

Rhetoric Thesis Guidelines

The senior thesis is the capstone of a student's college career at Bates, as well as a hallmark of the Bates experience for all students. All majors in the department are required to write a semester-long thesis. Thesis students are required to register for Rhetoric 457 during the fall semester *or* Rhetoric 458 during the winter semester. As part of the thesis, students are required to attend the "Departmental Thesis Meetings." There are several of these over the course of the semester, and as they are mandatory, you should be sure your schedule permits your attendance. If not, you should consult with the chair of the department and register for thesis in a semester that does allow for your attendance.

Each year the department may invite selected students to write an honors thesis. Honors thesis students must register for *both* Rhetoric 457 and Rhetoric 458. A grade for honors is assigned at the completion of the project.

The nature of any thesis is independent, original, and creative scholarly research, analysis, and writing. This is your project. Consider yourself the "Commander-In-Chief" of your thesis, although your advisor will provide essential direction, review, and criticism.

The senior thesis is an independent project which means you will be responsible for the quality of your finished project. You should take the initiative. Your advisor will guide you, and offer direction, but will not dictate how your project gets completed. Each student is different, as is each thesis. Know in advance what your advisor expects of you, and make it clear to your advisor what you are trying to accomplish with your project.

Once you've read through these guidelines, you should set up a time to talk to your advisor about expectations and requirements. Oftentimes, students or advisors can have incorrect assumptions about thesis. To avoid problems, you should be clear about your answers to the following questions and discuss your expectations and those of your advisor.

1. What do you hope to accomplish with this project?
2. How much time a week are you planning to devote to thesis?
3. How much direction do you want? How much direction do you expect?
4. How do you expect to be graded?
5. Thesis is a self-motivated project – what does that mean to you?

Legal and Ethical Issues: Please review Bates policy regarding ethics and plagiarism in **Appendix A.**

Thesis Timeline and Procedures

In the spring of your junior year, you should begin the thesis process. You should hand in a **THESIS PROPOSAL FORM** or an **HONORS THESIS PROPOSAL FORM** (usually due around the end of short term).

Members of the department will meet (usually before the completion of short term) to assign advisors. This will give you plenty of time to consult with faculty and do some background reading. This is especially important if you will be writing in the fall. Twelve weeks is not a lot of time – be ready to hit the ground running!

Topic Selection

Choose a topic you can be passionate about so that you will not lose interest while working on your thesis. Consider several of the term papers you have written for other courses, especially those at the 300 level. A good topic should be narrow enough for you to complete in a limited period of time and sufficiently broad so that the topic is both interesting and suggests important implications for further study. Finally, your thesis topic should be one you are already somewhat familiar with, rather than a subject matter that requires extensive research in unfamiliar territory.

Faculty in the department have varied and exciting research programs. Although we certainly do not want to limit your topic choices, it is sensible to choose an area of interest from a course you have already taken, or a research area investigated by a faculty member. This allows us to better direct your reading and critique your contributions to the literature on that topic.

Brainstorming Suggestions for Topics:

1. Write down the courses you have taken.
2. Review the syllabi – what did you particularly like/find interesting? What did you disagree with or find problematic?
3. Think about interesting situations – what are the rhetorical facets of those situations you could investigate? How?
4. Think about interesting rhetorical texts – particular speeches/television genres/films/etc. Why are they interesting? What can you say that is new?

You will want to consider these and other avenues BEFORE meeting with your advisor. Do not come to a thesis meeting thinking, "I want to do advertising" -- this is too broad. You should have some idea as to what about advertising you want to investigate and why.

Advisor Selection

As noted above, thesis advisors will be assigned by the department. Advisor selection will be based on faculty expertise in relation to the student's topic of interest, student preference, and faculty availability.

