

Senior Project Guidelines

Introduction

The MCL Senior Project is the capstone experience for students majoring in Classics, French, or German Studies. By researching, writing, and presenting a senior project in their senior year, students focus on their academic interests, gain perspective in their major(s), develop scholarly skills, demonstrate creativity and independent effort, and integrate their learning experiences. The project requires not only a commitment to independent work, but a close working relationship with faculty members as well, particularly with the faculty mentor supervising the student's project. Such sustained interaction contributes greatly to the quality and success of the experience.

While faculty mentors are responsible for guiding the senior projects, the students are responsible for scheduling meetings with their mentors and establishing deadlines for completion of the project in stages. Students are also responsible for selecting a topic, writing a proposal, submitting an initial thesis statement and bibliography, researching in various sources (library, online, interviews, or other valid sources), requesting materials through ILL (inter-library loan), and writing and revising their final project and the oral presentation in consultation with the faculty mentor. Students must meet every week or two with their mentor, following the established schedule as closely as possible.

Honors Thesis and MCL Senior Project

Those students in Classics, French, or German Studies who choose to complete a thesis in the Honors Program do not complete a separate MCL Senior Project. In addition to presenting their Honors thesis (in English), however, they present their thesis, or a significant aspect thereof, in their major language (French or German) at the MCL senior project presentation day. Students writing an Honors thesis in Classics present to MCL in English. Since the Honors Thesis is written in English, students majoring in French or German must demonstrate convincingly, in both the content of the thesis and the bibliography, that their language ability allows them unique access to sources in the target language that they have used to develop and argue their thesis.

Students who complete an Honors Thesis in another department that does not relate to their language major (Classics, French, or German), must complete a senior project in MCL.

Getting Started

Students must (1) choose a topic for the senior project to be written and presented in the target language (French or German) or English for Classics; and (2) indicate to the language program head their first and second choices for a faculty mentor for their project. May graduates must indicate their choices to the language program head by mid-November, December graduates in early September. Although students' choices are taken into consideration, the language program

head assigns a student's project to a faculty mentor, preferably the one most familiar with the student's topic area. Faculty mentors may also consult with their colleagues regarding the development of a project in order to guide students in the most productive way possible.

Choosing the Topic

Students may begin their senior project based on a paper(s) or term paper(s) they wrote in their upper-division major courses. They are encouraged to choose a paper whose topic truly interests them and on which they would like to pursue further research and/or analysis or expand in a related direction of scholarship. For example, students may discover an interest in a 19th-century writer or a work in 20th-century literature, or they may analyze a modern adaptation or parody of an older work. They may draw, as well, on the knowledge they have gained in another major for an interdisciplinary senior project. Language and art history majors may research artists in a particular era and place, such as Paris in the 1970s. Language and music majors may compose music in the style of a particular national composer, such as Schoenberg, and present a discussion along with their compositions. Language majors in education may present a teaching unit with lesson plans and worksheets for a high school class. A language and history major may research a specific local topic, such as the history and construction of nearby churches in communities founded predominantly by a particular ethnic group. A language and English major may produce a literary translation of a selection of short stories or poems with analytical commentary on the works and their value to a wider audience. A language and English major with aspirations to be a writer may create an original work and an analysis thereof as an integral part of the project.

While the senior project may assume a variety of formats, the result must meet the goals of the senior project as a capstone experience. In all cases, the grammar and syntax in written portions must be correct and the style appropriate to high academic standards.

Choice of the Faculty Mentor

The choice of the faculty mentor is determined by the language program head by **early December** of the student's senior year for May graduates and by **mid-September** for December graduates. The language program head takes into consideration the student's preferences, the topic, and the number of projects assigned to each faculty member.

Expectations of the Faculty Mentor and of the Student

Faculty members who agree to supervise a senior project have the following four expectations of the students: (1) that they be genuinely committed to the research or creative project, which should fit into their course of study, their interests, and/or their post-graduate plans; (2) that they have an adequate general preparation in the topic area; (3) that they have well-defined and obtainable objectives for the project; and (4) that they meet all scheduled deadlines.

Faculty members who agree to be a senior project mentor commit themselves to assist students in accomplishing the following: (1) undertaking an adequate literature search and developing a bibliography; (2) focusing the topic; (3) achieving a working outline, clear organization, appropriate style, and correct use of the target language; and (4) preparing the final draft by reading the paper carefully, critically, and in time for students to make final revisions and, if necessary, advising the students on the oral presentation.

MCL Senior Project Timetable

Timelines for Spring and Fall Graduates

Early in the fall semester, May graduates choose a topic for their senior project and begin research, constantly re-evaluating their thesis. Experience suggests that the most important strategy is to START EARLY! If the project is to be of maximum learning value, exhibit refined research skills, and be a challenging but pleasant research experience, early preparation must be sustained at a steady, comfortable pace.

During fall registration for spring courses, students graduating in May must register for FREN 399, GERM 399, GREK 399, or LATN 399 (1 credit). December graduates register for 399 during spring registration for fall courses.

Senior Project Proposal

By the last class day of fall semester, May graduates must submit electronically to the language program head and to their faculty mentor a one- or two-page proposal describing their project (December graduates, mid- to late September). If approved, the faculty mentor signs the proposal, which must be word-processed and double-spaced, and may be written in English. At this same time, students establish a schedule for completion of the work during the semester and seek the agreement of their faculty mentor.

