

Monmouth University  
Department of English  
Master of Arts in English

## **CREATIVE WRITING: INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE THESIS SEMINAR**

### **General Information**

The M.F.A. Creative Thesis constitutes the capstone to the student's work in the English M.F.A. program, and should represent the student's strongest creative works. Following successful completion of the M.A. in English, M.F.A. candidates will enroll in the two-semester EN 655 A-B: M.F.A. Creative Thesis Seminar.

The M.F.A. Thesis should extend and deepen both thematically and stylistically the creative work written in previous M.A.-level courses and in the M.A. Creative Manuscript, through intensive revision of that work and through the writing of new work, such that it can be used as a writing sample in a student's application for subsequent graduate study (Ph.D.) or form the basis of a book-length work.

The Thesis must be accompanied by a critical paper of ten to fifteen pages, analyzing comparable texts that exemplify the literary tradition from which their thesis springs. This paper may discuss the influence of analyzed works on the thesis, but will focus on a discussion of the craft evident in the creative works discussed.

The Thesis will be written under the supervision of a First Reader with additional guidance from a Second Reader. The First Reader must be a member of the M.F.A. faculty. The Second Reader must be a member of the Creative Writing faculty. During the semester before the student wishes to begin Creative Thesis Seminar, the student must identify the First and Second Readers, consult with the M.F.A. Program Director about the intent to begin, and with the First and Second Readers set out the direction and scope of the Thesis.

Before registering for Creative Thesis Seminar, the student must submit three items to the First Reader:

- 500-word thesis proposal describing the project's nature, aesthetic approach, genre of focus, and goals
- Abstract of critical paper
- Syllabus that follows the guidelines posted on our M.F.A. Creative Thesis Guidelines webpage.

During the two semesters of Thesis Seminar, the student will submit previously written creative work as well as new creative work to the First Reader and will substantially revise that work in consultation with the First Reader on a bi-weekly basis. The candidate and Readers will develop a schedule for submission of drafts. A complete draft of the complete Thesis and critical paper should be submitted no later than the eleventh week of the second thesis semester to the First and Second Reader to allow feedback with time for revision before final grading. The first reader will

provide regular oral and written feedback on the written work in conjunction with the meetings during both semesters. Two meetings with the Second Reader, one during the first semester, one near the end of the second semester, are the norm. As with the First Reader, oral or written feedback on drafts is expected.

### **Thesis Length**

The length of a prose thesis must be between 80 and 200 pages, exclusive of critical paper, table of contents, acknowledgments, notes, or similar materials. The length of a poetry thesis must be a minimum of 40 pages and can be as long as the length of a full poetry collection. If your thesis is longer than these guidelines, you must obtain permission from your First Reader. You may be permitted to submit a book-length work, or you may be asked to make a selection that meets the page guidelines.

The length of the critical paper must be ten to fifteen pages, exclusive of title page, bibliography, or other materials. A standard bibliography should be included and an annotated bibliography is not required.

At the end of the first thesis semester, the work must be approved by the First Reader as consisting of Master's level creative work and on course to meet the established guidelines for the Creative Thesis. At the end of the second thesis semester, if a Thesis is exceptional, the First Reader may recommend awarding distinction. Completed Theses will be presented as part of the student-run Graduate Symposium and the Graduate Thesis Reading.

Once the Thesis and critical paper have been judged as satisfactory by both readers, the student must submit a revised version of the Creative Thesis in digital form as well as in hard copy. Two bound copies of the Thesis will be produced: one will be archived in the Monmouth University Library and one in the English Department. Students whose Theses are awarded Distinction may give permission for their work to be digitally archived.

Prerequisites: Completion of English M.A., 39 credits of graduate English coursework, and a minimum GPA of 3.00.

For additional information, please consult Professor Alex Gilvarry, M.F.A. Program Director, at [agilvarr@monmouth.edu](mailto:agilvarr@monmouth.edu).

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