

## Religion Division MA Thesis Proposal Guidelines

A candidate for the Master of Arts in Religion must complete and orally defend a thesis to receive the degree. *A student should not undertake a thesis without first having the thesis proposal approved by the entire thesis committee.* This document contains specific guidelines pertaining to any thesis proposal submitted within the Religion & Philosophy Division. This is a general outline of the components that the student should include in the thesis proposal. The student is responsible for communicating with the thesis committee members regarding any additional requirements specific to the proposal.

### *Thesis Expectations*

The thesis should employ rigorous critical analysis to make a contribution to scholarship. The thesis will present original research that provides a new discovery or interpretation, applies a specific approach to a current scholarly discussion, or reevaluates previous research from a new perspective. The student should establish the validity of the thesis by assembling appropriate evidence (biblical, historical, theological, etc.) and then articulating persuasively the warrants that support the student's analysis of the evidence.

### *Thesis Proposal Components*

The proposal should include the following features:

Title: The student does not need to submit a cover page but should have a title for the project.

Introduction: A general statement of the topic to be investigated.

Thesis Statement or Statement of Problem: A statement of the claim or problem that is to be explored and an explanation of the relevance or importance of this claim or problem.

Design of Study: A description of the methods and procedures to be used to establish the claims of the thesis.

Working Bibliography: A bibliography of sources relating to the investigation of the topic, and following the formatting requirements explained in the "M.A. Religion Thesis Overview."

### *Submission*

The student will submit the thesis proposal to the committee members for approval a minimum of one semester prior to the expected date of the defense. In most cases, the defense will take place in the Spring term, and the student must submit the proposal no later than December 1 in the prior term. The student must make a formal request with the thesis advisor and the Religion & Philosophy Divisional Dean to submit and defend a thesis during any other term.

*For information regarding proposal approval and the thesis process students should refer to the "M.A. Religion Thesis Overview" document.*