

Honors Program, Thesis Course 399 Spring Semester, 2016

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Office Hours: (tentative) Thesis ONLY (meaning, you don't compete with students from other courses!) **Wednesdays 1-2:15**

Additional Office Hours (always welcome) on Mondays and Wednesdays 11am-1pm

****I STRESS THAT IF YOU CANNOT MAKE REGULAR OFFICE HOURS, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to send me an email with five possible times you can meet at least 48 hours in advance!**

Mandatory Meetings for Fall Semester:

January 29th, 4pm, O'Connell 237 (we will decide on the TIME of the meetings below together, as well as place...)

February 12th

March 4th

April 1st

April 22nd

May 6th

FINAL THESIS PRESENTATIONS: May 11th, 4pm-6pm MUST BE PRESENT!!!!!!!!!!

THESIS DINNER PARTY AT HEATHER'S on MAY 12th, 6:30 pm

REQUIRED TEXT: How to Write a Thesis by Umberto Eco (please purchase ASAP)

Greetings, and welcome to our Final Thesis course! You've worked hard to get here, and it is exciting to be able to share the ideas, experiences, research, and imaginative work that will carry you up and out of the University in the next year or so.

Your THESIS will be an exciting, imaginative, in-depth, interdisciplinary investigation into a subject or subjects that fascinate and sustain you. It will be an integrated compendium of research; readings, ideas, and potentially first-hand fieldwork (required if you are working on a year-long thesis). While length is somewhat subjective, the general requirement will be a **30-40 pages for year-long theses and 22-25 pages for a semester-long thesis**. The thesis should clearly demonstrate your academic and intellectual curiosity with equal measures of rigor and creativity. It will provide clear and fascinating insight, as well as elaborating on, the work you have done while at Chico State that has been most memorable and interesting

to you. You will want a project that moves you, and moves us, your readers, that is divergent in approach, engaging in delivery. Make us think. Let us see your expertise and extraordinary mind. By the time you reach the final draft in Spring, you will feel like a genuine expert, one who has an well-rounded, interdisciplinary approach to a question of intrigue. Each sentence of the final product will be the most beautiful one you possibly could write. Think of the thesis as a part of making the transition being a lone college student to conceptualizing yourself as a member of a community of writers, artists, scientists, philosophers, activists.

The Thesis Course is 3 units per semester. As the CSU catalog stipulates, “For all CSU degree programs and courses bearing academic credit, the “credit hour” is defined as ... [o]ne hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week...” This means that the expectation, in terms of hours, would be broken down approximately as follows:

2.5 hours “class” time per week (independently conducted for the most part)
5 hours of homework time (again, independently conducted)
= 7.5 hours per week, more or less

Since the semester here is long (17 weeks), we are looking at approximately 120 hours of work per semester on the thesis (if you subtract the time that the meetings will take). This means your year-long project will involve approximately 240 hours of research and writing! Wow! Think of the amazing potential results!

***Due to changes in the Honors Program, students entering before 2012 have the option of doing a one-semester thesis, whereas students entering after the 2012 academic year will be required to do six units (one year) of work on the thesis project.

Course Description from the Catalogue:

Independent study of an interdisciplinary topic that satisfies three units of upper-division GE theme requirements. This capstone course is designed to hone your skills in research and writing by working on a topic that grows out of the material you found most intriguing in your other upper-division theme classes.

Project Option:

There is an option for those whose fields are suited to such to declare a creative project. The project is a less clearly defined, but no less demanding proposition which will need to easily demonstrate equivalent time and dedication (artistic projects, performances, etc). The projects will be considered on an individual basis and will still need to include a narrative of sorts and a literary review (see below).

Purpose of Our 399 Thesis Course:

By way of my oversight, your advisor’s advice and influence, mandatory meetings, and collaborative peer editing, our course aims to provide you support and guidance as you work on your thesis. This includes helping you succeed in creating an interdisciplinary focus for your research, providing guidelines to stay on track and be accountable for your time and labors, and the provision of mandatory meetings to help you assess your progress, get advice, conduct peer review, and deepen your research methods.

My Role as Instructor:

My role is to help you determine the scope of an interesting and interdisciplinary project, to offer suggestions and advice for expansion (and sometimes contraction) of project to make it manageable, to keep you in check with respect to keeping up with the work on a reasonable time line, to give you feedback on your annotations, proposal, and draft, and to be here for questions, support, and guidance. I consider myself to be a facilitator and mentor, here to think through ideas with you, brainstorm, offer suggestions for readings and research directions, and assist when necessary in finding campus connections to faculty who will facilitate and chair your work. I am not an editor, your project director (that's you!) and I wish not to be a nag! I believe you can handle the responsibility of the work. If you have an assignment due, or a meeting with me due, it is your responsibility to check in. *I do not provide copyediting or proofreading.* While I may suggest editorial changes, the grammatical and mechanical editing of your thesis is ultimately your responsibility. The quality of the writing, as well as the quality of the research, is critical to your grade.

