

## Criteria for MA Thesis, Master's in Historical and Cultural Visualization updated Fall 2016

The MA thesis consists of two parts, an essay and a digital project. The essay should be approximately 50 pages, depending on the topic, and must establish the scholarly question, the historiography of the topic, and the goals and purposes of the digital contribution, *with a particular focus on how the digital intervention contributes to or changes the character of the research question*. A thesis must be fully and carefully annotated and include a substantial bibliography. Each essay must have an introduction, analysis, and conclusion.

A thesis must consist of a study of some aspect of material culture based on library and (where relevant) field research, and must have a substantial digital visualization component. It is not simply a description, but rather an analysis and interpretation that seeks to focus the digital contribution towards a research question that can have a public-facing component. The visualization should help make an argument that is better understood than a stand alone written essay. Students may choose to use any combination of the digital tools listed at the end of this document.

**Objective:** The thesis is an independent scholarly contribution that demonstrates the utility of digital visualization technologies for a historical question. The student must demonstrate an ability to gather, analyze, and interpret research data using the specialized literature in the particular field of study and theoretical perspectives that are current in the research area.

### **Criteria for assessment:**

- Clear statement of the research question and goals of the project
- Form, quality and depth of the written documentation, presentation and intellectual argument
- Form and quality of the digital component; success and clarity in relation to the stated goals of the project (for example: public outreach; mapping or modeling a research question)
- Analysis and conclusions
- Clear and articulate description of the research methodology
- Demonstration of competence in the discipline

### **Format of the project:**

The essay must conform to the criteria of the Graduate School (see <http://gradschool.duke.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations>) and have been submitted within the designated time frame for a degree to be awarded in December.

At present the deadline to apply for a December graduation is **October 15**. The schedule may be changed for 2017, so please check the graduate school website for updated information for 2017: <https://gradschool.duke.edu/academics/preparing-graduate/graduation-deadlines>

**Other critical deadlines (2016-17) are the following:**

- **October/November:** initial proposal meetings
- **November 23:** preliminary outline & list of resources
- **December 2:** initial proposal (should include project timeline)
- **March 10:** Formal Project Proposal due (3<sup>rd</sup> and final draft) with a presentation to the Wired! Committee scheduled before Spring break; students should include an environmental scan of similar or analogous sample projects as a basis for comparison with their proposal
- **October 1:** a full draft submitted to the advisor
- **November 1, revised** thesis submitted to the advisor

*Graduate School Deadlines:*

- **November 7:** deadline for submission of electronic master's thesis to the graduate school, (this has to be at least 2 weeks before the defense). Advisor must send letter to the graduate school that states that he/she has read the thesis and that it is complete and ready for defense
- **November 21:** last possible date to defend thesis
- **December 5:** deadline for final submission of electronic thesis.

The digital component must be included with the thesis on a cd.

***Timeline:***

Students must present a 1-page proposal at the beginning of their second semester at Duke University (normally around January 10) that includes a brief description of the research question and how a digital component can address the issue. The proposal should also include a brief, beginning bibliography divided into categories. At that point, a formal committee of three faculty will be established who serve as advisors, and who will review the final project at its completion. At that point, the committee will meet with the candidate and establish the plan for the summer research, the digital component, goals for the project, and a schedule of work until final submission.

***The Project Proposal: due March 10***

**(See the document called Abstract for MA thesis)**

This document must clearly state the research goals, the digital tools to be used, and provide a preliminary 1-page bibliography. Students must demonstrate that they are prepared to do the project, provide a preliminary outline for the paper, with a proposed timeline for completion of the different component parts. The schedule must be shared with the research committee and contain specific dates for completion and review.

## ***Tools Summary for the MA***

### Core Topics:

1. Content Management Systems / Blogging (WordPress)
2. Digital Collections (Omeka/Neatline)
3. Basic GIS/Mapping (ArcGIS, qGIS, OpenStreetMaps)
4. Basic Data Visualization (Tableau, D3, web applications such as Palladio)
5. Video Production (iMovie)
6. Image Manipulation (Photoshop)
7. 3D Modeling (Sketchup)
8. 3D Acquisition (Photogrammetry, Laser Scanning)

### Specialized Topics:

1. HTML/CSS/JavaScript/JQuery
2. Databases
3. DiVE
4. Physical Computing/Sensors
5. Advanced Audio/Video production
6. Text Analysis/Mining