

Final Project Instructions
MASTER OF LIBERAL STUDIES
University of Minnesota

<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page</i>
Types of projects	2
The Final Project seminar	3
Readers and approval process	5
Institutional Review Board (IRB)	5
Preparation of the written project	5
Title of your project	7
Binding	8
Copyright	8
Filing your project	10
Sample title page	11
Sample copyright page	12
Checklist to graduate	13

The culminating experience for students in the MLS program is the Final Project. The Final Project, with guidance and approval from your advisor(s), provides evidence of your ability to conceptualize, organize, and produce a scholarly, cohesive work on a subject of personal significance. It should evolve out of work you have pursued during your course of study, *and it must be interdisciplinary*. For example:

- A topic (e.g., aging) could be approached, interpreted, and enriched through the theory and practice of several disciplines (anthropology, public health, religion, literature, public policy, etc.).

- A theoretical perspective associated with a particular topic or discipline (e.g., feminist film theory) could be applied to a completely different topic or discipline (Renaissance paintings).

It is not a question of using one discipline as a straightjacket to coerce meanings from another discipline. Rather, the interaction and interplay of topics, theories, assumptions, methods, and concepts associated with two or more disciplines should, at a minimum, enhance your study and our understanding of your subject matter. Better yet, it will produce new and provocative meanings, with an impact and resonance similar to that of an effective metaphor.

In terms of writing, your vocabulary, organizational structure, and narrative style needs to be directed to a broad readership: your advisor(s), your instructor in the Final Project Seminar, the MLS Director of Graduate Studies, your fellow MLS students, and others who (as generally well-informed and intelligent people) should be able to understand what you are writing about.

I. Types of projects

Projects are of two possible types: (1) a scholarly thesis based on interdisciplinary research and analysis; or (2) a creative project with an interdisciplinary dimension; this project must be accompanied by a “process paper”, a written component focusing on the objectives, methodology, and scholarly significance of the creative piece.

(1) Thesis: Most students choose the option of the scholarly master’s level thesis. Such a project examines a topic or issue by means of insights, knowledge, or methods arising from your studies and experiences. Almost any topic may be chosen, provided that it has an interdisciplinary dimension.

Examples include: a case study; an investigative work based on field research; a feasibility study; an analysis and interpretation of a contemporary issue, trend, or historical event; a critique of art or fiction; an examination and position paper on theories and practices in science and technology; or an essay or series of related essays. Examples not appropriate include: prescriptive “how to” projects such as a simple school lesson plan; a procedures manual; a topic so broad as to offer only very general or superficial discussion and conclusions; or a paper that consists only of a re-statement of facts without serious analysis. *The scope of your interdisciplinary project should be manageable yet complex enough to support in-depth inquiry and reflection.*

The normal length is 50-70 double-spaced pages, including bibliography.

Your paper should address these kinds of questions:

- What issue or subject, problem, question, hypothesis, goal, etc. are you studying and writing about? Be clear and explicit. Why and for whom is it significant?
- What kinds of approaches, factual or conceptual underpinnings, theories, methods, etc. are you using, and from which discipline or disciplines are they drawn? Why have you selected these particular ones?
- What evidence do you have to sustain your arguments or ideas (the writings or studies by other authors, your own empirical research, fieldwork, personal experiences, insights, etc.)? Why is your evidence persuasive and plausible?
- What are your outcomes or conclusions? How do your own experiences, intuition, perspectives, etc. affect your interpretation of the evidence and the conclusions drawn? Are there shortcomings to your study, and do you have reservations or make qualifications about your claims?
- What are the implications, immediate and long-term, of your project? How do your discoveries point back to your initial hypothesis or intent, and how might they project forward to future, expanding investigations?

(2) Creative projects. Examples would be an original work of fiction or poetry, a musical performance, a film or videotape, a multi-media presentation, a screenplay, a staged reading of an original play, or an exhibit of one’s own art or photographs. *Note: If you are considering a creative project, you need to have a meeting with the Director of*

Graduate Studies, your advisor, and an MLS staff member as soon as the ideas for the final project have been formulated.

