**MACS Thesis Topic Proposal Guidelines**

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The Master’s thesis proposal is a 15-page minimum paper (not including bibliography) that serves as a blueprint for writing the thesis. The proposal includes the general topic area, the problem or problems to be addressed by the thesis, a statement of the core thesis and central arguments of the thesis, the research methodology to be used, and a chapter-by-chapter proposal of what the thesis will include. A substantial bibliography written in compliance with the Chicago Manual of Style should accompany the proposal; it is not counted in the page length requirement of the proposal. The proposal assesses student competence in identifying cognate ideas, connections and tensions in historical and contemporary theologies, philosophies, cultures and ecologies, and utilizing the elements of process studies in conducting new research on culture, ecology and/or religion. The thesis proposal also serves as a tool for assessing student acquisition of information literacy in Process Studies. Students are expected to consult with the advisor and committee prior to the time of submission.

Your thesis proposal must include the following elements in this exact order:

* **Title Page:** (Should include not only student name and proposed title of the thesis but also the name of the director, readers, and the date the proposal is being submitted). Names of director and that of readers may only appear if they have read and given their approval to the proposal in its present form.
* **Introduction:** Introduce your topic and why/how you became interested in it. *(This should be at least 3 pages in length.)*
* **Scope and Nature:** Situate the topic in the field of discourse in which it is located/give its context/background (internal boundaries); indicate the history of this topic in prior literature; that is, to what conversation are you trying to make a contribution? Indicate the limits of your work, things that won’t be covered that might be expected (external boundaries). *(This section should be no shorter than 7 pages in length,)*
* **Thesis Statement:** In a few sentences, state what the work will attempt to demonstrate or accomplish (that is, if not accomplished, the thesis changes drastically). Put another way, indicate the question (a gap, a problem, a puzzle to be solved) your thesis will attempt to answer: Then state the claim you will defend: your argument/thesis as answer to the question.
  + This section will become what is known as your abstract. It is a general rule of thumb that the Thesis Statement section should not be shorter than 100 words or longer than 350 words.
* **Literary Review:** The literature review is a critical look at the existing research that is significant to the work that you are carrying out. Obviously, at this point you are not likely to have read everything related to your research questions, but you should still be able to identify the key texts with which you will be in conversation as you write your thesis. Literature reviews often include both the theoretical approaches to your topic and research (empirical or analytical) on your topic.
* **Methodology:** Explain the theoretical frameworks and specific methodological tools that will be used for research and/or analysis. This is not a question about how the text/research will be organized.
* **Significance:**Discuss the significance of the work within the discipline and possibly other communities (religious, local, political, national, etc.) and possibly for the scholar. That is, why is this work important? What difference will it make and to whom?
* **Table of Contents/Chapter Outline:** Give a clear indication of what each chapter of the dissertation will include. (NOTE: the chapter outline must comply with the spacing requirements of the proposal, i.e. that it is double- and not single- spaced text.)
* **Timeline/Plan of Work:** Many proposals also include a schedule with anticipated completion dates for specific parts of the thesis. This timeline helps your committee determine if your project is realistic given available methods and institutional requirements (such as deadlines for submission, etc.). Setting a schedule can also help you manage your time more effectively by setting specific goals for yourself.
* **Bibliography:** In addition to the proposal, the student must include a short bibliography (no more than 4-6 pages) consisting of the most significant works/materials that will be used in the research/work, preferably arranged by topical heading. Students should include references in languages other than English when appropriate