimately become a book.

In mid-Fall, you will turn in your final thesis proposal to your committee and the Program Chair. In the Spring semester of Year 2, you will have two meetings with your Thesis Director and Reader. In addition, each graduating student turns in two bound copies of the thesis to fulfill the requirements of the MFA degree.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE

Students will begin a critical dialogue about their work with their Thesis Director at the end of the Spring semester of Year 1. At this time the Thesis Director also collaborates with the student's Thesis Reader to create a student-centered framework for writing over the summer.

Students will meet with the Thesis Director at least once before (but close to the end of) Year 1. These meetings may take place in person OR by phone/Zoom; whatever the format, they are mandatory. The Thesis Director then works with the student to create a detailed plan for

summer research and writing; this plan includes a list of primary and secondary readings to support the Thesis.

Role of the Thesis Director

The Thesis Director serves as the primary reader and editor of your Thesis.

The Thesis Director runs formal meetings throughout the Thesis Year. The Thesis Director convenes and manages the Gateway Presentation, Candidacy Review and the final Thesis Review. The Thesis Reader will be in attendance at these meetings provide further insight and support. Primary guidance on aesthetic and pragmatic edits are provided by the Thesis Director.

Students may ask to meet with their Thesis Directors outside of the formal meetings; these meetings are subject to the Directors' availability.

The Thesis Director will offer reading recommendations, as well as strategies for writing, researching, and organizing the Thesis. They will help students articulate their ideas and refine their project. They will give both written and verbal responses one-on-one to the student. They will also let students know when their theses are or are not meeting expectations and how the writing may be improved.

In this way, they guide the student to be a stronger writer and critical thinker on and off the page while also guiding their MFA Writing candidacy.

It is important for Thesis Directors to be in touch with the Thesis Reader about the student's work. The Thesis Director is the person students go to first with all thesis-related issues.

In summary, the Thesis Director's main responsibilities are:

1. Thesis management - helping students stay on track
2. Revision support and techniques
3. Leading students towards resources
4. Teaching critical thinking and writing
5. Conveying the expectations for an MFA thesis (every academic program differs in terms of these expectations) and upholding general academic standards
6. Reviewing preparation (both Candidacy and Final Review)
7. Keeping students apprised of their progress and the status of their projects throughout the Fall and Spring semesters
8. Writing up and communicating committee comments and recommendations made in Candidacy and Final Reviews and conveying these to students
9. Leading the Candidacy and Final Review meetings

Role of the Thesis Reader

Both Thesis Committee members are drawn from MFA Writing faculty; however, students can request Thesis Readers from other programs who have expertise on their subject or genre. This request must be approved by the Program Chair.

The Thesis Reader will attend the Fall Gateway Presentations (September) and the Candidacy Review and Final Review in the Spring.

Students can ask to meet with their Thesis Readers outside of the formal meetings; these meetings are subject to the Readers' availability.

The Thesis Reader plays a secondary role to the Thesis Director in the review meetings.

Fall Gateway Presentations

September 16-20, 2024: Students will formally present the work they've accomplished over the summer to their committee members at a mutually agreed upon time sometime this week. If the student wishes, other members of the MFA community (Program Chair, other MFAW Faculty, and current students) may attend and observe. These presentations will ideally occur in person and on campus, though specific circumstances may allow for Zoom meetings, and should run about 45 minutes-1 hour.

The primary goal of this presentation is to structure and articulate goals for the Thesis. Students are invited to think of these presentations as opportunities to talk to a group of smart, engaged colleagues. It's not a test or exam, but rather a conversation led by the students. The conversation will help shape and guide the students in writing their thesis proposals.

The Thesis Proposal

- Page One is a brief summary of the Thesis, including genre, thematic concerns, and the projected length of the project.
- Page Two is the Candidate's personal statement, which situates the Thesis within their overarching literary goals and broader personal/cultural/political frameworks. This statement should also outline the scope and intent of the Thesis project; highlight influences; and summarize approaches.
- Page Three is a short annotated bibliography; annotations may be narrative, briefly noting how each resource relates to the Thesis.

Due Sep. 23.

The Proposal is submitted to the Thesis Committee for review and also to the Chair who will keep a record of it on file. The Thesis Director comments on the document (via email), consulting the

Reader as needed and requesting changes be made and a second proposal be submitted in November. If the Director feels the proposal is fine as is, there's no need for this additional step.

If the Thesis Director requests a revision to the Thesis Proposal, they are due by **Oct.8.--**

Structure of the Review Meetings

Two formal one-hour meetings take place between the student and their thesis committees during Year 2 Spring. These occur in late February and late April-early May.

The first meeting is the Candidacy Review. During this meeting, the Thesis Director and Reader provide in-depth verbal feedback and recommendations for how to improve upon the first draft of the thesis manuscript. Time should be allocated for students to ask questions of their committee at the end of the meeting. **Week of February 24-28.**

If the Thesis Committee decides that the Thesis falls short of the requirements, the Candidate will be told in advance of the Final Review.

Final Thesis Submission Deadline: April 14, 2024.

During the Final Review, the Committee reflects on how the student has fulfilled the requirements to complete the Thesis project, including ways the student has incorporated changes and suggestions made by the Committee during the Candidacy Review. They may also discuss how the Thesis might be refined after the student's graduation. Committee members provide 1-2 pages of written feedback. **Week of April 28-May 2.**

****Due to the formality of this process, all meetings are held on CCA's campuses during regular business hours. If students would like to record their meetings, they need to discuss and clear this with their Thesis Director in advance. (Recording the meetings is highly recommended.)**

Additional Information:

1. While some Committee Members may offer line-edits of the Thesis, ensuring the Thesis is free of misspellings, grammatical errors, and the like is the Candidate's responsibility. Many students hire (for a fee) a copy editor or proofreader before submitting their final Thesis. (This expense is normal for graduate students in the humanities, and comparable to material expenses students incur in other MFA programs.)

2. Students and Committee Members are expected to note and understand the year's deadlines for the Master of Fine Arts in Writing Thesis Handbook.

3. **Submission:** You will need to [digitally submit one PDF copy of your Thesis to the library via](#)

VAULT. You must do this to complete your degree.