The Process Paper. Creative projects must have a written component, separate from the creative work itself, called a Process Paper. This is typically a 20-35 page double-spaced paper that includes discussion of your goals, of how the work was undertaken, and of the significance of its artistic content to the interdisciplinary character of the MLS degree. The process paper is then bound with the creative work, if applicable, with the process paper following the creative work. A bibliography should be included to complete this work. Photos or tapes should be included if the creative work itself is not in written form.

The Process Paper is not a paraphrase or written summary of your creative project. Rather, it is an introspective commentary on your work -- its conceptualization, development, and realization. Again, the purpose of the Process Paper is to provide the context that demonstrates your understanding of the interdisciplinary character in which your creative project may be understood. Why, for example, is your work of fiction, your musical performance, your film, appropriate for a Master of Liberal Studies degree, rather than, say, a master's degree in creative writing, music, or film studies?

Your Process Paper should address these questions:

- What were the underlying causes, motivations, sources of inspiration, etc. for your project?
- What did you set out to accomplish? What were your artistic goals? Did your ideas change as you proceeded, and why?
- What resources did you use (formal and informal) and how well did they contribute to the development of your project? How did you use these resources to frame your ideas? Formal resources include things like books and papers, theories and constructs, artistic concepts and approaches. Informal resources include the intellectual climate and setting of the University, discussions with faculty and students, and your own creative abilities. As a general rule, the Process Paper will include a review of literature.
- Who is your audience ("consumers") and what is the desired effect on your audience? Don't limit your audience to MLS faculty and students.
- What makes your project interdisciplinary? How do the interdisciplinary dimensions of your project relate to other aspects of your MLS program?

Finish your Process Paper with a Conclusions section. How well do you think you achieved the artistic goals you set out to accomplish? What insights did you gain? Discuss your work from both a critical, objective viewpoint and from a more personal, subjective viewpoint.

II. LS 8002 - Final Project Seminar

The Final Project is normally not begun until courses for your program are

completed or nearly completed. It is undertaken in conjunction with LS 8002, a seminar designed to help you carry out and finish your project. The seminar includes peer critiques, a structured setting to motivate you, and advice on your drafts by the seminar instructor, your advisor(s), and the MLS writing tutor. *You may not begin the seminar until you have a clear idea about what you intend to do for a project. Whether it is a thesis or a creative project, you must provide the following before you can register for LS 8002:*

- Indication of whether you are doing a thesis or a creative final project. If it is a creative project, you need to provide feedback from the Director of Graduate Studies, your advisor(s), and an MLS staff member.
- Proposed title of the project or paper.
- Proposed project outline, with a paragraph describing each major section or stage.
- Preliminary bibliography (required for either the process paper or traditional thesis), with brief annotations for your most important core resources. *Note: The annotations should be removed from the actual bibliography you include at the end of your finished thesis or process paper.*
- Signed approval of the above from your advisor (or at least one advisor if you have co-advisors).
- If applicable, documentation from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) indicating your project has been approved.

Most of your library research should be completed before the class begins. You will be expected to share and review drafts with your classmates as the term progresses. If you are planning to complete a creative project, (artwork, photography, web-pages, etc.) it should be complete, or nearing completion, and you should be prepared to write the process paper to accompany it. *Note: You are encouraged to precede LS 8002 with LS 5993, Directed Study, and LS 5950, Advanced Interdisciplinary Inquiry, to assist you in formulating your Final Project.*

You must complete your Final Project in order to receive credit and get a grade in LS 8002. A grade of Incomplete (I) will be given if your project is unfinished at the end of the semester in which you registered for the course. The "I" will remain on your record indefinitely or until the project is completed, although if you do not finish it within one year you may lose your status as an active student in the Graduate School. In such an event you may have to reapply in order to restore your standing and graduate. *(REMEMBER: you have seven years to complete your master's degree; the clock starts ticking when you take your first graduate level class for the program.)*

III. Readers and approval of your project

Your Final Project requires the approval and signatures of at least two different people: your instructor in LS 8002 and your advisor (also your co-advisor, if you have one). If your LS 8002 instructor and your advisor are the same person, and if you have no co-advisor, a second reader will be asked to review and approve your project. Following this, the MLS Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) will also review and approve your finished project. The DGS review serves in lieu of a concluding examination.

IV. Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Do you know about the Institutional Review Board and the use of human subjects?

