

graduating thinkers with curious minds

BGSUGD

BFA Senior Thesis

Spring 2015

Overview

The purpose of this document is to outline BGSUGD BFA Senior Thesis. Every *BFA in Graphic Design* degree major is required to propose a BFA Senior Thesis, to have the proposal approved by its deadline, to participate in a mid-term progress review in the Fall of your Senior year, and to submit their thesis for the BFA Thesis show as well as, submit thesis during finals period of their Spring ARTD 4080, *Graphic Design Senior Seminar* course. Failure to complete and pass BFA Senior Thesis will result in an "F" (course failure) in ARTD 4080, necessitating a retaking of the course and a restarting of Senior Thesis.

For the majority of you, every project you have completed to this point in the BGSUGD program has been assigned to you by your instructor (with a few exceptions here and there, we know), based on the subject matter of the course at hand. The learning objectives for each project were clear and concise, and your output typically met expectations. BFA Senior Thesis is purposefully quite different. Think of it as a focused, year-long, independent design research project. This self-proposed, -initiated and -managed effort is your opportunity to personally explore (research!) an area or topic that is of interest to you and to investigate it fully. It can be directly or indirectly related to graphic design, but "graphic design" must be at its core. The direct result of this sustained, year-long effort should be representative of, and embody, all that you have learned

in and out of the classroom. Your thesis should say something of substance, about you, the individual creative thinker / graphic designer, and your ability to visually communicate in an appropriate, compelling and engaging manner. But more importantly, we are asking that you question, argue, defend, propose, analyze, and/or present new explorations and new experimentations, somewhere within the over-arching umbrella that is the discipline of graphic design.

Enjoy the journey that is BFA Senior Thesis. It truly is something to be excited about, not intimidate by.

The BGSUGD faculty are excited to witness the results of your efforts over the course of the coming year and during mid-term review, the submission of your thesis into the School of Art BFA Senior Thesis Show, and your final thesis presentation at the end of your ARTD 4080, *Graphic Design Senior Seminar* course.

Cheers,



Lori Young
Chair, BGSUGD
Associate Professor of Art
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The Researchable Question*



One aspect of Senior Thesis is crystal clear: its success is largely dependent on your interest in the subject matter, and whether or not the topic is intellectually stimulating and engaging. In the end, as CCA Instructor and renowned designer Christopher Simmons so eloquently put it, “The real goal of thesis is for the idea and the execution to be so seamlessly interwoven that they can’t really be separated or discerned.” The faculty do not wish for you to work on something you dislike for an entire year. On the other hand, we also don’t want something shallow, self-indulgent, or already stated. The end-result should be incredibly self-fulfilling, yet selfishly transferable (think “open source”), not because *we* wish for such a result, but rather, because *you* do—that you want to research a topic and contribute to it in a meaningful and substantive way.

With that stated, let’s move on to the single greatest hurdle most Seniors encounter straight out of the gate with Thesis: *Step One*—writing one’s Senior Thesis Proposal. As the title of this section literally states, the goal is to present a “researchable question.” Granted, your title doesn’t necessarily need to be in the form of a question, but it’s not a bad place to start. What follows is a conversation on the constructs of a truly intelligent, rewarding and exciting proposal. IKEA®-style directions... sorry, out of stock.

(Not) $E=mc^2$

Seriously. We’re not asking you to reinvent the wheel, to discover a new planet, or to prove that a ■ + ● = squircle. Instead, investigate a subject in such a way that you add to its existing (visual / verbal) conversation. Draw upon—gently lean on—the research and ideas of scholars, creatives, and thinkers of the present and the past, citing their work as you go. What you contribute

may be a re-evaluation of the same, or a completely new and unique perspective. Keep in mind that your proposal should not provide profound insight, expertise, supreme capability, or absolute answers, *prior to* actually embarking on the thesis itself. We trust that, as critical and creative thinkers, you are fully capable of rising to an “expert” level of understanding and proficiency *during* the research and design phases of your thesis, and that the process of *doing* thesis will dictate a compelling and appropriate end result.

