I. Responsibilities

Primary Thesis Advisor

The role of the primary thesis advisor is to coach the student through the process of producing a “publishable-quality, book-length manuscript.” The primary thesis advisor should be mindful of the thesis deadlines, should coach the student through whatever revisions are deemed necessary to meet the quality and length requirements, and is required to sign off on the thesis proposal and the completed thesis manuscript when, in the Advisor’s opinion, the quality and length requirements have been met.
Second Thesis Advisor

The role of the second thesis advisor is to give the student an additional perspective on the thesis project, to offer advice on revisions to meet the quality and length requirements, and to sign off on the completed thesis proposal and thesis manuscript when, in the Advisor’s opinion, the quality and length requirements have been met.

Outside Reader

The role of the outside reader is to serve as official reviewer of the Thesis Proposal and of the Final Thesis Project. While the student is usually registered for Thesis Hours with the outside reader, the student does not compose a syllabus (the syllabus is provided), and the student does not communicate with the outside reader prior to submission of the Proposal or the Project. The outside reader will review the Proposal and the Project for format, style, copy editing, and sense and will apply strictly the department’s policy on errors in the Final Thesis Project.

Student

The student, of course, is ultimately responsible for deciding what and how to revise. The student must be aware of all deadlines and is responsible for collecting signoffs from the Primary and Second Thesis Advisors and for making the proper submissions at all stages of the thesis process.

MFA Coordinator

It is the MFA Coordinator’s responsibility to inform the student and advisors of the process and deadlines, to assist the student and Advisors where necessary, to review all Thesis Proposals and Final Thesis Projects, and to present any change requirements and final approvals to the student.

MFA Thesis Committee

The MFA Thesis Committee will consist of the outside reader and the MFA Coordinator. The Committee will make all final decisions on Thesis Proposals and Final Thesis Projects.

II. Thesis Proposal Process

Thesis Proposal

No later than Sept. 15 in the fall semester or no later than February 15 in the spring semester, the student must submit a thesis proposal. The Proposal will follow these requirements:
- Must be submitted via email to the MFA Coordinator, preceded or followed shortly by emailed approval from both the Primary Thesis Advisor and Second Thesis Advisor.
- Must include a prospectus and bibliography (see Prospectus and Bibliography in Section III)

Completed proposals will be reviewed by the MFA Outside Reader and Coordinator as quickly as possible. If the committee requires changes, the student and the advisors will be notified as quickly as possible.

If a proposal fails to include any of the above elements, it will be returned to the student without review.

### III. Thesis Project

#### Quality and Length

The student will produce a “publishable-quality book-length manuscript.” In genres where the book may not be an appropriate measure (such as screenwriting, PR/Marketing, etc.), substitute “performance-quality and-length script,” “substantial, production-quality project,” or the equivalent measure.

The Thesis Project will also include an abstract, a prospectus, and a bibliography, all to be approved by the Advisors and the MFA Committee.

#### Standard for Quality

The publishable quality of the MFA thesis will be evaluated by the thesis advisors and by a committee that includes editors who regularly determine publishable quality of work and will do so here on the basis of whether the work:

- Offers a recognizably new or fresh perception or understanding to its subject
- Demonstrates solid awareness of its genre
- Demonstrates notable stylistic facility

#### Standard for Length

The committee has the following expectations of thesis length (lengths below refer to pages of actual text). These are guidelines only, not strict requirements. Any shorter project should be approved by the MFA Coordinator in advance.

- **Novel**: 200 pages or more (roughly 80,000 words or more)
- **Short fiction (novellas, short stories)**: 150 pages or more; (flash fiction): 100 pages or more
- **Poetry**: 60 pages or more
• **Screenwriting**: at least one full-length feature
• **Stage**: One full-length production script or shorter works that combine for at least 120 minutes of stage time.
• **Nonfiction** (including investigative reporting, feature writing, etc.): 150 pages or more
• **Creative nonfiction**: 150 pages or more
• **Non-book project**: consult MFA Coordinator

**Prospectus and Bibliography**

The student will submit early in the final semester a Thesis Proposal and MLA-style research bibliography for approval by the Thesis Advisors and the MFA Committee.

