**MA Thesis Trajectory 2022/2023**

Coordinator: Kristine Steenbergh

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Registration

You must sign up for the following module at vu.nl:

* Master Thesis English Literature, L\_ELMAENGSCR, 18 credits.

Two trajectories

* Two thesis trajectories are offered, a Fall 2022 trajectory and a Spring 2023 trajectory.
* You can participate in only one trajectory per academic year.

Entry requirement

* In order to participate in the Fall 2022 trajectory, you must have successfully completed all MA (non-thesis) modules. The cut-off date is 19 September 2022.
* In order to participate in the Spring 2023 trajectory, you must have completed 18 ECTS in courses in the MA, and you must have participated in all MA modules offered in periods 1, 2, and 3. The cut-off date is 6 February 2023.

Trajectory phases

The thesis trajectory consists of two (in case of a re-sit, three) phases:

* Preparation phase (pp. 2-3)
* Writing phase (pp. 4-6)
* Re-sit phase (p. 7)

Exemption

* Requests for exemptions (e.g., from the entry requirement) must be sent via VU email to the thesis coordinator, Kristine Steenbergh: [k.steenbergh@vu.nl](mailto:k.steenbergh@vu.nl).
* Within ten working days, you receive a decision via VU email.
* If you disagree with the decision, you can subsequently file an appeal with the Exam Board.

Questions

If, after having read this syllabus, you have any questions regarding the thesis trajectory, contact the thesis coordinator, Kristine Steenbergh: [k.steenbergh@vu.nl](mailto:k.steenbergh@vu.nl).

VU email

Throughout the trajectory, regularly check your VU email inbox, since both the coordinator and your supervisor might contact you this way.

**I. Preparation phase**

The aim of the preparation phase is to formulate a thesis topic, familiarize yourself with the relevant literature, and get acquainted with the supervision process. All of this is formalized in a concluding thesis contract.

Step #1: Read example theses

* On Canvas you can find three MA theses completed in previous academic years. Read these to acquaint yourself with the thesis format.
* If you want to read more example theses, you can find them in the VU library thesis database: ub.vu.nl/en/ => University Library for Students => View past VU Master’s and Bachelor's theses.
* In general, the University Library offers great resources for the thesis trajectory: ub.vu.nl/en/ => University Library for Students => Take a free workshop or consult the online Libguides.

Step #2: Brainstorm about your topic

* On Canvas you can find a list of topic suggestions. You can choose to work on one of these topics. Alternatively, you can formulate your own topic.
* Your topic should reflect elements of what you have learned in the MA program. Note, however, that you cannot copy texts that you have written for other modules into your thesis. Instead, in order to avoid self-plagiarism, you must properly quote from and refer to your earlier work.
* You can write on literature (e.g., novels, plays, poetry, short stories) and comics, both fictional and non-fictional (e.g., memoirs, travel writing). You can include a comparison between these texts on the one hand, and film (e.g., adaptations) on the other.
* While media other than film (e.g., video games) intersect with literature and comics as well, they are not taught in the MA program and therefore you cannot treat them for your thesis.
* English translations of non-English texts can be studied only in comparison to original English-language texts. Moreover, in your thesis proposal (see step #4 below) you must argue your ability to research a particular historical, cultural, and/or linguistic context other than the English-language traditions taught in the MA program.
* As a rule of thumb, texts that you find slightly puzzling result in better theses than texts that you find straightforward.
* If this is not your first thesis trajectory, note that you cannot write on the same thesis topic again.

Step #3: Read primary and secondary materials

* Familiarize yourself thoroughly with your primary texts of choice: read and reread them while taking notes.
* Find all secondary sources on your topic available via the VU library catalogue (ub.vu.nl/en), and acquaint yourself with the most relevant of them: read them and summarize their arguments.

Step #4: Submit your pre-proposal

* Write out a pre-proposal, including research question/statement, topic, theory, chapter division, and list of relevant academic sources.
* If you are still considering several topics, write out the idea that is currently most viable to you (and hold on to the other ideas).
* The pre-proposal can include questions and hesitations on your part.
* Download the pre-proposal form from Canvas; fill out the form on a computer; upload the form as a Word document to Canvas.

