

Guidelines for the Two-Term and One-Term Thesis in Literary Studies or Literature & Film

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Should I write a senior thesis?

A. The Senior Thesis is a highly fulfilling experience, a chance to write on your own ideas at length, and an important indication of your ability to do graduate work. If you plan on going to graduate school, you should certainly do a thesis. But even if you don't know what you want after College, a Senior Thesis can be the most significant experience of your College education, one you will always remember.

Q. Do I need to have a minimum GPA to write a literary studies thesis?

A. No. Anyone who wants to write a one-semester or a two-semester thesis may do so.

Q. How does the senior thesis qualify for fulfilling the requirement of a Senior Project?

A. Either the one-semester or the two-semester thesis can fulfill the requirement of a senior project. You can also fulfill the requirement of a senior project by successfully completing a seminar specifically designated as "senior seminar." But if you do only a senior seminar, you will not qualify for honors in the major, regardless of your GPA in the major.

Q. Must I write a thesis to be qualified for consideration for Honors in English?

A. Yes. If you wish to qualify to be considered for Honors in the English major, you must earn a GPA of at least A- in the major and choose a Senior Honors Project consisting of either a two-term thesis or a senior seminar + a one-term thesis. Both grades you receive on your Honors Project will be counted toward your cumulative GPA in the major.

Q. How long should the one-term and two term-theses be? What do they look like?

A. The one-term thesis will be a minimum of thirty (30) pages, and the two-term thesis will be a minimum of sixty (60) pages. But there are lots of variations in length, form and content of senior theses. Whether they are one- or two-terms long, senior theses usually consist of

1. an Introduction, stating your questions, ideas, and methods
2. multiple Chapters analyzing literary works, each roughly the length of a long essay (commonly 2 in a one-semester thesis and 3 in a two-semester thesis)
3. a Conclusion suggesting further thoughts, areas for study, or questions
4. a Bibliography of the primary and secondary sources that you used.
Recent Senior Thesis topics include "Apocalyptic Tropes in Langland and Blake"; "Misreading the Social Text in Jane Austen's Novels"; "Metaphysical Contradictions in Marvell's Love Poems"; "Power, Class, and Art in John Fowles' Fiction." The department keeps copies of recent theses for your perusal.

The Process of Writing a Literary Studies Thesis in English A Step-by-Step Outline of How to Write the Thesis

1. Choosing a topic:
The Thesis is your project, and should embody your interests. Ask yourself what literary works or authors you have particularly enjoyed reading and writing about at Trinity. What English courses did you especially enjoy? Have you written on any topics to which you would like to return? These are the best sources for you to find a good topic, although you can also choose to work on a new subject, text, question or author you wish to study. Ask for a copy of the English Department's List of Past Senior Thesis Topics for inspiration. If you wish to write a thesis but can't isolate a topic, author, theme or subject that interests you, have a talk with your Academic Advisor, the Departmental Chair, or a Professor in the Department whose courses you found especially interesting. We are all here to help you.
2. Declaration of Intention:
By February 15 of the junior year, students intending to write senior theses need to submit to the

Chair of the Thesis Committee (Katherine.Bergren@trincoll.edu) a Declaration of Intention to write a one- or two-semester thesis. You need to specify which type of thesis (one- or two-semester) you plan to write, and, for the one-semester thesis, to specify which semester you will be doing it.

It is important to note that this and the following deadlines are applicable to all students, even those planning to write a thesis in the spring semester of their senior year.

3. Finding a Thesis Advisor:

As you write your thesis, you will be meeting regularly with a Thesis Advisor, who will read your work in progress, and help you to develop, revise, and polish your project. No later than March of your junior year you should choose a general area or subject, and make an appointment with the Professor who teaches that subject to discuss the thesis. If you don't know whom to ask, ask your Academic Advisor or the Departmental Chair to recommend someone best suited to help you in this capacity.

4. Thesis Proposal:

By April 1 of junior year, a student must hand to the Chair of the Thesis Committee (Katherine.Bergren@trincoll.edu) a 5-page Thesis Proposal along with a bibliography and Special Registration Form. Students will be notified by the end of the spring semester of their standing. If the proposal meets the approval of the Thesis Committee, the chair will sign off on the "Special Registration Form" that the student then turns in to the Registrar in order to be enrolled in either ENGL 498 (part I of 2-semester thesis/Colloquium) or ENGL 497 (one-semester thesis). See below on this webpage for the [Thesis Proposal Form for Juniors](#).

5. Registering for the Senior Thesis:

For the two-term thesis:

Fall term enrollment in ENGL 498, the Thesis Colloquium, is required for students who plan to write a two-semester thesis. Permission to register for ENGL 498 is contingent upon the approval of your preliminary proposal by the Thesis Committee. You will hand in to the Registrar a "Special Registration Form/ENGL 498" signed by the chairperson of the department (see above). You will also need, in your second semester senior year, to fill out a "Special Registration Form" for ENGL 499 --also to be signed by the department chair. Any questions about the mechanics of registration should be directed to Katherine.Bergren@trincoll.edu.

For a two-term thesis, you will get an interim grade (IP = "in progress") for the Colloquium, and a final grade in the spring (which will also convert your Colloquium grade to a letter grade). So you get a year-long grade for the Colloquium and the Senior Thesis.

For the one-term thesis:

For the one-term thesis English 497, you do not have to take the fall semester Senior Thesis Colloquium. If you are doing a Senior Honors Project, you will write your one-term thesis during Fall 2019 and take the senior seminar in Spring 2020. Permission to register for ENGL 497 is contingent upon the approval of your preliminary proposal by the Thesis Committee. You will hand in to the Registrar a "Special Registration Form/ENGL 497" signed by the chairperson of the department (see above).

6. The Final Product:

Your finished Thesis will probably include a Title page, a page of Acknowledgments, a Contents page, your Chapters, Notes, and Bibliography. You may examine Past Senior Theses in the English Department for an idea of how a completed Thesis looks. See also the Department's [handout on preparing your thesis](#). One-term theses are due on first day of finals (both semesters), and two-term theses are due on April 15.

7. Grading the Thesis

When you complete your thesis (one or two semester), the department will assign two readers from among the English faculty, who will be responsible for reading and grading your work. For the guidelines we follow when assessing grades, please see "[Grading Expectations](#)."