If the Project includes citations, the student will provide both a Works Cited and a Bibliography of other works important to the author during the composition of the Project (if the Works Cited is extensive, the MFA Coordinator might waive the requirement of a Bibliography—consult the MFA Coordinator). If the Thesis Project does not require extensive research, the student instead will provide a bibliography of secondary texts that have been useful to the student during thesis production.

The committee has the following expectations for Prospectus length and content:

- **Nonfiction, Investigative Reporting, Feature Writing, other brands of journalism**: 1250-2500 words following conventions of nonfiction book proposals
- **Creative Nonfiction**: 1000-1500 words following conventions of agent solicitation, including summary and synopsis (no cover letter)
- **Fiction**: 1000-1500 words following conventions of agent solicitation, including summary and synopsis (no cover letter)
- **Poetry**: 1000-1500 words in an artist’s statement
- **Screenplay**: 1000-1250 words following the conventions of production solicitation, including summary and detailed synopsis
- **Stage**: 1000-1500 words in a synopsis/artist’s statement
- **PR/Marketing/Advertising/Technical Writing/Business Communications**
  - Book: 1250-2500 words following conventions of nonfiction book proposals
  - Project(s): 1000-1500 words describing the scope, goals, and focus of the project(s)
- **Other genres**: Consult the MFA Coordinator

**NOTE:** For fiction and creative nonfiction projects, “following conventions of agent solicitation” should be taken to mean an introductory section similar to what would be provided in a query letter, followed by summary and synopsis. The MFA Coordinator can provide information to distinguish a synopsis from a summary.
Thesis Format

Length
See Standard for Length above for expected length of thesis.

Style
In the text, the student must follow the appropriate style for his/her genre (generally, MLA style for literary works, AP style for journalistic projects, PR/Marketing/Advertising, etc.). Follow MLA guidelines where there is no other genre-specific standard. Note that we do not use the medium tag at the end of MLA bibliographical entries in the MFA program. If you are citing an online resource, provide a URL.

Layout
Students may use the Thesis Template available on the MFA website (http://www.wcsu.edu/writing/mfa). The template provides the proper order of sections and pagination elements. For layout, page design, tables and figures, etc. follow the guidelines in A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Seventh Edition, by Kate Turabian. If there are any contradictions between Turabian and the template, the template takes precedence.

Archiving Your Thesis in the MFA Office
The MFA program no longer accepts hard-copy submissions of thesis projects for the thesis review process. However, we will archive a copy of your thesis in the MFA office.

Thesis Submission

No later than two weeks before the end of the semester (and advisably earlier), the complete thesis submission must be received in the Digital Thesis Submission System as a single file. The MFA Coordinator will provide a specific due date.

The thesis submission must include the elements of the Thesis as indicated in the Thesis Template.

As part of the Digital Thesis Submission process, you will be required to copy and paste the text of your Abstract into the system separately. Primary and Second Thesis Advisors must sign off on the Thesis project in the Digital Thesis System.

Thesis Review and Approval

Soon after receiving the complete thesis submission and approval by both Advisors, the MFA Committee will review and either approve or immediately return the thesis to the student with an explanation of required changes.

If the committee approves the thesis, the student will be informed immediately and the thesis will be passed to the Office of the Dean of Arts & Sciences.
IV. Summary of the Process for Thesis Advisors

1. Coach the student on the completion of a high-quality thesis project. Ensure that the thesis project meets the guidelines for length and quality described in Section II.
2. Review the student’s thesis prospectus and bibliography.
3. Submit the Proposal to the Coordinator no later than September (Fall)/February (Spring) 15. Proposals received after this date might not be considered for end-of-semester graduation.
4. Sign off on the student’s final thesis submission in the Digital Thesis Submission System no later than two weeks before the end of the semester (exact date TBD)—that is, the student’s thesis submission is not complete until all Thesis Advisors approve it in the Digital Thesis Submission System; if Advisors sign off later than two weeks before the end of the semester, then the student’s submission will be considered late. Submissions received after this date might not be considered for end-of-semester graduation.

