

## Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies MA Thesis Information Sheet (Revised: Sept. 2018)

THE UNIVERSITY HOLDS STUDENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR FOLLOWING THE GUIDELINES AND MEETING THE DEADLINES SPECIFIED IN THESE DOCUMENTS. Be sure to read and understand the requirements registration, thesis credits, graduation, etc.

### **1. The key documents you should be sure to consult are:**

- ◆ GW CCAS *Graduate Student Handbook for Master's & Certificate* (online link at <https://columbian.gwu.edu/graduate-resources>)
- ◆ GW *Thesis and Dissertations* style guide (online at <https://library.gwu.edu/etd>).
- ◆ See WGSS's own *Guide to Graduate Study in Women's Studies* on what is typically expected in WGSS theses. Some of the information here is also in the Guide.

**2. Example of Typical CCAS Deadlines:** The final copy of the MA thesis, formatted according to GW guidelines, officially approved by the Thesis Advisor and the Reader, usually is due for electronic submission by the following dates (but **be sure to verify the dates for the year you are graduating**):

- ◆ January 15 for Winter graduation
- ◆ May 15 for Spring graduation.
- ◆ August 15 for Summer graduation.

### **3. Some Tips for Avoiding Major Headaches:**

- ◆ Read the GW guidelines so you don't miss deadlines, or have to retype/reformat at the last minute.
- ◆ Almost everyone underestimates the time it takes to do the research and write the thesis. Try to be realistic in your planning.
- ◆ In planning your schedule, keep in mind that WGSS faculty, as well as most other GW faculty, are not paid to work with students over the summer (though some may be willing to give students some of their time).
- ◆ If you run into a writing block, feel isolated or overwhelmed, get help by going to the Writing Center and/or getting together with other students working on theses or independent research for feedback and support.

### **4. Typically, in writing a thesis in the social sciences (humanities may be different), one would:**

- ◆ Define a research question.
- ◆ Locate the topic within the existing literature, discussing how it relates to previous research and theory, and what it will contribute.
- ◆ Explain your methods and sources of information.
- ◆ Present your findings.
- ◆ Discuss the theoretical, policy, or other implications of the findings.
- ◆ Draw some conclusions.

**5. Human Subjects Permission:** See the Graduate Student Handbook and the Office of Human Research website (below). As explained in the GW Graduate Student Handbook, if your thesis

involves research on living people (such as interviewing, observing, questionnaire, focus group, etc.) you must get what is called IRB approval. For more details, required CITI training, and access to forms, go to <https://humanresearch.gwu.edu/> and follow instructions. For student projects, they usually try to in a few weeks, but it may take longer. Your advisor and/or other WGSS faculty can help you figure out what to do. As indicated in the Handbook and on the website, if you fail to obtain Human Research approval, the University may require you to start your thesis all over again, not use any of the data (interviews, etc.) you collected without permission, register and pay again for thesis credits, and other penalties. In other words, this is serious!

#### **6. Example of a time line (subject to negotiation with your thesis advisor and reader):**

- **Spring, first year:** Begin defining a general topic and finding an advisor
- **Summer, first year:** Background reading; secondary sources; literature search. Usually this would be independent work by the student.
- **September-October, second year:** In consultation with your thesis advisor, finalize your topic and research strategy. **Submit to WGSS the “Thesis Topic Approval” form signed by your thesis advisor and DGS (academic advisor).** Initiate IRB review if necessary. (IRB will not approve any research done before submission to the IRB.) Although the IRB tries to process most student applications within 2-3 weeks, some proposals may take 2 months or longer. Allow enough time.
- **November - March, second year:** Conduct research and begin writing (schedule will vary).
- **January – February :** Write first draft and submit to advisor. (Alternatively, your thesis advisor might prefer that you submit chapters or sections rather than a full draft)
- **March:** Revise thesis in response to advisor’s comments.
- **April 1:** Give second draft to both advisor and reader (Alternatively, your Reader might be involved in reading earlier drafts or may prefer to read only the final draft after it is approved by the thesis advisor.)
- **April -** Revise second draft. Give revised thesis to advisor & reader.
- **May 1 – May 15:** Get final approval for any additional revisions. Format and electronically submit thesis <https://library.gwu.edu/etd> and <https://library.gwu.edu/etd/ccas> . CCAS requests that you submit before May 15 so that any formatting problems can be fixed. If you wait until May 15 to submit electronically, you risk not graduating until August for any minor problem.
- Modifications to this timeline should be made in negotiation with one's advisor.

#### **7. What happens if you need more time?**

If you have finished your coursework and taken your 6 thesis credits but need more time to finish the thesis, beyond the Spring semester, in the past, CCAS policy has permitted the following:

- ◆ If a student registers for “continuous enrollment (CE) for the summer and finishes by August 15, the student pays only \$35 (amount may change) and graduates in August.
- ◆ If a student registers for CE for the summer but does not finish by August 15, she/he may register and pay again for CE for Fall, finish within first 3 weeks of the Fall semester, and graduate in January (policy may change).
- ◆ If the student needs more time (than the first 3 weeks of the fall semester), she/he registers for “continuing registration” (CR) for the fall semester and pays for one credit. The student

must file by January 15, to graduate in January.

- ◆ These rules can be confusing, so be sure to consult your academic advisor and CCAS. Policies may change so it is always important to check.