Thesis Timeline

You should generate a timeline for your thesis as soon as possible. You should provide a preliminary timetable that lists each chapter, the subject heading and possible subheadings, and the approximate date you expect to complete each part of the thesis. Because of the extensive research and writing you'll need to complete in a relatively short time, a tentative schedule that you can follow realistically is essential to managing your time. With only 13 class weeks in a semester, a writing schedule will help refine the process and allow you and your adviser enough time to discuss each step. A typical thesis may have five chapters: introduction, conclusion and three substantive chapters (e.g. literature review, theory, and analysis). Here are two sample timetables:

SAMPLE A: SUBMISSIONS BY CHAPTERS

- A. End of 2nd week – Turn in history chapter
- B. End of 5th week – Turn in theory chapter
- C. End of 8th week – Turn in analysis chapter
- D. End of 10th week – Turn in introduction and conclusion
- E. End of 11th week – Revise and edit previous chapters
- F. End of 12th week – Proofread, make corrections, and hand in completed thesis

SAMPLE B: SUBMISSIONS BY SECTIONS/PAGES

- A. End of 1st week – Turn in justification of study/introduction
- B. End of 2nd week – Turn in 5 pages of general history
- C. End of 3rd week – Turn in 5 pages of general history
- D. End of 4th week – Turn in 5 pages of literature review
- E. End of 5th week – Turn in 5 pages of literature review (and completed history chapter)
- F. End of 6th week – Turn in 5 pages of theory/method
- G. End of 7th week – Turn in 5 pages of theory/method
- H. End of 8th week – Turn in 5 pages of analysis
- I. End of 9th week – Turn in 5 pages of analysis (and completed theory chapter)
- J. End of 10th week – Turn in 5 pages of conclusion
- K. End of 11th week – Turn in 5 pages of introduction
- L. End of 12th week – Proofread, make corrections, and hand in completed thesis

Many people, rather than turn in entire chapters, prefer to turn in sections. You should discuss these options with your advisor to see what will work best for you.

Possible Chapters/Contents of a Thesis

Introduction

- Introduce the topic and justify why it is worthy of study.
- Identify your texts – specifically and clearly, AND justify their selection.
- Explain how you came to the topic.
- Introduce your argument.
- Introduce your theoretical approach briefly and explain the rationale for this approach.

History/Context

- This chapter provides background information on your topic. It provides the historical context necessary to understanding your argument. Think in terms of telling a good story.
- You should include a literature review of the relevant academic literature that has been written about your text/topic. This is where you demonstrate a familiarity with the academic/trade literature. This is not an annotated bibliography – if you do not know the difference, see your advisor.
- Further justifies the importance of your artifact/study.

Theory and Methods

- In this section, you explain and develop the theory that will be used to help understand your text. You should conduct a full literature review, and discuss/develop the theory in a way that sets up your analysis.
- This section also includes a detailed methodology that describes the process of rhetorical analysis conducted. Here you explain what you actually did – "sorted the metaphors," "identified mythic themes," or "examined the role of race in the film..."

Application/Analysis

- The analysis can be one to three chapters that develop your evidence for substantiating your thesis statement. This is where you analyze your text(s) and explain to your reader the relevant and interesting elements. This is where you blend theory and text.
- Your analysis should have a clear organizational structure that is (most likely) based on the development of theory done earlier.

Conclusion

- This chapter is a summation and restatement of your thesis a brief summary of the major findings. This is also where you explain how these findings advance our understanding of human symbol use, rhetoric, or culture.
- You should state clearly why this work has been important, and also identify areas for future research.

Bibliography (“Works Cited” or “References”) – Use APA Style unless your advisor states otherwise. You should include references with each chapter.

See **Appendix B** for style/format requirements.

Appendix A: Statement of Policy on Plagiarism

Adopted by the Faculty in April 1975

1. Intellectual honesty is fundamental to scholarship. Accordingly, the College views plagiarism or cheating of any kind in academic work as among the most serious offenses that a student can commit.
2. Plagiarism occurs when one presents work which is taken from another person who is not given due credit. **ALL STUDENTS WILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR CAREFULLY READING AND FOLLOWING THE DOCUMENT PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE**, which defines plagiarism and discusses in detail the proper and improper uses of source material. Students who are uncertain in any specific situation as to whether plagiarism may be involved should discuss the matter with their instructor.
3. In order to insure equal and fair treatment for all students, instructors are expected to report to the Dean of Students any cases of plagiarism where there appears to be an intent to deceive, as well as cheating of any kind in student work. Absence of any obvious attempt on the student's part to acknowledge the original source will be taken as prima facie evidence of such an intent to deceive. If the evidence warrants, the case will then be brought before the Committee on Student Conduct for a hearing.
4. In instances involving questionable or faulty use of source material where culpable motives are not involved, the instructor should warn and advise the student. At the beginning of each semester the instructor should discuss potential problems in the area of plagiarism as they apply to the particular course involved.