V. Summary of the Process for Students

1. Focus on the integrity of your book/project.
2. Compose a prospectus and a bibliography under the guidance of your Thesis Advisors.
3. Submit your Proposal to your Advisors. Your Advisors, in turn, must submit it to the MFA Coordinator no later than September (Fall)/February (Spring) 15. Proposals received after this date might not be considered for end-of-semester graduation.
5. Submit your completed thesis project via the Digital Thesis Submission System. The project must be received and approved by Thesis Advisors no later than two weeks before the end of the semester (exact date TBD). Proposals received after this date might not be considered for end-of-semester graduation.

VI. Deadlines

*Thesis Proposal*
Fall: September 15
Spring: February 15

*Thesis Submission*
Two weeks before the end of the semester (exact date TBD by MFA Coordinator)
VII. Additional Time

In the event that a student is unable to complete a thesis project to the satisfaction of the Thesis Advisors and the MFA Committee within the allotted time, the student may take a maximum of two additional years to satisfactorily complete and file the necessary copies of the thesis submission. The student may be required to register for “Continuous Registration” hours through the Graduate Studies office.

Appendices

A. Important Thesis Terms
B. Instructions for Digital Thesis Submission
Appendix A

Important Thesis Terms

Abstract—a short, objective description of the book for the use of archivists and researchers so that they can tell at a glance how to classify the thesis and/or whether or not it is useful to them in their research. The abstract is not a part of the proposal, but it will be required as part of the final thesis submission.

Bibliography—a list of works consulted in the process of completing the thesis. The bibliography must be submitted along with the prospectus and final thesis submission, and adhere to MLA format (unless the thesis requires another format, such as with Journalism). The bibliography need not be annotated, but must show proof of a significant amount of reading and research. See Works Cited below, which lists works that are directly referenced, quoted, or paraphrased. When the final thesis project is submitted, the Bibliography will be moved to the end of the text.

Introduction—when the final thesis project is submitted, the thesis prospectus (or a revision of it, including the synopsis, if provided) becomes the “Introduction” to the whole thesis project.

Prospectus—term used to describe everything in the Thesis Proposal other than the Bibliography. Upon submission of final thesis project, the prospectus (or a revision of it) will appear in its entirety at the beginning of the final submission as the Introduction; the bibliography should be placed at the end of the final thesis submission rather than at the end of the introduction.

Summary—usually a few paragraphs that describe the work as a whole and appear in the prospectus. Typically, agents for fiction and nonfiction books expect to see summaries in the proposal, so strong summaries are expected in thesis proposals in those genres.

Synopsis—appears in the prospectus of projects that require scene by scene, chapter by chapter, story by story, and/or section by section descriptions. Students should consult Prospectus and Bibliography above to determine whether or not the synopsis is appropriate for their projects.

Works Cited—appears before the bibliography if the prospectus or final thesis project refers to, cites, quotes, or paraphrases other works.
Instructions for Digital Thesis Submission (and Thesis Proposal Submission)

The following instructions are designed to aid you in submitting your MFA Thesis Proposal and your final Thesis project. Any questions regarding the digital submission process may be sent to Dr. Brian Clements at clementsb@wcsu.edu.

1. Navigate to http://repository.wcsu.edu.

2. Scroll down and select the link titled “Submit Research” beneath the “Author’s Corner” header. This will bring you to an index of departments and research publications.