Many graduate students involve human subjects in their research. *Site studies, interviews, focus groups, written surveys or questionnaires, participant-observations, tests and experiments, and other forms of research involving people require approval from the University of Minnesota's Research on Human Subjects Committee of the Institutional Review Board.* Due to the power dynamics between researchers and human subjects, the IRB reviews all such projects to ensure that strict ethical practices are observed and that persons who agree to participate in research are fully protected and aware of their rights. Most importantly, written approval of your research plan must be obtained from the IRB before any research with humans takes place.

You need to do some groundwork before you are ready to complete an IRB application. Depending on your project and the meeting schedule of the IRB committees, approval may take as little as two weeks or as long as several months. You can start by looking at the IRB website which presents guidelines, sample application materials, and blank applications for you to download. This material is available only on-line as a cost saving measure. Go to www.research.umn.edu/subjects or call 612-626-5654.

The basic materials requested include a brief description of your project, its goals, and how you intend to do research with humans (one-on-one interviews, written surveys, etc.). In all cases you need to develop a letter of consent for each research participant to review, discuss, and sign. The IRB website has information on the "informed consent process" that highlights the importance of any rights of research participants, including the right to stop participation at any time.

Additionally, you need to include a plan for how you will identify or solicit participants. Will you work with an agency or organization such as a school? Will you place ads in the *Minnesota Daily* or another newspaper? Will you send out random surveys from a blanket e-mail request? You may need to develop a list of contacts who are willing to work with you; however, at the planning stage, you are not permitted to conduct any actual research. You may only introduce yourself and your project to see if there is enough interest to proceed with the person or organization involved.

The IRB will especially scrutinize projects that work with "vulnerable" populations such as children (anyone under 18), the disabled, the elderly, racial minorities, and immigrants or others who speak English as a second language. The IRB will also consider whether your project is biased in some way – do you exclude women or men, do you exclude racial minorities? While the process may appear daunting, it can be successfully navigated. If you plan to interview ten adults affiliated with a certain organization (for example, ten members of the regional AAUW to study women in leadership positions), you will most likely get quick approval. However, if you plan to work with "vulnerable" populations, it could take months to get all your application materials approved because you may need to revise some of your materials or aspects of your project. If you want to work with "vulnerable" populations, we suggest you collaborate with a faculty member who has done such work and get their input on your application and research design.

The IRB was developed in response to a history of abuse in research with human subjects, and so, as researchers, we must educate ourselves and strive to practice ethical standards in all of our research and writings.

V. Preparation of the written Final Project

Listed below are the specifications for preparing the written portion of your Final Project. One bound copy of the project, with signatures and your Final Examination Report form, is submitted to the MLS office. The copy may be in original typescript or a photocopy of the original.

Manuscript sequence

PRELIMINARIES – The first two pages have no page number; subsequent preliminary pages use lower case roman numerals for page numbers – i, ii, iii, etc. Use a new page for each new feature, in this order:

1. Title page (no page number; see example)
2. Copyright page or blank sheet (no page number; see example)
3. Dedication (optional) — i
4. Epigraph (an optional quotation placed at the beginning of a work) — ii
5. Table of Contents (headed simply as Contents) — iii
6. List of Illustrations (optional, headed simply as Illustrations) — iv
7. List of Tables (optional, headed simply as Tables) — v
8. Preface (optional) — vi
9. Acknowledgements (optional) — vii
10. List of Abbreviations (optional, headed simply as Abbreviations) — viii
11. Glossary (optional) — ix

TEXT – Separate the main body of your paper into well-defined divisions or parts – chapters, sections, sub-sections. Each chapter should begin on a new page using arabic numerals Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, etc.

BACK MATTER – Pagination continues your text using arabic numerals through to the very last page of the manuscript. Start a new page for each new feature, in this order:

1. Appendix (optional). If there is more than one appendix, give each a number or letter: APPENDIX 1, APPENDIX 2, etc.
2. Endnotes (optional; headed simply as Notes)
3. Bibliography (with annotations deleted)

Paper. To insure durability and opacity, use white bond paper that is at least 20 pound weight, 8-1/2 x 11 inches, with 75-100 percent cotton rag content (a watermark in the paper indicates the cotton content).

