



## MA THESIS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

The purpose of the proposal is to help you narrow down a realistic topic and approach, not to present a polished abstract of work or ideas you've already thought through. The Religious Studies faculty understands that the approved proposal and the actual thesis may turn out to be quite different in content or approach.

1. Develop your proposal in consultation with your thesis advisor(s) in the Religious Studies department.
  - a. You may choose a different RLGS faculty advisor from the one assigned to you while doing course work; you may also have up to two thesis advisors (or "readers") if you wish.
  - b. You will submit the proposal to your advisor or "first reader", who will then approve it or ask you to rewrite it.
  - c. You may begin to write your thesis without approval of the final proposal, but you will not be allowed to defend the thesis as required by the graduate office, and thus finish the degree, until an acceptable proposal has been submitted to the advisor and filed with the department.
2. Approximate length: 5 pages, double-spaced, plus bibliography.
3. The proposal should be descriptive in nature, both in terms of specific content and organization. Include a discussion of the theoretical approach that you will or are likely to take as well as short summaries of your anticipated chapters. Explain **what** subject you will be writing on, **why** it is significant, and **how** you plan to approach the topic.
4. Give your thesis proposal a working title. Also include chapter titles.
5. Essential to the proposal is a **thesis statement** that expresses the proposition to be supported, i.e., the point of view to be sustained by research and critical, reasoned argument.
6. Demonstrate that you have the ability—i.e., the training, skills, and tools—necessary to complete your project successfully. Do so by including a sample bibliography with your proposal. The bibliography should be composed of the works on which you have based your proposal, and which you have already read or are familiar with. Bibliographic format: MLA, Turabian, Campbell/Ballou, and University of Chicago styles are all acceptable at the University of Denver, but be sure to consult your thesis advisor in case s/he has a preference.
7. Expect to revise your proposal.
8. After the thesis proposal has been approved, you will need to select a second DU faculty "reader" to be part of your thesis committee. The second reader must be a member of the RLGS department. You may add a third reader from outside the department, however, who can also be a voting member of your defense committee. You should, therefore, think seriously from the outset about a topic in which at least two members of the department have some expertise.
9. For information on proper formatting of the thesis itself, please consult the pamphlet entitled "University of Denver Thesis and Dissertation Formatting Guidelines," available at the Office of Graduate Studies website, <http://www.du.edu/currentstudents/graduates/graduationinformation.html> .

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