

## GUIDELINES for ACADEMIC THESIS PROJECTS

**Prerequisites:** Script Analysis; Dramaturgy I and II; Either one semester of Vision and Form, or Gender, Politics, and Performance.

**The Academic Thesis:** Your aim with the Academic Thesis is to master a body of reading and research on a subject through written and oral expression. Your study should focus on the important body of work of a major playwright, director, designer, theoretician, style, genre, or theoretical lens. You may propose another area of focus, though acceptance cannot be guaranteed. **Through this project, you are to arrive at an original vision of your chosen subject.**

### **Timetable**

- Candidates should initiate projects by **contacting the Graduate Thesis Director** to discuss their interest and the scope of their project.
- Following this initial step, candidates will be assigned an **Academic Thesis advisor** in order to further discuss the project and outline their Academic Thesis Proposal.
- Under the guidance of the advisor, the candidate should develop a **written proposal**, including a preliminary bibliography. Most likely, this proposal will go through two or three revisions before can be considered by the full faculty.
- The proposal should be submitted to the faculty at least **one week before the faculty meeting at which it will be discussed**. \*\*Revisions may be requested by the faculty prior to project approval, and proposals are sometimes not approved.
- Once approved, the candidate will be invited to **request a committee**. In addition to the advisor, the committee is composed of two others, who are usually members of the Villanova theatre faculty. Students should not personally invite faculty members onto their committees.
- The candidate and the faculty advisor establish the **timeline** for the development of the research and writing of the project, which includes at least two drafts with notes and revisions. The final paper should be 6000-9000 words (see more below under Thesis).
- When the faculty advisor determines that the research project and paper are ready to be seen by the student's Project Committee, it will be **distributed at least one week prior to the Thesis Project Defense**.
- The student will provide copies of any necessary texts to committee members.
- The student will meet with the committee to discuss the work completed and the potential future development of the project. The student will be asked to lead off this discussion with a **20-minute presentation of the Thesis and research**. Following the entire discussion (approximately 80-90 minutes), the committee will announce its decision.

**Proposal:** The proposal should be an organized plan for your research and will allow the faculty to evaluate the project and make helpful suggestions at a relatively early stage of development. Most importantly, you must include the **exact statement of the**

**question/problem** that you plan to investigate. Please divide the Proposal into three sections, utilizing headings that correspond to the following guide:

### **Heading 1: Introduction to the Academic Thesis**

- Broad view:
  - Why an Academic Thesis?
  - How might an Academic Thesis challenge you? help you grow?
  - How might an Academic Thesis complete your work at Villanova?
- Specific overview:
  - How might your proposed project/area of study challenge you? help you grow?
    - Be as SPECIFIC as possible when discussing any issues or opportunities; including past feedback you have received and thoughts on how you would like to work toward growth.
    - What is your plan for tackling your project?
  - How might your proposed project be the culmination of your course of study here?
    - What course work has prepared you to tackle an Academic Thesis? (Please consider *all* courses.)
    - How do you plan to implement your broader learning/experience at Villanova in your proposed capstone project? Be SPECIFIC.
  - Situate your exploration of this topic – consider plays, genre, and style. Do you have experience with aspects of the topic? What opportunities/challenges are available?
  - What research/reading have you done (ever) that prepares you to take on your proposed project?

### **Heading 2: The Project Proposal (Label all headings below)**

- **Introduction:** Orient the reader to the general state of knowledge in the field and the Title of your project.
- **Review of the Literature:** Provide an overview of the material already published in your area of research. Suggest the kinds of materials available and indicate your familiarity with them and their relevance to your specific area of inquiry.
- **Justification:** Point to the need for knowledge or deficiencies in previous research (in materials, procedures, etc.), the next logical step that justifies your project.
- **Exact statement of the question/problem:** While you may not have answers at this point, you must define, limit, and circumscribe as much as possible the precise nature and scope of the project. This will become the root of your thesis in the final presentation.
- **Method:** Describe the kind of study to be undertaken (comparative, theoretical, historical, etc.) and the procedures to be used in gathering and analyzing the data.
- **Bibliography:** Correctly formatted and organized for maximum usefulness. Identify primary and secondary sources, books/articles, etc. PLEASE be wary of relying on website or web-only sources. Your project must include primary texts.

### **Heading 3: Personal Goals**

- Consider personal and external obstacles and challenges to completing the project
- Please create a "hierarchy of priorities" to achieve within the project resulting in three **clearly articulated, specific, measurable goals**.

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**Thesis Budget Proposal:** A budget of up to \$50 can be approved for an Academic Thesis Project. A Budget Proposal template can be found at the end of this document. This Budget Proposal should be submitted along with your Thesis Proposal for approval. The budget will be finalized when your thesis project is approved for defense.

**Thesis:** The goal of an academic thesis project is to produce a final paper that could be submitted to an academic journal. As stated above, your paper should be 6,000 – 9,000 words long. A strong academic thesis will contain:

- A clear, creative, and defensible **thesis statement**.
- An identifiable **methodology** that is not only stated, but also utilized throughout.
- A review of literature translated into a narrative form, culminating in your stated **contribution to the field**.
- Continuous **evidentiary support from primary and secondary sources**, complete with properly formatted Chicago **citations**.
- Strong academic writing throughout.
- A properly formatted **bibliography in Chicago style**, organized alphabetically by author's last name.

**Thesis Project Defense:** In the Thesis Project Defense portion of the project, you will meet with your committee to discuss the work completed and the potential future development of the project. You will lead off this discussion with a **20-minute presentation in which you define a thesis about your person or subject and give evidence from your research to substantiate the thesis**. You must demonstrate an ability to work your way through the crucial analyses, including the most recent published works, of your person or subject.

To do well in the defense, you need to feel at home with:

- All the major works and some minor works of your person or subject, to convey the scope of the contribution made.
- The fundamental biographical or historical facts of your person or subject.
- The milieu of the period, including other plays or theatrical productions that had an influence on, or were influenced by, your person or subject.

Other advice:

- Be clear as to what extent the thesis is of your own devising and to what extent it is a distillation of theatre criticism or scholarship you have read. Cite the theoreticians and historians whose work you are utilizing.

The Academic Thesis is your discourse on a body of material. It is also evidence that you can be taken seriously as an informed and articulate theatre person capable of discrimination and elucidation. The idea is that, through the Academic Thesis, you may become a master of your area of concentration.