3. Scroll down to “Writing, Linguistics, and Creative Process” and select the “Master of Fine Arts in Creative and Professional Writing Theses” link.
4. **If this is your first time using the digital submission system**, you will be prompted to login or create an account. Select “Sign Up” if you have not already created an account, and enter the required information on the following page. **You must use your WCSU email address to create an account.** If you have already created an account, please enter your login information and select “Login,” then go to My Account.

5. The first time you log in, the next page in the process is the Submission Agreement. Please read through the entire page before proceeding. Please note that you will be able to enter all of the information described in the agreement on the next page, including the thesis embargo period.

6. When you’ve read the agreement, please click the check box to indicate that you have read the terms and then select “Continue” at the bottom of the page.
Welcome to the thesis submission page. Please fill out the following form for your MFA thesis project.

a. Title (This is the title of your manuscript.)
b. Author (If your name is not listed in the box, please select the silhouette & pencil button on the right-hand side of the gray box. This will open up fields for email, name, and institution. Fill out the information, and then move on to the next step.)
c. Date of Award (This is your expected date of graduation.)
d. Degree Type (Thesis. This should already be selected for you.)
e. Embargo Period (Select the length of time you would like your thesis to remain private and accessible only to yourself, the coordinator, thesis committee, and advisors. Students submitting creative theses they intend to have published should select the 100 year embargo period. While this does not place an embargo on your thesis until the end of time, the university may be able to permanently maintain your thesis’s private status through other means. Students who are submitting practical theses such as professional portfolios may choose not to establish an embargo. If you do not plan to publish your creative thesis and want others to be able to view your thesis, you should not establish an embargo.)
f. Degree Name (Please select “Master of Fine Arts.”)
g. Department Name (Writing, Linguistics, and Creative Process should be filled in for you.)
h. First Advisor, Second Advisor, Third Advisor (Please fill in the names of your primary and secondary thesis mentors. The “Third Advisor” field may be left blank, unless the student has, for whatever reason, a third thesis mentor/advisor.)
i. Keywords (These are useful for indexing your thesis. While any embargo set on your thesis will prevent the public from accessing your document, the abstract and the thesis information (title, author, department, degree, etc.) will be publicly listed. You can add up to six keywords that must be separated by commas.)

j. Subject Categories (Please select an appropriate subject category for your thesis project. This is also for indexing. Fiction writers, nonfiction writers, and poets will find their subjects under Arts & Humanities > Creative Writing. Screenwriters will find their subject under Arts & Humanities > Film & Media Studies. Playwrights will find their subject under Arts & Humanities > Theatre & Performance Studies. Professional writers may find their subjects under Social and Behavioral Science in the sub-categories of Communications, Business, or any other applicable fields. When you’ve chosen one or more subjects, please click the subject and hit “Select.”)

k. Abstract (Please copy and paste the abstract of your thesis project into the provided text box.)

l. Comments

m. Upload a File (Choose “Upload a file from your computer”). You may upload a Word Doc, PDF, or MP4. Please note: If you choose to upload a Microsoft Word document, your submission will be converted to a PDF by the system. Sometimes, in the automatic PDF conversion process, errors are introduced; you are advised to create and upload your own PDF.)

8. When you’ve filled out the thesis submission page, please select “Submit” at the bottom to submit your thesis.
9. You can view the status of your thesis by clicking “My Account” in the top corner of the repository webpage.

10. You can view your submission in the articles box. When you first submit your thesis, the status of the thesis will be “Under Review.” When the student’s thesis mentors, the coordinator, and the thesis committee have approved the thesis, that decision will be reflected here. Should changes be requested, the status will say so. To review comments from the coordinator or reviewers (Thesis Committee), select your submission. It will bring you here:

Reviews of your thesis or subsequent comments will appear beneath the “Reviews” header. After reviews have been submitted and the decision to approve, approve with request for revisions, or reject the thesis has been made,
the student will receive an email that will prompt him or her to login and view this page. If revisions are requested, you can make your revisions and submit the revised version by selecting “Revise Thesis” in the top-left. Doing so will bring you to a blank thesis submission page where you can upload the new document.