WGS MA Thesis 2nd Year Timeline

This is intended as general guideline of your progress during the second year of the WGS MA program up to the completion of your thesis, not as fixed timeline. You can use this as a guide and adjust goals and milestones as needed under the guidance of your Thesis Supervisor.

August:
- Confirm supervisor and 2nd reader
- Turn in Thesis registration form to add WGS 698A Thesis for Fall semester (required)

September:
- Meet to structure research and writing timeline
- Submit preliminary bibliography review to supervisor

October:
- Form writing groups: schedule bi-monthly meetings
- Supplemental reading and draft of final bibliography

November:
- Develop timeline for completion of thesis with supervisor
- Thesis presentations to 1st-year cohort
- Submit abstract of thesis to SSH by Thanksgiving
- Complete bibliography
- Turn in Thesis registration form to add WGS 698B Thesis for Spring semester (required)

December:
- Thesis consultation with SSH
- Outline of thesis complete before Spring semester

January:
- Meet supervisor to rehearse approach to first draft
- Check with 2nd reader to discuss schedule/relationship with supervisor

February:
- Very rough first version of thesis (sections sketched out or completed)
- Set up schedule with supervisor for submitting/revising sections of the thesis
- Fill out online application to graduate and become familiar with remaining Graduate School Deadlines & Submission Instructions for Graduation: https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/graduation
March:
Learn about thesis formatting: https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/digital-submission-requirement
First (very) rough complete draft to supervisor by March 1st
Make an appointment for a conference to discuss draft
First draft returned with comments by Spring Break
Complete 2nd draft by end of March
2nd draft to supervisor (and 2nd reader?) by March 31st

April:
Present thesis at Graduate Conference
Make final revisions and submit final version to supervisor/2nd reader
Beginning formatting (see OGS for details)
Complete writing and formatting by April 30th

May:
Degree check and formatting check (OGS)
SUBMIT!!!! (by last class day)

What can you do now during the first year of the program?
- Identify faculty and courses with similar research interests.
- Attend talks on campus about topics that interest you.
- Consider taking courses (ask Grad Coordinator about undergrad courses) with relevant faculty.
- Talk to PhD students, talk to faculty, use your networks on campus.
- Narrow your focus. Be specific but flexible.
- Your IRB should be started by the end of the spring semester of your 1st year if possible, under the guidance of your Thesis Supervisor. You will need this extra time because the IRB usually needs revisions. (Try not to start later than the end of September of 2nd year.)
- If the thesis requires fieldwork (interviews, observation, ethnographic work in general), and research with human subjects, start the IRB process right away during the spring of your 1st year. You may need to fieldwork during the summer if possible, in order to balance your work load (classes and TAships) during the fall of your 2nd year.
- The Graduate School hosts workshops about the thesis, formatting, graduation, and other processes. Attend these workshops during your first year and learn this information ahead of time. https://gradschool.utexas.edu/services-and-resources/events
MA Thesis FAQ

1. How should I choose a supervisor and 2nd reader?

Most students choose their supervisor because they have already taken a class with that professor but this is not the only (or even the most important) consideration. Having taken a class with a professor in your area of interest might have alerted you to issues that will adversely affect your progress toward the thesis. You cannot ask a professor to supervise your thesis until you know fairly clearly what your topic is. Do not expect the professor to come up with suggestions about what you should research; it is your task to interest the professor and persuade her that she will enjoy working with you.

2. How should I approach a potential supervisor and 2nd reader?

The best way to approach a potential supervisor for your theses is by email – this gives you a chance to present your best argument for why the professor should work with you. An email also allows the professor to consider you as a student without the personal pressure of a direct appeal. If your supervisor has recommended a 2nd reader, use that recommendation in an email to introduce yourself and ask for a chance to discuss your project in person.

Remember: faculty members affiliated with WGS do not have to take you on as a student. Everything they do for us costs them in some way because it takes them away from their own departmental responsibilities. Being turned down is not a reflection on you or your project (unless you have failed to articulate it)—it just means that the professor is already overworked. Do ask for the names of potential supervisors if the professor cannot work with you.

3. What should I know about my supervisor/reader before I make a decision?

If you have already taken a course with the professor, you probably know whether you can work with this faculty member. Recall if you were satisfied with the speed and quality of their feedback on your papers or with conversations you had with them in the semester. A minor irritant in one course can be a major problem in writing a thesis.

If you don’t know the professor, check out the online Teaching Evaluations (https://testingservices.utexas.edu/cis) or contact another student who might be able to give you some insight.

Make sure you clarify the specific arrangement you have with the supervisor and 2nd reader—meetings, schedule, relationship between supervisor and 2nd reader, etc.
4. How long should the thesis be?

A min. of 40 pages to a max. of 60 pages (including footnotes and works cited). While you can go beyond the maximum, you should not drop below the minimum. It is quite proper to divide your thesis into chapters and to subdivide those chapters even further into sections if your argument calls for it.

5. What format should I use for citations and footnotes? And what about the format of the thesis in its final form?

You should choose the format appropriate to the primary discipline in which you are working or according to the preference of your supervisor. In English, for example, we use either Modern Language Association (MLA) or Chicago style. The OGS website has all the information you need about formatting, with templates, so that the thesis will be acceptable to the Graduate School. https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/digital-submission-requirement#formatting

6. What about footnotes and bibliography?

The notes will either be footnotes or endnotes depending on the format you use. Your bibliography will appear as “Works Cited.”

Check into automatic citation software—Endnotes or NoodleBib (available through the PCL). The PCL gives classes on both and you can buy Endnotes through the Computer Store on Campus for a great discount.