

## SJU WRITING STUDIES PROGRAM

### Thesis Guide

#### The Basics

- Your thesis project requires you to write 75-80 double-spaced pages, depending on your genre (prose, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, academic analysis, etc.). Poetry collections, which are typically single-spaced, should be at least 48 single-spaced pages; screenplays and plays are somewhat longer. Projects can also include more than one genre.
- Thesis work is the equivalent of two courses: Thesis I (ENG 793) and Thesis II (ENG 794), at 3.00 credits each. Standard tuition rates apply. These count as courses.
- Thesis projects are graded as pass or fail.
- You will need a thesis advisor. A second reader is strongly recommended.
- It is helpful if you write up a short blurb (1 page) that describes your project before you approach a possible thesis advisor.
- Forms for registering for thesis credits can be found on the Writing Studies website under "[Current Students](#)". Here you will find an audit sheet for the Writing Studies program (so you can track your progress toward the degree), a request form for thesis completion, samples of the title page, and the library bindery form.
- You can choose to present your work at a thesis reading or prepare a defense (a public conversation with your advisor, second reader, and other interested members of the community) or you can do both, if the project warrants this. Consult with your thesis advisor about the best conclusion for you.
- Thesis readings are generally offered two times per year and are announced by the Writing Studies program.
- Revised writing that has previously been produced or workshopped in a Writing Studies course may be included in the thesis project, but you must have the **consent** of both your course professor and your thesis advisor. Saint Joseph University's [academic honesty policy](#) stipulates that work from one course cannot be resubmitted in another. Talk with your thesis advisor if you have questions.
- All steps in the thesis project (reading/defense and submission of copies with signatures) must be complete before you receive your diploma. You can walk in the graduation ceremony with six credits in progress; however, you will not receive your diploma until the degree is finished.
- Dates for the thesis readings, deadlines for hard copies, and other important announcements are distributed through your SJU email account. Check or forward your SJU email regularly or you will miss important deadlines! It is also helpful to

**friend** the Writing Studies program on Facebook to make sure that you receive all announcements. Additionally, the Writing studies [blog](#) will have all the information regarding readings.

### **Your Advisor**

It's best to begin looking for a thesis advisor as early as possible. It's to your advantage to find a thesis director that you feel meshes well with your intended project as soon as you can. Some English faculty members are available for thesis direction during the summer, while some are not. Plan ahead!

Most students find thesis advisors through the courses that they take, but if you need assistance, you can contact the graduate director.

English department faculty have a wide range of interests, and mentor projects when they find the topic compelling and the student a good match to their teaching styles. Most English department faculty mentor projects in a variety of genres.

For examples of thesis projects, please see the thesis collection in the English department office. Feel free to stop by and browse the finished product! The library also has copies.

### **Second Reader**

Second readers typically read the next-to-the-last-draft of a thesis project and offer feedback at that point. You should give your second reader sufficient time to read and respond to your thesis so you can incorporate his or her comments into your draft (2-3 weeks minimum). Therefore, for a December graduation, the second reader should get the project by mid-November at the latest. For a May graduation, early April is ideal. Negotiating deadlines with your second reader early will facilitate this process.

Your second reader offers you important feedback, so sitting down with your second reader and your thesis advisor over a cup of coffee can be extremely beneficial in order to figure out the direction, style, and format of your project. Talk with your thesis advisor if you would like to pursue this option.