Definition

There are many forms of academic dishonesty. Here we are concerned especially with plagiarism. Plagiarism is the representation of another person's words, ideas, or information as if they were one's own. You may use another person's words, ideas, or information, but to do so without acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism. This applies to both oral and written work.

Reasons for Citing Sources

The fundamental reason for citing sources is intellectual honesty. You are guilty of plagiarism if you do not cite your sources.

Citing your sources can also be helpful to you and your reader.

1. You are providing information that your reader may use in seeking further knowledge on your topic, or on a subtopic or peripheral topic that you have treated only briefly.
2. You are providing a means whereby another person may verify the accuracy of your use of sources.
3. Careful citation helps you to know when you do have a new idea, or whether you have achieved a meaningful synthesis of other people's ideas.
4. The same idea might have occurred independently to others. By citing your sources you show how you arrived at it.

What to Cite

Although it is impossible to list all possible circumstances, the following illustrate the range to which the principle applies. You may describe Einstein's theory of relativity, but if you present it as your theory you are guilty of plagiarism. You may summarize a Supreme Court opinion in your own words, but if you incorporate the language of the original without indicating that you are doing so, you are guilty of plagiarism. Copying from someone else's paper during an examination is plagiarism. The submission of a term paper purchased from or prepared by someone else also constitutes plagiarism.

Acknowledgment should be made not only for theories, interpretations, ideas, and language adopted from other sources, but also for nonverbal material such as artistic and musical works, illustrations, charts, and experiments. Indicate the sources of data, whether from reference works, computer data files, or your own efforts.

Acknowledge specific detailed assistance from friends, instructors, or others. On collaborative projects, indicate who contributed which portions of the endeavor. Copying another person's lab report or running off a duplicate listing of a computer homework assignment is plagiarism. A student who wishes to submit work for credit in more than one course should consult with the instructor(s) in advance.

Beliefs so widely held as to defy citation and information (such as birth and death dates) obtainable from any of a number of authoritative sources are considered "common knowledge" and need not be cited. Also, phraseology in common use, such as "knowledge is power" (Bacon) or "military-industrial complex" (Eisenhower), may be duplicated without acknowledgment.

It is safer to acknowledge than not to acknowledge. Always supply a reference if you are in doubt; even a crude reference is better than none at all.

Appendix B: Style and Format Requirements

Style: [APA Style](#) is preferred, unless your advisor states otherwise.

Title Page: (see example)

1. Title of the thesis
2. Name of author and department
3. The following statement: “A THESIS submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for a Bachelors Degree”
4. Name of School
5. Date of submission
6. Advisory committee (beginning with advisor). If you do not have an advisory committee, simply list the name of your advisor as shown and change label (as shown in Appendix C) from “Advisory Committee” to “Advisor”.

Paper: Use high quality bond paper or its equivalent as high acid paper will yellow and decay in only a few years. For example high quality 8 1/2 x 11 computer paper is acceptable.

Typing: All text must be double-spaced on one side of the page. Individual footnotes, bibliographic references and long quotes may be single spaced.

Print your thesis using a laser printer. Acceptable fonts include Times Roman or New Century Schoolbook in 11 or 12 point font. Script type and other exotic typefaces are not acceptable; neither is colored ink.

Margins: A margin of 1.5" should be left on the binding edge (left side) and 1" for the other three edges. These margins apply to full-page photographs and pages containing charts, tables, text, and other figures.

Pagination: You should account for every page in the thesis. The title page is page 1 (or page I if you are using Roman numerals for certain introductory parts), even though it is not so numbered. The second page is page 2 (or ii), whether it is a dedication, acknowledgement, table of contents, introduction or preface, and each page thereafter should be numbered consecutively. If for any reason -- such as appearance -- you choose not to put the page number on a given page, you should still account for it in the numbering. All pages of illustration, whether interspersed with the text or included in a separate section, should be numbered consecutively with the text.

Acknowledgments: An optional personal statement by the author.

Table of Contents and List of Figures: It may also be appropriate to include a list of abbreviations.

Abstract: A short, single-spaced summary of the thesis question, the method(s) used to address the question, the results and the conclusion. The abstract is quite important. It should present the most important things about this study. The abstract should allow others to decide whether they would like to read your thesis.

Bibliography: Alphabetized list of all published information referred to in the body of the thesis. Consult with your advisor regarding the appropriate bibliographic style.