Managing Scope

On the pragmatic side of things, make sure to choose a manageable proposal topic, one that can be effectively researched and designed between now and the end of your Senior year (preferably, before mid-February of next year, when the *BFA Senior Thesis Show* takes place, so you are able to submit your thesis work for consideration in the show). Speak with faculty members about those topics of interest to you and ask for advice regarding texts and existing research that relate to those topics. It is highly recommended that you read a few secondary materials on, or related to, your chosen topic, to facilitate writing a more persuasive proposal. You may wish to present drafts of your proposal to specific faculty members for informal feedback, before submitting your final proposal. Why is it so important to obtain feedback? Because *proposals may not be revised or resubmitted*. It’s important to submit a strong proposal straight out of the gate.

One last bit of advice for your proposal: whatever you write, however much you write, be certain that every word counts. Your proposal will be your road map for the next twelve months, and good road maps should never, ever get one lost.

* Title and concept inspired by: Meredith Davis, Jamie Gray, Deborah Littlejohn, “What is the Researchable Question?” paper presented at *Massaging Media 2: Graphic Design Education in the Age of Dynamic Media*, April 5, 2008, Boston, Massachusetts.

Thesis Tips

- *What inspires you in design? ...in life?*
- *What are you obsessed with in design? ...in life?*
- *What are you passionate about in design? ...in life?*
- *What do you like reading in design? ...in general?*
- *What topic will retain your interest for an entire year in design? ...in general?*
- *Do you have a point to make? What exactly are you arguing? Care. Otherwise, don't propose the topic.*
- *Building your proposal from statements of the obvious will lead to rejection every time. If you state that "The car has become the embodiment of human expression," you are not stating something new or original, as most would not argue the point.*
- *"Less isn't more. Just enough is more" –Milton Glaser*
- *If you propose something, is it true? Logical? Believable? If it is true, what is the direct result of such a reality? What are the ramifications of such a reality?*
- *Over-arching, grand claims mean little if they cannot be supported with documented primary and secondary sources to back them up. The faculty have been around the proverbial block a few times—little gets past us.*
- *If a term is used, define it. State its common definition, not an esoteric one that few support, or worse, has been disproven by others.*
- *Since we have neither the skill nor assigned task of proving scientific theorems, don't. In other words, do not prove, just investigate, explore, and discover.*
- *Revision to your proposal and/or scope is possible, even after approval. In fact, it might change completely. Embrace this reality. But also realize that such alternations and modifications can only occur with a sustained effort and actual research and work. Change for the sake of change, or a complete lack of effort, only guarantees a lower grade, not permission to do what you want, whenever you want to do it.*
- *A poorly written proposal who's ambiguity presents more questions than clarity will be quickly dismissed*

A researchable question...

- *Is not answered by "yes" or "no"*
- *Is not a description of process or steps to be taken*
- *Reflects a hierarchy among relevant concepts*
- *Requires a definition of terms*
- *Is capable of being broken down into 3-5 sub-questions that suggest methodology and literature, and when answered, resolve the larger issue*
- *Avoids issues of "better" or "more" unless accompanied by appropriate methods that will validate such claims*

Thesis Timeline

ARTD4070 // SPRING of JUNIOR YEAR // One Credit

Thesis Packet

- Packet distributed beginning of term :: Spring semester

Thesis Proposal

- Proposal due during ARTD 3060 course; April 10 of Junior Year (emailed to lyoung@bgsu.edu)
- Proposal must include bibliography of *10 minimum* resources with required contemporary AND historical references.
- Thesis advisor will be assigned upon approval of your thesis. This may or may not be your academic advisor.
- Two 11 x 17 printouts from 3040 and 3060 projects will be submitted (Questioning [BLANK] and Installation) during finals week and will go on display in the hallway. *Template will be provided.*

ARTD4070 // FALL of SENIOR YEAR // One Credit

Thesis Progress Review Presentation One (1)

