

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

[WORKING TITLE GOES HERE]

By
[NAME]

A THESIS PROPOSAL

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of South Alabama in
partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the Degree of Master of Arts

in

English

[DATE]

Approved:

Date:

Chair of Thesis Committee:

Member of Committee:

Member of Committee:

Member of Committee:

Chair of Department: Dr. Ellen Harrington

Director of Graduate Studies: Dr. Brandi Kiel Reese

PREPARING YOUR PROSPECTUS

Students must schedule a prospectus meeting with all faculty members on the committee (including the outside reader) prior to submitting the approved prospectus.

Please prepare a draft of your prospectus to show to your thesis advisor no later than **the first week** of your second-to-last semester (usually the Fall semester, but not always). After your advisor has agreed that it's ready, set up a prospectus meeting with your committee to take place no later than the week after Labor Day if you plan to graduate in the Spring.

Once your prospectus has been approved by your committee, any revisions need to be made by you asap so that you can submit the final prospectus to Shawn Ash who will keep it with your records. Please submit your final prospectus within one week of your prospectus meeting. Keep a copy for yourself.

The Prospectus Document

Your creative prospectus should clearly define your project and demonstrate an awareness of its literary context, situating your work in the field.

Your thesis will include a critical introduction that illustrates your literary influences and their impact on your creative work. Please adequately indicate what you intend your focus to be for your critical introduction.

3-5 double-spaced pages for your prospectus is adequate.

Please also include a works cited page that demonstrates what you've already read and what you intend to read in the genre you've selected (12-15 texts total). * Please note that the reading annotations that you do in your classes should be carefully chosen to count towards your readings you can list on your works cited page. That is, make what you choose always be readings you need for your thesis work.

The prospectus is a thoughtful document that details your *intentions*. These may change or be adjusted over the course of compiling your thesis work. The prospectus should be accompanied by a writing sample in the genre proposed (e.g., a short story, an essay, five pages of poetry, novel chapter, etc).

Please see the sample that follows that will help you to create your own prospectus.

Important note regarding the use of AI: Please consult with your thesis advisor about any use of AI in your work, including your prospectus. Your thesis advisor will direct you on decisions about usage.

Sample creative prospectus for all genres (3 - 5 double-spaced pages)

*** This is just an example that you can manipulate for your own purposes. Feel free!**

1. Working Title of project (one line)

2. Project Description (250-300 words)

Working Title is a [genre] of approximately [75,000–90,000 words] that explores [central theme or conflict]. Set in [setting and time period], the narrative follows [brief description of protagonist(s) and major situation]. Through [single/multiple]points of view, the [novel] examines questions of [major themes].

This project draws on [historical research, personal experience, literary traditions, cultural context, etc.] and incorporates elements of [genre(s) or aesthetic approaches] to create a narrative that investigates [larger significance of the project]. The completed manuscript will contribute to contemporary conversations about [relevant themes, issues, or literary concerns] while demonstrating sustained engagement with craft elements such as [characterization, structure, voice, and setting].

3. Literary, Critical, and Creative Contexts (250-400 words)

Ask yourselves these questions:

Who are your literary influences? What traditions, genres, or conversations does your work participate in? What research or craft approaches will inform the project? Which of these elements of your work might you write about for your critical introduction?

Your discussion should demonstrate how your project is informed by existing literary traditions and critical conversations, while also clarifying how it seeks to develop an original artistic contribution.

Sample:

This project is informed by a range of [literary, critical, historical, and cultural influences] that shape both its thematic concerns and its creative approach. The manuscript engages with questions of [memory, identity, belonging, family history, migration, trauma, social change, power, etc.] and considers how these concerns are expressed through [narrative form, character development, and setting].

The project is situated within relevant literary traditions and genres, including [genre, movement, or aesthetic category], and draws on the work of writers such as [author 1], [author 2], and [author 3]. These texts provide important points of comparison in terms of [thematic focus, narrative strategy, tone, structure, or stylistic approach]. While these works inform the project's development, the manuscript seeks to establish its own distinct artistic vision through its subject matter, voice, and formal choices.

In addition to literary influences, the project is informed by relevant critical perspectives or theoretical frameworks, which may include approaches to [memory studies, postcolonial theory, trauma theory, Southern Gothic studies, ecocriticism, etc., as appropriate]. These frameworks provide a context for understanding how narrative form and thematic content intersect in the work.