References and Footnotes: Research skills are a particularly important aspect of the thesis writing process. Therefore, special attention should be paid to references and footnotes.

The purpose of providing references is to 1) attribute cited information, ideas and quotations properly to the original author, and 2) enable readers to easily locate the cited information

Footnotes enable the author to expand upon ideas or information presented in the body of the thesis that are supplemental or secondary to the text. Again, the format for footnoting is not stipulated and students are encouraged to look at the approaches used by authors in their area of interest and to consult with their advisor.

Submission: One copy of your thesis should be bound and submitted to your thesis advisor. Thesis binders are available for purchase at the College Bookstore. You must also send an electronic version to rhetoric@bates.edu. The electronic submission must be a PDF file titled using the formula *Last Name _ Title*.

Title Sheet Example

TITLE:

SUBTITLE

By

Kenneth Burke

Rhetoric Department

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for a Bachelors Degree

Bates College

Date

Advised by Professor I. B. Good

Honors Thesis

If you are interested in earning Department Honors by completing a year long Honors Thesis, you should indicate this to the Rhetoric department in the form of an *Honors Proposal*.

On the basis of the quality of work and the overall performance in coursework within the major, no more than 10% of students will be invited to write honors. Other requirements include:

- A minimum GPA of 3.5 within the major (based on at least 6 rhetoric courses)
- Completion of a fall semester senior thesis deemed by the Department's faculty to be of sufficient scope and quality to be considered for honors. (See **Honors Review** below).

Honors Thesis Proposal

Three copies of your honors thesis proposal are due at the same time as semester-long proposals (usually during short term) for department consideration. The honors thesis proposal should contain an abstract of each section of your paper, a complex rationale for your study, an articulated thesis statement and an annotated bibliography. See attached form for more details.

Honors Review

If you are invited to write honors, you must undergo a "review" at the end of the fall semester. For this review you must submit a full chapter of polished writing as well as a detailed summary of your other chapters. The rhetoric department will meet to review your materials. If satisfactory progress is being made toward an honors level project, the student will be invited to write honors in the winter semester.

Students hoping to participate in the honors program should plan their winter semester courses as if they will not be enrolling for a second semester of thesis and make adjustments as appropriate once honors invitations have been extended by the Department. Departmental invitations are extended by the first week of January.

Students continuing their thesis work in the second semester for the Departmental Honors Program may collect additional data/evidence, further develop their analysis of evidence they collected in the fall, deepen their review of the existing scholarly literature on their topic, and revise the written work in their fall semester thesis. **The College requires that students being considered for Departmental Honors submit their final thesis by early March.**

Later in March, honors candidates are required to defend their thesis orally, before a panel of rhetoric faculty, other Bates faculty from outside the Department, and an outside expert in the student's field of interest. It is on the basis of the final thesis, as well as this oral defense, that the panel makes a final determination of whether a student will receive Department Honors.

Thesis Proposal Form

Name: _____ Major Track: _____

I would like to write in the (circle one): FALL SPRING

I have taken the following rhetoric courses: (Please list both departmental courses and those taken to satisfy interdisciplinary requirements):

Semester Taken	Course number and title	Grade Earned

My text/artifact will be: _____

The general argument/line of thought I will be developing is: _____

Below, please identify at least 5 sources you have already consulted and briefly describe how they are informing your approach to the text/topic. Please list full bibliographic citations.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

HONORS THESIS PROPOSAL

Name: _____ Major Concentration: _____

I have taken the following rhetoric courses: (Please list both departmental courses and those taken to satisfy interdisciplinary requirements):

Semester Taken	Course number and title	Grade Earned

Title or Subject:

Text / Artifact _____

Please attach a copy of your text/artifact to this proposal.

Please write a short (4-7 page) essay in which you respond to the following questions.

1. What is the problem or question or topic that you are interested in studying? What makes this topic important, and interesting?
2. What do other scholars say about your question or topic? What are the competing approaches or perspectives in the literature? How would you situate your question in these ongoing discussions?
3. Describe how you plan to discuss and/or answer your question. What do you plan to do and why? Tell us what kind of information you are planning to analyze and how your analysis will address and contribute to the scholarly literature. Why is your rhetorical approach useful?

4. What do you expect to find at the end of your research? What might your arguments or contributions be?
5. Sketch out in paragraph form or roughly outline the chapters that may be included in your thesis.
6. Include a detailed/annotated bibliography.