VASSAR COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

Senior Thesis Handbook

2021-22

Overview

The department's optional senior thesis is an opportunity to do independent research on a topic of your choosing. Typically, the thesis topic is an extension of independent work done in RELI 300 during the fall. The senior thesis is a half unit of credit (RELI 301) taken in the spring of your senior year.

The Senior Thesis generally takes the form of an extended scholarly essay of 40-60 pages long. Other formats—such as creative writing projects—are possible but must be approved in advance by the department. Regardless of format, all senior theses follow the schedule of due dates listed below.

Thesis Petition

The department must approve your senior thesis. In reviewing your petition the department will ask: (a) Have you identified a viable and engaging research problem and (b) explicitly situated your project in relation to relevant scholarly literature? (c) Does your course work at Vassar prepare you to undertake the project you propose?

The thesis petition is available on the department's Moodle site and in this handbook. It is due to the Department Chair by email by December 1, 2021 by 5pm.

Advisor

The department uses an advising system of primary advisor and second reader. You will work most closely with your primary advisor. Your second reader is responsible for reading your final thesis, but should also be thought of as another advising resource. The department assigns advisors in December and January. The department does its best to match up your interests with members of our faculty. You should expect to meet with your advisor at least every two weeks during your thesis semester.

Grades

Senior theses are ungraded. Advisers assign marks of Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, or Distinction. Students will receive comments back from their advisor.

Moodle Database

The department will post all senior theses to our Religion Department Moodle database unless notified otherwise by you.

Deadlines 2021-2022

(Note: The Spring term deadlines below are suggestions; please consult with your advisor.)

December 1: Thesis Petition
Submit your thesis petition to department Chair via email.

February 6: Key Section
Submit a 15-20 page draft of key section of your thesis to your advisor. This can be a draft of one chapter of your thesis.

March 2: First Draft of the Thesis plus Project Abstract
Submit a draft of your entire senior thesis to your advisor.

March 8-11: Meet with Advisor
Schedule a meeting with your advisor to discuss your draft.

April 5: Second Draft Due
Submit your second draft of your senior project to your advisor.

April 12-15: Meet with Advisor
Schedule a meeting with your advisor to discuss your second draft.

April 29: FINAL THESIS DUE
Submit an electronic copy—in PDF form—to both of your readers and to Wendy Post (wepost@vassar.edu). Use the following filename protocol: FirstnameLastname_RELI_SeniorThesis_2022.pdf.

The Department of Religion
Vassar College
Senior Thesis Petition

1) Name:

2) Tentative Title of Project

3) Identify all college-level courses (at Vassar and elsewhere) that you have taken relevant to your project, including independent work.

4) Who do you think your advisor might be?

5) Have you spoken to this person about the potential of directing your project?

6) On a separate sheet of a paper, provide a summary of your topic by addressing the following questions (max: 500 words):

1. What is the topic of the thesis? What question or questions will your thesis examine? Why are these questions important to you and others?
2. How is your RELI 300 essay related to your proposed thesis? Is the topic the same or similar? Are the questions similar?
3. How will your thesis expand on the work you did in your RELI 300 essay?

Formatting Guidelines for the Senior Thesis

Submit an electronic copy—in PDF form—to both of your readers and to Wendy Post (wepost@vassar.edu). Use the following filename protocol: **FirstnameLastname_RELI_SeniorThesis_2022.pdf**. The Religion Department will archive the electronic version of your senior thesis.

Here's a suggested set of style protocols for the thesis.

- A Title Page
    - Your name
    - Project Title
    - The date
    - The Department of Religion Senior Thesis
    - The name of your first reader
    - The name of your second reader

- Thesis Abstract with key words.
    - A one-paragraph (around 200 words) description that provides a clear idea of the main questions, arguments, and conclusions of your thesis.
    - Select 5-10 keywords that distinguish the most important ideas, names, and concepts in the thesis
    - See examples in the Journal of the American Academy of Religion

- A Table of Contents as appropriate

- Acknowledgements if you wish

- Double-space your pages and number them consecutively

- Include appropriate citations and a bibliography. Footnotes should be consistent. Consult your advisor about the appropriate citation format for your project. In addition, consult the Vassar College Libraries' online citation guide at http://libguides.vassar.edu/citingsources