Type. Your paper may be typewritten or computer generated. In either case, any easily readable standard type font of 10, 11, or 12-point pitch is acceptable. Print must be letter or near letter quality; use of a “dot matrix” line printer is not acceptable, nor is a script font style acceptable. All print must be in permanent black ink and must appear on only one side of each page.

In the body of the paper, different typefaces and sizes may be used to set off examples, quotations, tables, and charts from the rest of the text, as long as all typefaces are easily readable. The same is true for footnotes, section headings, and chapter titles.

Margins. Every page, including appendices, illustrations, and bibliography, must have a LEFT margin of 1-1/2 inches (to allow room for binding) and TOP, RIGHT, and BOTTOM margins of 1 inch. Page numbers may be outside the margin but no less than 1/2 inch from the top or bottom of the page.

Spacing. The body of the paper must be double-spaced (three lines of text per inch) or 1-1/2 spaced (four lines per inch). Long quotations, notes, and the bibliography may be single-spaced.

Page numbering. Every page in the body of the text should be numbered sequentially from the first page of the text right through the appendices and bibliography. Any materials before the body of the paper—such as acknowledgments, dedication, table of contents, or list of illustrations—must be numbered with lowercase roman numerals and must be arranged in that order after the copyright page. *The title and copyright pages must not be numbered or counted.* The rest of the text should have arabic numerals starting with 1.

Style. You may use one of three stylistic conventions:

1. Modern Language Association (MLA) — most often used in the humanities. (See Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (4th Edition). The Modern Language Association of American, New York, 1995.)

2. American Psychological Association (APA) — most often used in social science and natural science research. (See *Publications Manual* (4th Edition). American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 1994.)

3. The “Chicago Style” — an all-purpose style – usually used in history and some humanities. (See *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th Edition). University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993. See also, Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (6th Edition). University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996.)

If you are unsure about which style to use, consult your advisor, your LS 8002 instructor, or a reference librarian. Internal consistency within each convention is essential. It is not acceptable to “mix and match” within your paper.

Illustrative material. Photographic illustrations must be black and white photographic originals or well-done black and white photographic copies of the originals. Color photographs and images are discouraged because color dyes deteriorate and fade over time (exceptions for color are acceptable if the illustrations are meaningless in black and white).

Photos may be printed directly on 8-1/2 x 11 inch photographic paper, conforming to margin specifications, or alternatively, they may be permanently mounted onto thesis-quality paper using a heat or pressure-sensitive dry-mounting process, such

as Kodak Dry Mounting Tissues or Scotch 568 Positionable Mounting Adhesive Sheets. Other methods, such as paste, rubber cement, spray mounting, or tape, are not acceptable because such mounting techniques are not permanent and over time will damage both paper and photo.

If hand lettering or drawing is necessary, India ink is preferred. Felt tip pens must not be used, since the ink will eventually bleed through the paper.

VI. Title of your Final Project

Your title should clearly communicate to an intelligent, generally well-educated reader what your paper or project is about. When selecting a title, there are three things to avoid.

1. *Avoid cryptic titles that may seem clever but reveal little or nothing about the content of your work.* The use of colons can be helpful in this regard. Consider these examples:

Not good	"Modern Fantastic"
Good	"Modern Fantastic: The Films of David Cronenberg"

Not good	"The Cyborgian Self"
Good	"The Cyborgian Self: Toward a Critical Social Theory of Cyberspace"

2. *Avoid highly technical terms or "insider's jargon" unfamiliar to a general audience.* While acceptable for a traditional, discipline-based thesis, such titles are basically inappropriate for the MLS.

Too technical	"Sustainable Biomass Denitrification as a Function of <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> and <i>Echinacea purpurea</i> "
Better	"The Effects of Native Plants on Nutrient Abatement in Sustainable Ecosystems"
Best	"Abiding Benefits: Native Plants in Sustainable Landscapes"

3. *Avoid generalities.* Say what you mean. If your project deals with attitudes about race, say so. Don't couch your real meaning by using overly broad or vague language.

