Dr. Susan Frye English 5960:02

Thesis Research: MA Thesis Proposal

Here is the format of the MA Thesis Proposal, written in consultation with Susan Aronstein, and taking into account Greg Semenza's and Robert Peters's discussions.

1. Title of your thesis

2. Thesis committee, including advisor and outside member

3. The literature review (1-2). The purpose of this section is to show your committee that you understand the larger conversation that is taking place about your topic. Provide an overview of what has been written about your topic before or on subjects as close to your topic as possible. Trace important historical developments and controversies. Briefly summarize what your most important sources have said about your topic. If no one has written on your topic, you still need to explain how your thesis is related to the critical conversation that surrounds it and demonstrate your awareness of this conversation by summarizing particular articles, books, and other sources.

4. Your contribution (1-2 pages). Explain how your thesis is going to contribute to the conversation that you summarized in Part 3. What larger question or questions are you asking in this thesis? If you've formulated a tentative argument or thesis statement, please include at couple of paragraphs or so explaining what you think you'll argue. It's helpful to have this tentative argument as a starting point, but please be aware that it may well change and will certainly become more complex as you research and write your thesis.

5. Methodology (1-2 pages). What theoretical perspectives and thinkers do you plan to use in your thesis? Why have you made these choices? Are there particular passages of theorists that you find helpful? How might you redefine the key term or terms of other thinkers in order to make your argument? Are there theories that you still need to explore to see if they're relevant? What materials will you be using -- in particular, what will your primary sources be, including written and visual texts of all kinds?

6. Thesis Map (1 page). Explain how you plan to organize your thesis into chapters. Give your chapters tentative titles, and explain what each will accomplish.

7. Provide a calendar with deadlines toward completion. Keep in mind that you need to have a complete draft of your thesis to your committee by March 1. By March 30 you should have submitted a completed thesis to your committee. You are required to defend your thesis by April 15 at the latest.

8. Annotated bibliography (5 pages?). Explain why each of your major sources is important to this project. Conclude with a paragraph or two explaining the major research that you still need to accomplish. Remember that you'll keep adding to -- and subtracting from -- your bibliography as you go.