

Welcome back! This is it, the last semester of the Croft senior thesis. Hopefully by now you have a least a loose sense of what you're writing about and hopefully you have actually put an introduction and even a chapter down on digital paper. The most important piece of advice I have for you is to continue working hard on the thesis **now**.

First Draft

The **first draft** of the thesis is due **Monday, February 27**. This is only **five weeks away**. Think about what your finished thesis will look like and think about what you will need to do each week to get there by Monday, February 27. This is the moment to work the hardest on your thesis. Your other classes are just getting started and you have more time now than you will later in the semester. A good, complete first draft will lay the groundwork for a high-quality thesis and a low-stress semester.

Second Draft

The **second draft** of the thesis is due to your mentor, me and Dr. Gispén, and your third reader on **Friday, March 24**. At this point you should have revised all of the rough language, found all of the missing references, and elucidated the unclear points that you still had in your first draft. Your mentor and the second and third readers should be reading a complete and polished scholarly work so that they can aim their comments at helping you push your analysis to the next level, not correcting basic grammatical mistakes or pointing out gaping holes in your argument.

If you do not have a full draft completed at this point, you will be facing an uphill battle for the rest of the semester, and your final product will not reflect the best of your abilities. We here at Croft have seen many promising theses receive less than ideal grades because students did not turn their first and second drafts in by the deadlines and consequently were not able to incorporate their readers' comments into their work or fully polish their argument and writing.

Comments from readers

Over the next two weeks after you submit your second draft should continue polishing your work as your committee reads it over. This is also a good time to prepare the presentation of your work that you will give at your defense (see <http://www.croft.olemiss.edu/current/thesis-defense> for instructions on preparing the defense). Your committee will return your thesis to you by **Friday, April 7**, at which point you will meet with your mentor and discuss how to integrate the readers' comments into your work, taking into consideration the scope of your project and the time remaining before the end of their semester.

Please refer to the Senior Thesis Format page on the website (<http://www.croft.olemiss.edu/current/croft-thesis-format>) a detailed explanation of the **formatting requirements** for the thesis.

Final Draft

After making all necessary revisions, you will turn in the **final draft** of your thesis on **Monday, April 24**, and, in conversation with your mentor and third reader, you will schedule a time for

your thesis defense during regular school hours between **Wednesday, April 26** and **Friday, May 5**. You are responsible for finding a time that is convenient for both your mentor and your third reader.

If you do not turn in your final draft by the deadline of **Monday, April 24** you will not be able to defend this semester! Do not let yourself get behind!

Final Grade

Your final grade for Inst 422 will be based on an evaluation by each of your three readers of both your written thesis and the oral presentation that you give at your defense. The criteria for this evaluation are as follows:

- The student has articulated a *compelling research question or hypothesis*.
- The student has *contextualized the research topic*.
- The student has used *appropriate literature and primary sources*.
- The student has employed *methods of analysis* that are both *explicit* and *appropriate* for testing the hypothesis.
- The student has convincingly *demonstrated the validity of the hypothesis*.
- The note *apparatus, bibliography, and any graphs or tables* are organized and presented in a manner in keeping with the standards of the discipline.
- The thesis meets the *linguistic and stylistic standards* of the discipline.
- The student *met my deadlines and those set by the Croft Institute*.
- The student *kept the appointments we set and was respectful of my time*.
- The student's *oral presentation at the outset* of the defense was successful.
- The student's *oral defense* of the thesis was successful.

Your written thesis will count for 80% of the grade for Inst 422 and your defense for 20%. A grade of C or better is required to complete the course for credit and graduate. Please discuss these criteria with your mentor to determine what his or her expectations are for each of them.

Model Theses

The Croft Institute has posted sample senior theses and thesis prospectuses on its website. The theses can be found at: <http://www.croft.olemiss.edu/current/model-theses>. You will have to log -in to see the theses.

Let me reiterate that the key to success this semester is working hard now so that you can turn in a complete draft of your thesis on **Monday, February 27!** This should be your absolute number one priority for the next four weeks. As always, if you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at wschenck@olemiss.edu or 915-1500.