Too general	"Changing Attitudes at the University of Minnesota"
Better	"Changing Attitudes About Race and Ethnicity at the University of Minnesota"
Best	"Changing Attitudes about Race and Ethnicity at the University of Minnesota 1945-1970"

VII. Binding

purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship or research, is not an infringement of copyright. In determining whether the use made of a work in any particular case is a fair use, the factors to be considered include:

- (1) purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;
- (2) nature of the copyrighted work;
- (3) amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and
- (4) effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

You, as author of the thesis, bear the responsibility of determining whether a use is fair or not.

Note that if in your master's paper you included copies of or materials from journal articles or other publications that you authored, you must obtain from the publisher a letter authorizing your use of this material. A copy of this letter must be included as an appendix.

Additional questions about copyrighting your masters paper or using copyrighted materials in your thesis can be directed to the Registrar of Copyrights, Copyright Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20559. If you have complex questions, please consult private legal counsel. Questions regarding copyright, patent, and trademark are of a legal nature and should not be considered lightly.

Remember that scholastic honesty is of paramount importance. Any use of another person's work in your project must be properly documented, and permissions must be obtained when necessary. Plagiarism and other forms of scholastic dishonesty, such as research fraud, are violations of the University Student Conduct Code and are subject to disciplinary action.

IX. Filing your project

Your Final Project is considered equivalent to a Masters Plan B paper. As such, it does NOT have to be filed with the Graduate School. The MLS office is the only University office that must receive a copy of your project. Your bound copy must be submitted to the MLS office in order to process your Final Examination Report (see attached "Checklist to Graduate").

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE (text in 10, 11, or 12 point type)

Life as TV: Baudrillard, Beavis, and Me

A PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

John Andrew Doe

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF LIBERAL STUDIES

May 2004

Approved:

Instructor of LS 8002

Date

Advisor

Date

Co-advisor (if applicable)

Date

Director of Graduate Studies

Date

© John Andrew Doe, 2004

**Master of Liberal Studies
College of Continuing Education/Graduate School
University of Minnesota**

CHECKLIST TO GRADUATE

Please pay close attention to the following items. These are necessary steps toward fulfilling the requirements of the Graduate School and receiving your Master of Liberal Studies degree.

Degree Program Transmittal and Degree Program forms should already be turned into the Graduate School. If you are unsure, call the MLS staff at 612-626-8724 or the Graduate School at 612-625-4019.

FINAL PROJECT

- Read and abide by the specifications in the Final Project instruction sheet. Use an appropriate style format for the paper and bibliography.
- Your Final Project needs to be read by your seminar instructor and your advisor(s). A “second reader” must read your Final Project if the instructor is also your adviser.
- The cover page must be signed by your seminar instructor, advisor(s), and (if applicable) a “second reader.”
- One copy of your Final Project (with the signed cover page) needs to be bound for the MLS office (see the instruction sheet for binding requirements).
- *Turn in, by mail or in person, your bound and signed Final Project to the MLS office. The MLS office will then process your Final Examination Report (see below).*

GRADUATION FORMS

There are a series of forms to fill out regarding graduation and program completion. The MLS office will obtain these forms and review them with you in your Final Project seminar.

- **Commencement Attendance Approval Form:** If you want to participate in the Graduate School Commencement Ceremony, you need to submit this form to the Graduate School. Contact the Graduate School for submission due dates (the form is due several months before Commencement). *Both the Director of Graduate Studies and your advisor’s signatures are required, so be sure to allow time for obtaining signatures.* The form should be obtained and returned to 316 Johnston Hall by the deadline set by the Graduate School.

For specific questions regarding Commencement (wardrobe, where to go, line up, etc.) call the Graduate School at 612-625-4019.

- **Graduate School Application for a Degree Form:** This form does not require any signatures but your own! It is due in 200 Fraser by the first working day of the month in which you want to graduate.
- **Examination Report Master's Degree Form:** The MLS program does not require a concluding examination; however, the Examination Report Master's Degree Form indicates that you have finished all your coursework and your Final Project, and therefore, your master's degree. The MLS office will hold your Examination Report. Once you submit your bound and signed final project to the MLS office, we will obtain the DGS' signature and submit the form to the Graduate School. The Examination Report form is due by the last working day of the month in which you want to graduate. *Plan ahead to allow time to obtain the DGS' signature and submit it to the Graduate School by the deadline.*

If you have questions on any of the requirements or forms, please call the MLS staff at 612-626-8724.