

**Thesis Prospectus  
Cover Sheet**

**Instructions:**

Complete and submit this form with supporting materials to the Coordinator of the MA Program in English by the end of the semester *preceding* the semester during which you plan to write your thesis (e.g. if you plan to write your thesis during the spring semester, the signed form should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator no later than the final day of the fall semester).

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

C# \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Admission to the Program: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please attach a 250-500-word description of the project that you are proposing, along with a preliminary bibliography. See attached guidelines.

**Approval**

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Reader's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary Reader's Signature  
(optional)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
MA Coordinator's Signature

## Thesis Prospectus Guidelines:

The prospectus should include the following elements:

1. **A statement of the Problem and Background.** Briefly explain the current state of research on the problem you are exploring.
  2. **A clear statement of Purpose.** What is it you hope to argue?
  3. **Contribution and Originality.** How is your study contributing to the scholarly body of work? The thesis should not be a regurgitation of established ideas, but rather a furthering of thought on the topic.
  4. **Bibliography.** A list of the most important primary and secondary sources relevant to your study.
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### Picking a Topic

Of course, every research paper has a topic, or at least an area of inquiry. You may not know exactly what your thesis will be (and why should you, this early in the game?), but you know what you are interested in. Remember what it was that attracted you to graduate study in the first place? (medieval drama? The novels of Virginia Woolf? American naturalism?). If you are feeling a bit unsure about what direction you should take, it may be helpful to let your natural curiosity guide you deeper into the project. To help clarify your thinking, you might also:

- Make a list of the texts, authors, or subjects that you are drawn to and then write a few sentences (or paragraphs) about each one and try to define the reason for your interest.
- Talk with faculty and other grad students who are working in areas that are of interest to you and bounce some of your ideas off of them.
- Set aside a couple of hours for each item on your list and do some research on each using the MLA database. This exercise should give you a better idea of the work that is already being done.
- Once you have a few ideas about where you want to go with the project, meet with your advisor or primary reader to discuss narrowing and refining the project.