Step #5: Attend colloquium meeting A

* Diederik Oostdijk hosts colloquium meeting A for all thesis students. Attendance is mandatory.
* During this session, you will rigorously analyze and reflect on your pre-proposal, which will help you to recognize both the potential and the pitfalls of your topic before embarking on the writing phase.

Step #6: Submit your thesis proposal

* Taking into consideration the feedback on your pre-proposal, you write out a thesis proposal, including a research question/statement, topic, theory, chapter division, and list of relevant academic sources.
* Download the thesis proposal form from Canvas; fill out the form on a computer; convert the form from a Word document to a PDF file; sign the form; upload the form to Canvas.
* Based on your proposal and staff availability, the thesis coordinator decides who will act as your thesis supervisor and who as your second assessor.
* Your thesis supervisor informs you via VU email about the date, time, and place (offline/online) of the colloquium meeting B.

Step #7: Attend colloquium meeting B

* You attend a colloquium meeting with your thesis supervisor and their other thesis students, in which you review each other’s thesis proposals.
* In addition, you receive instructions from your thesis supervisor on the thesis contract and the writing phase.

Step #8: Submit your thesis contract

* The end of the preparation phase is formalized in a thesis contract.
* Download the thesis contract form from Canvas; fill out the form on a computer; convert the form from a Word document to a PDF file; sign the form; upload the form to Canvas.
* Your thesis supervisor and second assessor will then sign the thesis contract as well.

**Deadlines preparation phase**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Fall 2022 trajectory | Spring 2023 trajectory |
| #1: Example theses | June 2022 | October 2022 |
| #2: Brainstorm topic | July 2022 | November 2022 |
| #3: Read materials | August 2022 | December 2022 |
| #4: Pre-proposal | 5 September 2022, 2 p.m. | 9 January 2023, 2 p.m. |
| #5: Colloquium meeting A | 14 September 2022, 10 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. HG-05A32. | Thursday 19 January, 1.30-4.00 p.m. HG-14A40. |
| #6: Thesis Proposal | 3 October 2022, 2 p.m. | 6 February 2023, 2 p.m. |
| #7 Colloquium meeting B | 10 October 2022\* | 13 February 2023\* |
| #8: Thesis contract | 17 October 2022, 2 p.m. | 20 February 2023, 2 p.m. |

* Read dates marked with an asterisk as “week of …”
* Late submissions are not accepted.

**II. Writing phase**

The writing phase consists of three components: individual supervision meetings, a stop/go-report, and the final thesis.

Step #9: Three individual supervision meetings

You meet three times with your thesis supervisor to discuss a draft chapter. Since your supervisor receives a limited number of hours for supervising your thesis, there is a meeting protocol in place:

* Two weeks prior to the meeting, you upload your draft chapter as a Word document to Canvas. Late submission or submitting a text that has not been carefully edited (paragraph construction, grammar and spelling, MLA guidelines) means no feedback and no meeting (nor a chance to reschedule the meeting).
* One week prior to the meeting, your thesis supervisor sends you their written feedback via VU email. The feedback focuses on the content of your text; only on the first page of the text are writing mistakes marked.
* During the meeting, you ask specific questions about the written feedback for max 30 minutes. If you have no specific questions, the meeting ends prematurely.
* All chapters receive feedback only once.

Step #10: Submit your thesis stop/go-report

* For the third supervision meeting, you also submit a thesis stop/go-report, in which you provide an overview of your progress so far.
* Download the thesis stop/go-report form from Canvas; fill out the form on a computer; convert the form from a Word document to a PDF file; sign the form; upload the form to Canvas.
* Based on your thesis stop/go-report, your supervisor gives you a thesis stop/go-advice.
* A go-advice indicates that your thesis supervisor thinks it is possible for you to complete your thesis within the allotted time and with a pass grade.
* A stop-advice indicates that your thesis supervisor thinks it is unlikely that you will complete the thesis within the allotted time and with a pass grade.
* If you receive a stop-advice, you can nonetheless choose to continue working on the thesis.

Step #11: Submit your thesis

* Your thesis must be between 15,000 and 25,000 words (excluding appendices, footnotes, Works Cited list, and illustrations).
* On the title page, you list:
* The title and, if applicable, the subtitle of your thesis.
* The name of the university: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
* The name of the faculty: Faculty of Humanities.
* The name of the program: Master’s program English Literature in a Visual Culture.
* Your name.
* Your student number.
* The name of your thesis supervisor.
* The name of your second assessor.
* The date of submission.
* After the title page follows a signed declaration of originality. You can find the format on Canvas.
* You upload your thesis as a PDF file to Canvas.

