



October 25, 2013

Barry Shank  
Graduate Studies Chair  
Dept. of Comparative Studies  
The College of Arts & Sciences

## MA Comparative Studies: non-thesis option

Barry,

The Graduate School Curriculum Committee (GSCC) met on October 23 and, among its agenda items, considered the proposal to add a nonthesis option to the established MA in Comparative Studies. I'm writing to summarize the GSCC discussion of the proposal and outline the next steps in the approval process.

The GSCC felt that the rationale for establishing a nonthesis option was clear and its implementation well within the graduate school guidelines. However, there was discussion about how some aspects of the nonthesis option would be executed and the committee felt some clarification would be helpful. No oral component to the nonthesis exam was proposed and none is required. However, in the option of producing a substantial paper of publishable quality, it is clear that faculty judgment and guidance is required. How this will be provided was unclear. Some programs utilize an advisory feedback meeting after submission of such a paper, somewhat similar to an oral exam. Alternatively, committee members may be examining the paper (and the student) during its writing. The committee felt it would be helpful to have a more detailed description of how the committee will interact with the student and how the student might defend/discuss his/her paper. Such clarification would be beneficial to students who wish to pursue this option.

Please submit a revised copy of the proposal to me. The GSCC would like to have a final look at the updated version prior to its moving forward in the approval process. The proposal should then be ready for review by the Graduate Council. Following Graduate Council, the proposal will be released to the Council on Academic Affairs for their review.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions or clarifications.

Many thanks,

Scott Herness  
Associate Dean  
The Graduate School



May 15, 2013

Scott Herness, Professor and Associate Dean  
The Graduate School  
250 University Hall  
230 North Oval Mall  
CAMPUS

Dear Scott:

The Department of Comparative Studies has completed and submitted its proposal for a revision to their MA program. The program revision is endorsed by the College of Arts and Sciences, was approved by the Division of Arts and Humanities, and has the full support of the Comparative Studies faculty.

The proposal provides the opportunity for students to pursue a non-thesis option via a "Master's examination non-thesis policy." The non-thesis option will give students the opportunity to progress more smoothly through both programs. Furthermore, the proposed modification to the MA allows students who decide to terminate their studies at the end of their Masters course of study with a publishable document.

We are sending the program forward for review and approval in the next stage of curricular review at the Graduate School and Council on Academic Affairs. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either one of us.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,

Joseph E. Steinmetz  
Executive Dean and Vice Provost  
College of Arts and Sciences

Mark Shanda  
Divisional Dean, Arts and Humanities  
College of Arts and Sciences



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April 30, 2013

Graduate Curriculum Committee  
College of Arts and Sciences

To the Committee:

The Department of Comparative Studies is proposing to revise its MA program. This revision will bring our program into alignment with the Graduate School's recommendations. It will allow students to proceed more smoothly through the program if they are continuing on for a PhD. It will allow students who wish to complete a terminal MA to produce a publishable document as a regular part of their program. Finally, this proposal cleans up a problem in the MA-PhD transition, establishing a regular process through which that transition can be managed. It has the full endorsement of our faculty and myself.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barry Shank", written over a series of horizontal scribbles.

Barry Shank  
Professor & Chair



Department of Comparative Studies

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April 30, 2013

To whom it may concern,

As Graduate Studies Chair in the Department of Comparative Studies, I fully endorse the proposed revisions to the MA program, notably concerning the thesis/non-thesis option. The revisions have been discussed at length by members of the Graduate Studies Committee, and feedback has been solicited from all faculty in the Department. We have spent considerable time thinking through the strategic advantages and justifications for the changes outlined in the proposal, and we believe they are fully in keeping with recent initiatives in the Grad School to pursue non-thesis options and policies for MA students. We also believe they maintain a rigorous set of requirements for completing the degree. If you have any questions regarding the proposal, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would be happy to offer further details or justifications for the changes.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip Armstrong". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Philip Armstrong  
Graduate Studies Chair

## Proposed Revisions to Comparative Studies MA requirements

In light of the Grad School looking to establish other options for completing the MA (i.e. “Master’s examination non-thesis policy”), the Department of Comparative Studies is seeking to revise its existing requirements.

Currently, the Department of Comparative Studies requires all MA students to complete a Thesis to be awarded the MA degree. The department proposes to add the Non-Thesis option (which may include completion of Doctoral Candidacy Exams) as an alternative. This change will expedite the progress both of students completing the terminal MA and of students pursuing the PhD to completion of the degree.

The existing rules provided by the Grad School state:

**Thesis.** The master’s examination for a student pursuing the thesis option must include an oral portion and may include a written portion. The master’s examination need not be confined to the thesis topic.

**Non-Thesis.** The master’s examination for a student pursuing the non-thesis option must include a written portion and may include an oral portion. The written portion may be in the form of an examination (in which case it should be at least four hours in length) or a substantial paper or project appropriate to the discipline and consistent with best practices in the field. (see: <http://www.gradsch.ohiostate.edu/6.2-masters-examination.html>)

In light of these rules, Comparative Studies proposes:

1) For students who do not continue to the PhD program (Terminal MA degree):

- a) Continue to offer MA Thesis option for those seeking terminal MA degree.
- b) Create non-thesis MA “exam” option or small “substantial” written paper. The “exam” option would be a four-hour written exam that demonstrates advanced knowledge of the field, including at least one question from each of two faculty advisors. Or students can produce a “substantial” written paper--a paper of publishable length and substance that also demonstrates advanced knowledge of the field--under the guidance of at least two faculty advisors who would meet with the student to discuss the paper's development as it is being written and who would then agree upon its readiness for publication.

2) For MA students who declare their intention to move into the PhD program:

- a) In AU of the student’s second year, the student must submit a letter of intent either to continue on to the PhD program or to complete the terminal MA degree. Permission to continue to the PhD program will depend upon the student’s satisfactory progress toward the MA degree, and permission to continue will be granted with the approval of the student’s advisor and the Graduate Studies Committee.

b) Students who are not given approval to continue to the PhD program will be expected to complete the terminal MA degree, and can do so by completing either the Thesis or the Non-Thesis option.

c) Students approved to continue to the PhD program may either: 1) complete the MA (ordinarily by the end of the second year upon completion of either the thesis or non-thesis option) and be awarded the MA degree at that time, or 2) complete coursework for the PhD and be awarded the MA degree upon successful completion of Doctoral Candidacy exams (the MA is awarded by fulfilling the Non-Thesis option).

### Justifications

1) Allows for accelerated completion of course work in PhD program (by approximately one semester), though still leaves time open for taking other courses/fulfilling language requirements if necessary.

2) The “substantial” paper option offers the opportunity for students to publish a text (the typical length of a MA thesis is not suited to publication).

3) Importance of these revisions for length of grad funding offered to students (especially under rules of continuous enrollment).

4) Lessens length of time to candidacy exams.

5) Revisions will allow the department to compete for BA students applying straight into PhD programs elsewhere (and sometimes given MA retroactively). Benchmark programs include the History of Consciousness program at UC Santa Cruz, which only takes PhD students, or the program in Comparative Studies in Discourse and Society at University of Minnesota, where “students normally are not admitted to work toward the M.A. degree.” BA students would still enter under “MA/PhD” category but would accelerate into PhD program more quickly.

6) In the event that a student does not complete their dissertation, they would still be awarded a terminal MA degree after fulfillment of the Candidacy Exams or either the thesis or non-thesis option.

7) Students entering the program with the BA only are expected to complete exams by the end of the 7th or 8th semester of study. Students entering with the MA are expected to complete exams by the end of the 5th or 6th semester.