I do not accept late work, except in serious, compelling, documentable situations.

Projected Course Direction for Year-Long Students

Fall: Gathering information. Read, take notes, read more, take more notes. Interview at least one person in your area. Consider ways of familiarizing yourself with the "whole," with trying to understand. Do annotations, albeit tedious, to help you organize your research. Meet your advisor as much as you can. Most importantly, ask big questions. Buckle your seatbelt for the long ride. Take some risks. Be willing to sometimes look a little dumb sometimes. Eat buttery popcorn. Love your library. This all helps.

Spring: Fill in holes in your knowledge. Develop a deeper primary research. Read our textbook for helpful advice on writing a thesis. Find your notes and use them. Write. Read a bit more where your knowledge is weakest. Write more. Talk to your advisor as much as they will permit you to. Use your peers for review. Turn in drafts. Read John Mc Phee's Draft #4:
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/04/29/draft-no-4>

Bring home a kitty to keep you company while you write. Build your Final Presentation (15 minutes). Invite your friends and family to come cheer you on. Cheer yourself on. Eat chocolate. Remember that it will be over soon and that you will have this amazing thing to take with you into the world.

Tentative Spring Thesis Presentation Date: May 11th, 4pm (tentative!)

Advising:

You will be required to find a suitable advisor for your thesis or project who is an expert in the area (s) you wish to conduct research. This advisor should be carefully selected from your intended field (s) of study, and the advisor must consent to working with you during the year to evaluate your ideas and writing. Advisors will vary considerably in the amount of time and effort available to you as a student; some will prefer a hands-on approach, others may simply be willing to read your draft and final work. Please begin thinking NOW about who might be willing to work with you in such capacities. Advisors will be asked to grade your final paper in Spring, which is 40% of your Spring Grade. Choose wisely!

Some Advice to You From Me!!

The main criteria will be critical in the evaluation of your final thesis:

Risk—is the project interesting, different, not a report or reiteration of knowledge? Does it attempt something interesting, different, slightly, as they say, out of the box?

Effort—does the project seem like the concerted effort of a high-level Honors Student, an almost-graduate level student? Is it clear that you are knowledgeable and somewhat expert in the area you chose to investigate and understand?

Depth—is the project sufficiently deep in scope? This relates too to the above criteria regarding effort. Did you ask the important questions? Think through many angles? Uncover the stones?

Originality/Imagination—is the project at least attempting to make a contribution to a conversation in your area (s) of interest? Is it engaging, scintillating, and sufficiently new to convince us of original thought?

Interdisciplinary-ness—this is a requirement of the Honors program and GE pathways. Do you connect the primary area of study to other disciplines? Is there an attempt to look at the convergence of sometimes disparate things? **MAKE SURE TO CHECK WITH YOUR PATHWAY COORDINATOR IF YOU ARE USING THIS COURSE TO COMPLETE A PATHWAY REQUIREMENT!!!!!!!**

Hey, okay, so I have an idea, and I am ready to work. What next?

Get yourself an Advisor! Stat! The advisor's job is to mentor you through the intellectual process, provide support, suggest readings, read a draft or two, and at the end, to either issue a grade, or to ask me to. When considering how to select an advisor, bear in mind that until policies change at the University level, advisors are not generally paid for their time. So, to that end—select someone who will be willing to give you a minimum (very minimum) of four hours of time during the semester. Also, someone who will be able to support and appreciate the level of time and dedication it will take, as well as commitment to the interdisciplinary aspect of the thesis requirements. Finding someone who knows your work ethic will make things easier.

Gratitude is Invaluable. Because your advisor may be putting in extra hours on your behalf, consider small, but meaningful gifts, cards, etc as a thank-you for their dedication to you. Small things count. Simply mailing a handwritten note (Thanks, Gail, for the time you spent with me last Friday talking through

these readings) is thoughtful. As a professor, I know that gift cards, even for \$5.00, to Naked Lounge, Peets, etc are treats, and well appreciated.

****ADDITIONALLY**, please consider an acknowledgement to your advisor (s) in your written thesis.

Read. Then read. Then do some reading! Often students are intimidated by the writing component (particularly the length) of the thesis. This is, in part, because if you haven't yet read much about your area of interest, you don't yet know how much there will be to say. You should know about 500% more than the next smartest person in our class in your area of research, so take the reading seriously—it is a key element to success in the course.

