

Monmouth University  
Department of English  
Master of Arts in English

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR NON-THESIS OPTION: ALTERNATIVE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE FOR LITERATURE AND RHETORIC CONCENTRATIONS**

### **General Information**

The MA Thesis is the standard capstone to the student's academic work in the English MA program, and it should represent the student's strongest scholarly and critical work. However, for some students an alternative to the thesis is an appropriate choice. The Master's Essay option in the Literature and Rhetoric and Writing concentrations is available for students who do not seek the independence or specialized study of thesis work or whose career plans do not require the levels of independent research demanded by thesis work. Students who aim to present their scholarship at conferences or hope to publish it in journals or who anticipate applying to more advanced graduate programs after the MA at Monmouth should not pursue the Master's Essay option. The Graduate Program Director and Graduate faculty advisors are your guides about whether or not you should pursue the Thesis or Essay options. Please meet with these advisors before signing up for either EN691: Thesis Development (3 credits) or EN-ESS: Masters Essay (0 credits).

The Master's Essay option consists of 1) satisfactory completion of two additional program courses (6 elective credits) and 2) submission of an appropriately revised and expanded paper previously submitted for a program course, hereafter termed the Master's Essay (no additional credits granted). The Master's Essay's overall quality and length is more than a course paper but less than a thesis. It should aim to be a document of discovery and originality. The total number of credits to graduate with an MA is the same as the Thesis option: 30.

### **Additional Coursework for the Essay Option**

Students who select the Master's Essay option will need to register for two additional graduate EN electives (total 6 credits). For Literature Concentration students, one of the two electives must be coded an LT (Literature) course. For Rhetoric and Writing Concentration students, one of the two electives must be coded an RW (Rhetoric and Writing) course. These two courses replace EN 691: Thesis Development and EN 692: Thesis Writing. Curriculum charts prepared by the Registrar clearly map out the sequence and requirements for both Thesis and Master's Essay options.

### **Registering for and Writing the Master's Essay**

The Master's Essay, EN-ESS, is a zero-credit, pass/fail requirement of the Master's Essay curriculum. Students who wish to begin EN-ESS must have completed 21 credits in the Program and have a minimum gpa of 3.0. To register for the course, the Graduate English Director

initiates an eform to enroll students in the Master's Essay (EN-ESS). This enrollment essentially declares the student's intention to pursue the Essay option alternative capstone experience.

The Master's Essay should be an extension of a researched paper completed in a previous MA-level course. It will be written with the agreement and under the supervision of a full-time faculty member in the Monmouth University English Department. This supervisor is called the Faculty Essay Advisor. Normally, the Faculty Essay Advisor will be the professor from the previous MA-level course who assigned the research paper chosen for expansion into a Master's Essay. In the final weeks of the semester **before** the student wishes to begin the Master's Essay, the student should approach the intended Faculty Essay Advisor, win their agreement to supervise the Essay to completion, and consult with the Graduate Program Director about the intent to begin work on the Master's Essay. Students who are not certain about what previous paper to expand into a Master's Essay should consult with the Graduate Program Director and one or more faculty members.

The completed Master's Essay should be a minimum of 6,400 words long (20-25 pages), exclusive of endnotes, works cited, bibliography, illustrations, or similar materials. The Essay should not normally exceed 30 pages. The work of expanding a previous course paper into a Master's Essay will be done with strategic support of the Faculty Essay Advisor in face-to-face meetings held at key moments of the semester (i.e. beginning, middle, before submission of final draft). Written feedback on rough drafts is provided at least twice during the semester. Master's Essay students will be expected to revise and expand with the assistance of appropriate tutors in the Writing Services during weeks they are not seeing their Faculty Essay Advisor.

The Master's Essay should be completed during the student's final semester or penultimate semester in the Program. A final draft is due to the Faculty Essay Advisor in week 12 of the semester. The Faculty Advisor will consult with the Graduate Program Director to determine a Pass or Fail grade. The Graduate English Director submits EN ESS grades, which completes the EN-ESS zero-credit course. Non-completion of the course earns a fail grade and retake. If a Master's Essay student needs to complete the Master's Essay without concurrent enrollment in program courses, he/she will still need to maintain matriculation. It is possible, if the Faculty Essay Advisor and Graduate Director are available, for Master's Essays to be completed during summer term.

For additional information, please consult Dr. Kristin Bluemel, Graduate Program Director, at (732) 571-3622 or [kbluemel@monmouth.edu](mailto:kbluemel@monmouth.edu).

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