Step #12: Grading of thesis

* Your thesis is assessed by your thesis supervisor and the second assessor. You can find the thesis assessment form they use on Canvas.
* You receive a numerical grade between 1.0 and 10.0 for your thesis (only grades ending on .0 or .5 are possible; 5.5 cannot be used).
* You receive an email from your thesis supervisor with your thesis grade and the assessment forms.

Step #13: Outcomes writing phase

There are three possible outcomes to the writing phase:

1. You do not submit your thesis or you submit your thesis after the deadline. Your thesis is then graded with a No Show. You go on to the re-sit phase.
2. You submit your thesis; it is assessed with a fail grade. You go on to the re-sit phase.
3. You submit your thesis; it is assessed with a pass grade. Congratulations, you have successfully completed the MA thesis trajectory!

**Deadlines writing phase**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Fall 2022 trajectory | Spring 2023 trajectory |
|  | | |
| #9: Submit draft 1 | 24 October 2022, 2 p.m. | 6 March 2023, 2 p.m. |
| #9: Feedback supervisor | 31 October 2022\* | 13 March 2023\* |
| #9: Supervision meeting 1 | 7 November 2022\* | 20 March 2023\* |
|  | | |
| #9: Submit draft 2 | 14 November 2021, 2 p.m. | 3 April 2023 2 p.m. |
| #9: Feedback supervisor | 21 November 2022\* | 10 April 2023\* |
| #9: Supervision meeting 2 | 28 November 2022\* | 17 April 2023\* |
|  | | |
| #9: Submit draft 3 | 5 December 2022, 2 p.m. | 8 May 2023, 2 p.m. |
| #10: Submit stop/go-report | 5 December 2022, 2 p.m. | 8 May 2023, 2 p.m. |
| #9: Feedback supervisor | 12 December 2023\* | 15 May 2023\* |
| #10: Stop/go-advice | 12 December 2023\* | 15 May 2023\* |
| #9: Supervision meeting 3 | 19 December 2023\* | 22 May 2023\* |
|  | | |
| #11: Submit thesis | 30 January 2023, 2 p.m. | 12 June 2023, 2 p.m. |
| #12: Grades | 13 February 2023\* | 26 June 2023\* |

* Read dates marked with an asterisk as “week of …”
* For the Fall 2022 trajectory, the Christmas break (2 weeks) has been taken into account.
* For the Spring 2023 trajectory, the May break (1 week) has been taken into account.
* Late submissions are not accepted.

**III. Re-sit phase**

Step #14: Additional supervision meeting

* If you submitted a thesis and received a fail grade, there is a fourth supervision meeting with your thesis supervisor to discuss their feedback on your thesis.
* If you did not submit a thesis or submitted late, and thus received a No Show, there is no fourth supervision meeting.

Step #15: Submit your re-sit thesis

* Same as step #11 above.

Step #16: Grading of re-sit thesis

* Same as step #12 above.

Step #17: Outcomes re-sit phase

There are three possible outcomes to the re-sit phase:

1. You do not submit your re-sit thesis or you submit your re-sit thesis after the deadline. Your re-sit thesis is then graded with a No Show. You sign up for a new thesis trajectory in the next academic year.
2. You submit your re-sit thesis and you receive a fail grade for it. You sign up for a new thesis trajectory in the next academic year.
3. You submit your re-sit thesis and you receive a pass grade for it. Congratulations, you have successfully completed the MA thesis trajectory!

**Deadlines re-sit phase**

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Fall 2022 trajectory | Spring 2023 trajectory |
| #14: Supervision meeting 4 | 20 February 2023\* | 3 July 2023\* |
| #15: Submit re-sit | 13 March 2023, 2 p.m. | 24 July 2023, 2 p.m. |
| #16: Receive re-sit grade | 27 March 2023\* | 28 August 2023\* |

* Read dates marked with an asterisk as “week of …”
* For the Spring 2023 trajectory, the summer break (4 weeks) has been taken into account.
* Late submissions are not accepted.