Annotate what you read. Create a set of notes for yourself. This will save you a huge amount of time later on. You will be able to use some of what you write in your annotations directly in your paper. AND make sure to ask you advisor what they think you should read! If you are crossing disciplines, consider asking a second advisor from your connecting discipline to recommend some good reading as well.

I want to do a project rather than a lengthy written thesis. What do I do? Come see me asap in office hours. Projects are a little harder to define in scope, and must be done on a case-by-case basis. Please see me by Week Two!!! If we do not meet by the end of Week Three, it may be too late to set up proper perimeters.

Attend Mandatory Meetings. These are designed as A) check-ins about your progress, B) to provide moral and peer support for your work, C) to clarify questions and issues before they become problematic, and D) to talk through handouts, expectations, procedures, and provide some new material for your projects, ie, ethnographies to read, etc. These meetings are so important that you will receive *points* for attendance!

What Should My Thesis Do?

For the purposes of this particular section, the words “thesis” and “project” are interchangeable, not meaning to distinguish between written work and artistic sorts of thesis ambitions.

When asked, “What do you hope for in a good thesis, as a teacher?” I thought of a few ways of answering this. For one, I don't have a “vision” of each project, or a pat answer. But I do think the following are important aims of a good thesis:

- 1) The project demonstrates considerable *expertise*. You should know, like, *a thousand percent* more than the next smartest person in the room. Or more. I should be able to call you up if I need a guest lecturer to talk about your area, and be able to treat you like an expert in the field. Which you will be!
- 2) Your work should be *original*. That is, the thesis distinguishes itself from a “report” by including at least some layer of primary research. This can be in the form of an interview, a survey, a map, anything that generates even a small but NEW contribution to what you are studying. If you can't do all the research you want to do, due to lack of funding, time, or necessary sophisticated assistance, at least make some interesting assertions about your subject that could be used by future researchers.

- 3) Connections. You should be making *connections between disciplines*, between ideas, between researchers in a historical context, between dissimilar ideas that might, in fact, be related. Your ability to think uniquely and originally about your issue and come up with new and important thoughts is critical.
- 4) Remember that you will hit some lumps in the road, and even some failures. *Failure is a GOOD SIGN of GOOD RESEARCH*. It says you are trying new things. It becomes part of what you write about.

Thesis Specifics:

While the thesis specifics will vary a good deal as per your fields of research, ALL theses will include the following:

- ❖ **A Weighty, Engaging Introduction:** What made you choose to do your research in this area? What questions and curiosities drove your work? What was it that bore scrutiny by you?
- ❖ **A Literary Review and Conversation of Contexts:** What have others thought about this subject, or these ideas? Whose voices have been in the conversation in the past, and whose voices are most prevalent now?
- ❖ **A Synthesis:** of your ideas into the conversation. What can you add to this discussion? What do you have to say that is new, interesting, real? What were some things you found, considered, etc. that might carry the curiosity of others in the future?
- ❖ **A Primary Research Component** that will include, but is not limited to, fieldwork, interviews, ethnography, mapping, laboratory work, etc as is relevant to your project.
- ❖ **A Conclusion** that is insightful, *not reiterative*, offering future directions for research, ideas for collaboration, etc.

The Final Thesis must be clean and error-free, and include proper in-text citations for scholarly sources consulted and a comprehensive Works Cited page. Aim to stun and compel the audience with interesting, provocative, beautiful writing. Because this project has been driven by your curiosity, your reading experiences, your field work, interviews, etc., you will want to be writing in *first person narrative*. I am respectfully asking that you stay away from “formulaic” approaches to writing; please take creative liberties and risks as you write.

Expectations for Semester-Long Thesis Students entering Spring 2016 and Year Long Students

By February 4th (SEMESTER STUDENTS ONLY): Meeting #1 with Heather DUE. Also submit to me via Blackboard a copy of a potential reading list in my office no later than 5pm. This might include, but is not limited to, peer-reviewed research, qualitative/quantitative studies, essays or nonfictional works that

may pertain to your research, fieldwork conducted in your area, fictional works, artwork, music, performance, etc. that may add to your understanding of your subject area. Leave no stone unturned!

By February 4th (YEAR LONG STUDENTS ONLY): Literature Review (see sample online) DUE to Blackboard by 5pm.

By February 26th (SEMESTER STUDENTS ONLY): ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (please see separate annotation assignment, citing each work in MLA or APA format, depending on your field of research) and will include material from a minimum of **12 sources**. Sources will be subject to scrutiny and review!