- In-Progress work presented during second week of Fall semester of Senior Year (PechaKucha Format)
- Presentation should include a minimum of nine (9) new visual explorations/projects created since last term.
- 10 Minute Presentations // Sept 4th, 2015 // *Sign up sheet outside FAC 107 starting first day of classes*
- You are required to attend all reviews as participant and audience member as part of credit hour

Thesis Progress Review Presentation Two (2)

- In-Progress work presented during late Fall semester of Senior Year (PechaKucha Format)
- 15 Minute Presentations // Nov 6th and Nov 13th, 2015 // *Sign up sheet outside FAC 107 October 9th*
- You are required to attend all review days as participant and audience member as part of credit hour

ARTD4070 // SPRING of SENIOR YEAR // One Credit

Thesis Show

- All BFA seniors are required to submit their thesis project for jurying into the BFA Thesis show
- Follow BFA Thesis prospectus schedule received from Jacqui Nathan and the BGSU Galleries
- Must get all paperwork signed in advance by assigned THESIS advisor, NOT the day it is due

Thesis Work & Documentation/Process Book

- Completed thesis is due at end of ARTD 4080 course during final exam time for final assessment.
- Due along with Project; bound format; to include sketches, notes, documentation, reference materials/imagery, etc.
- Process book should be a fully designed work
- Submit digital files of Thesis work on CD following proper file naming standards (i.e. JohnSmith_Thesis [title]_2015)

Register ARTD4070 Jan. 14 :: Thesis Packet Presented Register ARTD4070 Apr. 10 :: Thesis Proposal Due May :: Finals week :: Thesis course investigations due June :: Three (3) investigations/experiments July :: Three (3) investigations/experiments August :: Three (3) investigations/experiments Register ARTD4070 Aug. 24 :: Sign up for first thesis review Sept. 11 :: Present & attend thesis reviews Oct. 9 :: Sign up for second thesis review Nov 6 & 13 :: Attend thesis reviews Jan :: BFA paper 1 needs signed by advisor Feb :: BFA submission & artist statement due Mar :: Final BFA work due BFA Thesis show May :: Finals Week :: Thesis project, documentation book and CD due	SPRING 2015	SUMMER 2015	FALL 2015	SPRING 2016
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Thesis Proposal Requirements

Please submit your BFA Senior Thesis Proposal as a screen-resolution quality PDF single page, following the format outlined below (do not delete, add, or include anything other than what is listed here); you are fully responsible for the content of your submitted proposal; e-mail your proposal directly to division chair, Lori Young at lyoung@bgsu.edu on or before the announced deadline; **late proposals will not be accepted!** (*Proposals should be no longer than one page, set in Helvetica or Times in 9/12.*) **Proposals must also include a full bibliography of 10 resources with historical and contemporary references of academic standard as a separate page within your single PDF document.**

(include all of the following below this line in your proposal PDF.)

Student Name ::

Through research, discover and answer *What Is your...*

Semantic Unit ::

Genre ::

Style ::

Stereotype ::

Institution(s) ::

Ideology ::

Discourse ::

Paradigm ::

Thesis Title (working title) ::

Thesis Abstract ::

What is the essence (spirit) of your thesis (topic) and the research questioning that you are interested in investigating?

Thesis Rationale ::

Why are you pursuing this topic?

Thesis Methodologies ::

What type of research methods will you use to learn more about your thesis?

NOTE // Any declined or unapproved proposals and work will be marked as failing.

Senior Thesis Progress Review Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____

		excellent	good	weak	poor	failure
OVERALL	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
THESIS CONTENT	OBSERVATION / THEORY	<input type="radio"/>				
	PROPOSITION	<input type="radio"/>				
	ARGUMENT & RESEARCH	<input type="radio"/>				
	INVESTIGATION / ACTION	<input type="radio"/>				
	THESIS PROGRESS	<input type="radio"/>				
PRESENTATION	VISUAL	<input type="radio"/>				
	VERBAL	<input type="radio"/>				
	Q+A RESPONSES	<input type="radio"/>				
CUSTOM	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CUSTOM	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>