## Dates and Details

- Thesis readings are typically held twice a year and are announced by the Writing Studies program. Contact the graduate director if you would like to read on a particular date. Your thesis project does not have to be complete for you to participate in a reading.
- **If you are planning on graduating, one hard copy and one electronic copy of your thesis are due in the English office around the time of the December and May thesis readings.** Please check with Heather Foster (phone: 610-660-2645, hfoster@sju.edu) for the precise date.
- If you wish to have a personal copy of your thesis bound, you will need to fill out the bindery form and submit payment via a money order. The cost per copy is \$25.00, plus UPS shipping fees. Delivery can take several weeks as the library must have 30 volumes before they can arrange a shipment with the bindery company.
- **The Thesis Reading:** requires you to prepare a short sample of your work to read to an interested audience. Typical readings are 10 minutes (approximately 5-6 pages of prose). For success with this part of the project:
  - **Practice reading your selection out loud (and time yourself).**
  - **Read a self-contained section of your work.** Don't choose a character-heavy section of your novel where the reader needs a ton of background information. Choose something that's easily understood by an audience who is unfamiliar with your work.
  - **Funny is good.** (And engaging for most audiences!)
- **Thesis Defense:** The thesis defense is a conversation about your project with your advisor, second reader, the graduate director, any guests you invite, and interested others (they are open to the campus community). Prepare a section of your work to read out loud. Do the same steps as above. Also prepare questions for your readers about the direction of your project and what you would like feedback on. The thesis defense typically takes 60 to 90 minutes and can be scheduled at any time.
- Everyone who completes a thesis project prepares an abstract of his/her thesis for the Writing Studies Thesis Reading program that is given out at the reading (whether reading or defending or both). The due date for your abstract will be emailed to you several weeks prior to your reading/defense. Examples are below.

### **Julie B. *Failing Isabella* (novel)**

After graduating from Lycoming College in 1999 with a B.A. in English/ Creative Writing, Julie was fortunate enough to immediately find a job as a high school English teacher. Although she loves teaching, grading papers and creating lesson plans have given her little time to pursue her own writing. Luckily, her classes at Saint Joseph's, particularly the full-length novel she has tackled as her thesis project, have inspired her to start writing once again.

*Failing Isabella* experiments with shifting narration to tell a story from the perspective of three different female characters: Laura, who becomes increasingly more aware that her marriage is collapsing; Izzie, an insecure teenager, who feels disconnected from both her family and peers; and Allie, Izzie's stepmother, who is desperate to befriend her no matter what the cost. All three women demonstrate insecurity and vulnerability, which allows each of them to be manipulated by the same man.

Julie would like to thank all of her professors at Saint Joseph's University, her thesis advisor, Dr. Ann Green, and her second reader, Jamey Gallagher for all of their help and suggestions. She would also like to thank all of the friends and family members who willingly read the 200+ page manuscript, and especially her fiancé for his constant patience and support.

Thesis Mentor: Ann E. Green

Second Reader: Jamey Gallagher

### **Cara R. *Auditory Damage: Journeys to the Inner Ear and Beyond* (poetry)**

The concept of *Auditory Damage: Journeys to the Inner Ear and Beyond* arose from one, simple fact: Cara Donaldson is convinced she will be deaf by the time she is 30.

This self-prognosis comes from years of living in the world of live music where earplugs are not an option and any place but front row is unacceptable. Yes, weekly pilgrimages to concert venues and a life-long love affair with headphones are directly responsible for Cara's personal auditory damage, but she takes it to a positive place, drawing inspiration from every word misheard along with every note played.

The end result takes the reader on a poetic journey past what you hear and are conditioned to accept as truth and into the realm of what can be created from the fragments of what you *believe* you heard, which can ultimately lead to something divine. Her collection of poems touches on four aspects of the human condition:

everyday life, intense love, mental health (or the lack thereof) and the final bow, death.

Cara would like to thank all the unique and colorful faculty of the SJU English department for their guidance and expertise during her undergraduate and graduate years on Hawk Hill, as well as all her wonderful, albeit utterly insane friends and family who inspired a good number of these works.

Thesis Mentor: Melissa Goldthwaite

Second Reader: Julia Peterson

### **Final Steps**

- **Thesis Submittal:** Deadlines for submission of the electronic and paper copies of your thesis will be announced about a month before the reading. Your copies **must** be submitted to the English department by this date to meet the deadline for graduation.