By March 11th (YEAR LONG STUDENTS ONLY) Primary Research Component DUE. This will consist of your mapping, surveys, additional interviews, etc. It will be an annotation in the form of your other annotations, describing how, where, when, etc. your research was conducted, and what its conclusions were.

By March 11th (SEMESTER STUDENTS ONLY): DUE: Thesis proposal, 2-3 pages (assignment posted in Blackboard) and the name of an advisor who has agreed to work on your thesis with you (just put contact info at bottom of proposal).

By March 25th (ALL STUDENTS): Interview Annotation #1 (OR **Interview Annotation #2 two, if year long**) DUE. See "Interview Techniques and Write-Up" on Blackboard for further tips on this process!

By March 31 (YEAR LONG STUDENTS ONLY) 15 pages of thesis due to Blackboard (it needn't be beginning to end; we'll go over in class some, also see Eco's book)

By April 8th (SEMESTER STUDENTS ONLY): Submit a clean hard copy AND copy to Blackboard of a minimum of TWELVE pages of work (for semester students) TO BOTH ME AND YOUR ADVISOR.

ALL STUDENTS: Meeting #2 with Heather (if not completed, at least scheduled!) by **APRIL 8th**

By April 22nd (ALL STUDENTS): Completed VERY GOOD WORKING draft of thesis DUE to your advisor and to Heather via Blackboard by 5pm!!!!

By May 1st (YEAR LONG AND SEMESTER LONG STUDENTS BOTH!!) 100 word abstract and inventive title of project DUE to Blackboard by 5pm. NO LATENESS PLEASE. This is essential so I can plan the program!

MAY 11th: (ALL STUDENTS) D Day! Presentations in front of Honors Program, Undergraduate Dean, Director, etc. Dress sharp, practice, and be ready to stay the whole time.

By May 13th: (ALL STUDENTS) FINAL DRAFT OF THESIS DUE to me and to your advisor

GRADING POLICIES

Assignments are considered late if they do not appear on Blackboard (or hard copy, if specified) at scheduled times. Printer trouble IS NOT a valid reason for late work, nor is computer difficulty. After many semesters of being flexible with deadlines, I have come to the conclusion that unless dire circumstances arise (medical/familial emergencies) *I cannot accept late work.*

Here are some associations for you with each strata of grade:

A work: “A” work is generally associated with *exemplary, stellar, original, extraordinary, thought-provoking, engaged, of artisanal quality.* An “A” is *truly remarkable, shiny, graceful, boastworthy, and amazing.* In other words, you totally rock.

B work: “B” work is generally associated with *“above and beyond,” with some, but not all, of the above qualities, above average, to stand out on occasion, to be worthy of recognition.* You are, on occasion, *outstanding,* at other times, perhaps, *doing perfectly great.* **Newsflash! A “B” is a good grade.**

C work: “C” work is average. That means, that you have done *competent work.* *You have done what has been asked of you, but rarely stretched toward something more.* Your work (not you, of course!) *is regular, ordinary, and meets minimum assignment criteria.* You are just fine! Remembering that a “C” is average is helpful. It means *everything is okay.*

D work: “D” work fails to meet the minimum criteria for the course. Perhaps you did a fantastic job on the Annotations but did not turn in other work. When you receive a “D,” it means that I cannot, in good conscience, allow your project to be presented—it simply isn’t yet ready. A “D” can also indicate a lack of commitment to the deadlines.

“F” work: This would be a rather sad state of affairs. Perhaps it was a very rough time in your life. Trying not to get an F is always a good idea. Remember, though, that it is your *work* that is being assessed—not you, not your potential, and not your past performance in other academic endeavors.

If you have concerns or questions about your grade, come to my office hours. Come *before* things are dire, before the end of the semester, when it is often too late to make substantive improvement!

POINTS POSSIBLE for SEMESTER ONLY thesis projects will be graded as follows:

Annotations: 25 points per annotation, 12 annotations, **300 points**

Attendance at Mandatory Group Meetings: 20 points per meeting, six meetings, **180 points**

Proposal: **100 points**

Interview: **100 points**

Thesis Score (Heather): 200 points
Thesis Score (Advisor): 200 points
Abstract, title, and Presentation Score: 200 points
Self-Evaluation: 50 points

Total Possible Points (subject to change): 1330 points

Year Long Thesis Project Grades, Spring Semester:

100 points for Interview #2

100 points for submission of a primary draft

50 points for submission of a peer review

200 points for Primary Research Component (to be determined)

200 points for my evaluation of the Final Paper

200 points for Advisor's evaluation of Final Paper

200 points for abstract, title, and successful, graceful public presentation of your project per guidelines

180 points Attendance at Mandatory Group Meetings: 20 points per meeting, six meetings.

Total Possible Points (subject to change): 1230