Particular attention is given to craft elements such as [images, voice, characterization, point of view, narrative structure, language, and setting]. The project also draws on research into [historical period, cultural context, geography, profession, or community], which supports the development of an informed and nuanced fictional world.

Through the integration of literary influences, critical frameworks, and creative practice, this project aims to contribute to ongoing literary conversations while producing an original and fully realized work of fiction.

The critical introduction will explore how [some intersection of the previous elements or a specific question relating to the application of one or more of these elements] is central to the work of the thesis and the approach to writing.

4. Description of the Creative Work (250–400 words)

This section should answer the question: what exactly are you writing?

Provide a concise overview of the manuscript, including genre, structure, form, major themes, central conflicts, instigating questions, and key craft strategies.

Sample:

This project consists of a [novel, novella, short story collection, poetry collection, memoir, hybrid manuscript, screenplay, etc.] of approximately [length in pages]. The work follows [protagonist(s) or central subjects] as they navigate [central conflict, situation, or journey]. Set in [time period and/or location], the project explores themes of [theme 1], [theme 2], and [theme 3].

The manuscript is organized as [brief description of structure, such as chapters, sections, multiple perspectives, linked stories, or chronological/nonlinear arrangement]. The narrative may employ craft strategies such as [point of view, voice, experimentation with form, multiple timelines, lyric elements, speculative elements, etc.] to support the project's overall meaning.

Central questions or conflicts explored in the work include:

- [Major conflict, question, or tension]
- [Major conflict, question, or tension]
- [Major conflict, question, or tension]

Through its characters, narrative structure, language, and setting, the project seeks to investigate [larger artistic, emotional, cultural, or philosophical concerns].

5. Methodology and Research (150–250 words)

Describe the research, reading, drafting, workshopping, and revision processes that will inform the project.

Example: The development of this creative project will involve a combination of research, creative practice, and revision. Depending on the nature of the manuscript, research methods may include historical, cultural, literary, archival, field, or subject-specific research to support the accuracy, depth, and complexity of the work.

Research activities may include:

- Reading primary and secondary sources related to the project's subject matter, setting, historical period, or themes.
- Conducting field research, site visits, interviews, observations, or other forms of experiential inquiry when appropriate.
- Studying literary models, comparable works, and craft texts relevant to the project's artistic goals.
- Engaging with scholarly, cultural, or historical materials that inform the project's context and themes.

The creative process will also include drafting, workshopping, feedback from faculty and peers, revision, and reflection on craft. Particular attention will be given to elements such as voice, characterization, structure, language, point of view, and form. Through the integration of research and creative practice, the project aims to produce a manuscript that is both artistically accomplished and intellectually informed.

6. Thesis Structure and Timetable (100-200 words)

Outline the components of the thesis and provide a realistic timeline for drafting, revision, and completion.

The completed thesis will consist of the manuscript [working title] and a critical introduction of approximately 15-20 pages.

The creative portion will comprise approximately [length in pages] and will represent the culmination of the research, creative development, and revision described in this prospectus.

The accompanying critical introduction will examine the project's [literary, theoretical, historical, cultural, or craft contexts] and discuss the creative decisions that informed the work's development.

Proposed Timeline:

- [Specify Months] Complete a full, clean draft of the manuscript.
- [Specify Months] Write the critical introduction, framing the work within existing scholarship.
- [Dates the manuscript and critical intro will be handed in to your thesis advisor for review]:
- [Defense date approximately]
- Defense: a short reading and presentation of your work
- Incorporate feedback from thesis committee and revise. [Include official submission dates.]

This timeline may be adjusted in consultation with the thesis advisor to accommodate the evolving needs of the creative project.

7. Bibliography (12-15 sources)

Might include:

4–6 comparable creative works

2–4 critical/theoretical works

1–3 research or historical sources relevant to the project

Format: Your prospectus should be in MLA format and double-spaced throughout. Use the template format provided by Graduate School for the signature sheet, and attach the final version of the prospectus to the signature sheet when you request signatures.

<http://www.southalabama.edu/graduatemajors/graduateschool/thesis.html>

Signature Page: For the final version, be sure to complete the formal signature page signed by the committee, Dr. Ellen Harrington (Chair, Department of English), and Dr. Brandi Kiel Reese (Graduate Director, College of Arts and Sciences). Forward the signature page to the Department of English to file, and keep a copy for yourself.

Deadline: The thesis prospectus for the English MA must be completed and approved during the first weeks of the second semester before graduation. Please consult with your thesis advisor about these dates.