

Department of English
University of Manitoba
Graduate Program

Guidelines for Writing an M.A. Thesis Proposal

Formulate your thesis as a proposition that you wish to advance and prove by means of demonstration and argument. To examine, to survey, to discuss, to explain, to interpret, or to illustrate may be methods you wish to employ in your argument but in themselves they do not constitute a thesis statement. Your proposal should serve as a hypothesis that will guide you in your research. It will state your conclusions in a necessarily tentative yet nevertheless positive manner.

In 300-500 words your proposal should contain the following information:

- 1) a condensed statement of the thesis—the central argument and its range in literary works and in critical concerns;
- 2) the critical context—how the argument relates to other criticism in the same field; and
- 3) the critical method and organization.

The style should be succinct, clear, and coherent. Let the form of your sentences and organization of your paragraphs indicate the emphasis of your argument. Avoid wordiness, excessive use of adjectives and adverbs, the passive voice, and such self-reflective expressions as “I intend to show that” (which may be readily assumed). Because your audience will be reasonably well informed, you need not include any general information or remarks on obvious matters.

In sum, observe the principles of good writing and good sense. Use your proposal to establish a goal and a framework for your thesis. A strong proposal can best lead to a significant thesis.