The Project

Normally, students meet with their faculty mentor every week or two in order to submit their writing, obtain feedback, and discuss the progress of the project. Students are responsible for scheduling meetings and meeting deadlines.

150-word Abstract

On or before March 1 (mid-November for December graduates), students write a 150-word description in English of their senior project. Students may need to review the abstract several times in consultation with their faculty mentor. Once it is finalized, students submit the 150-word abstract electronically to the MCL department coordinator for publication in the senior project

presentation program. The MCL department coordinator will send the abstract electronically to all faculty members and majors in the student's language program.

Writing the 150-word Abstract

- The title of the senior project and the faculty mentor's name must be included.
- The project usually needs a main title and a subtitle. The topic appears in the main title; a strong indication of the thesis should be evident in the subtitle.
- Make every word count; limit the abstract to 150 words or less.

Here is an example of a former student's abstract:

The Role of Poetry for Jewish Women in Nazi Concentration Camps:
Bearing Witness and Affirming Agency
Melissa Hendrickx (Dr. Anna Lisa Ohm, faculty mentor, 2009)

Poetry became a survival mechanism for many Jewish women living in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. By examining their poetry in its original German, we discover that women used poetry to express powerful emotions, bear witness to the horrors of the Holocaust, affirm their humanity, question their religious identity, transcend suffering, and deal with painful memories. Studying prisoners' poetry provides us unprecedented access to events of the Holocaust and a better understanding of the role literature plays in traumatic situations.

Timeline

The student and the faculty mentor agree on a deadline in the first week of March for a complete first draft (mid-November for December graduates).

The final draft must be submitted electronically to the faculty mentor by the end of the first week in April (December 1 for December graduates).

The final copy of the senior project, with all revisions, must be submitted electronically to the faculty mentor on or before the last day of finals week. The length of a senior project paper is generally 10-16 pages (Times New Roman, 12pt) plus a cover page, bibliography, and possibly an outline. The length of written text, however, depends on the nature of the project. Therefore, the final length is decided in consultation with the MCL faculty mentor.

In regard to documentation (footnotes, bibliography), the general guide should be the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, but any other system agreed upon by the faculty mentor and the student is acceptable. The faculty mentor then submits a copy of the final senior project electronically to the MCL department coordinator to keep in the MCL files.

Presentation

Students are required to prepare a 10-15 minute oral presentation in the target language for French and German, in English for Classics, at an MCL senior project presentation program or at an all-campus scholarship day. Usually, concurrent sessions are scheduled by language program. All faculty members in the language program are present, as well as classmates, friends, and family members. The presentation is followed by a 5-minute question-and-answer period in which first the faculty members, and then others ask questions, giving student presenters an opportunity to discuss their project. In addition to summarizing the content of their project, students might also explain how they came to the project, how it evolved, what difficulties they encountered, and what they learned along the way.

After the presentations are completed, the faculty members in each language program meet to discuss the evaluation. The senior project is graded H/S/U (honors, satisfactory, unsatisfactory), on the basis of the development of the project, the final written draft, and the oral presentation.

Presentation Schedule

Mid- to late April for spring graduates (first or second week in December for fall graduates). Presentations may be followed by a department reception.

MCL Senior Project Checklist

FOR MAY GRADUATES (checklist for December Graduates follows!)

In September of your senior year	Choose a topic
During fall registration for spring courses of your senior year	Register for FREN 399, GERM 399, GREK 399, or LATN 399 (1 credit)
In mid-November	Indicate your first and second choices of a faculty mentor for your senior project to your language program head
In early December	The head of the language program, in consultation with faculty members in that program, selects a faculty mentor to work with you on your project.
By last class day of fall semester	Submit a written project proposal to your faculty mentor and to the language program head. Seek your faculty mentor's agreement with the schedule you prepare for researching and writing your senior project.
January & February	Be in regular contact (every week or two) with your faculty mentor to be sure you are on track.
March 1st	Submit a 150-word abstract in English

	describing your project to the MCL department coordinator for publication in the printed senior project presentation program. The department coordinator will send an electronic copy of your abstract to faculty members and majors in your language program.
During the first week in March	Give a complete first draft of your project to your faculty mentor for comment and suggested revisions.
By the end of first week of April	Submit a final draft of the project electronically to your faculty mentor and to all other faculty members in your language program.
Mid-April (TBA)	Senior project presentations (10-20 min. per project), followed by question-and-answer period. Presentations may be followed by a department reception.
By 4:00 p.m. on the last day of spring semester finals week	Make all final corrections to your senior project and electronically submit the final copy to your faculty mentor by 4:00 p.m. on the last day of finals week. Faculty mentors submit an electronic copy of every senior project they mentored to the department coordinator to keep on file.

MCL Senior Project Checklist

FOR DECEMBER GRADUATES

During the latter part of spring semester of your junior year.	Choose a topic.
During the spring registration for fall courses in your junior year	Register for FREN 399, GERM 399, GREK 399, or LATN 399
Early September	In consultation with the head of your language program, select a faculty mentor to work with you on your project.
Mid- to late September	Submit a project proposal to your faculty mentor and to the head of your language program. With your faculty mentor's agreement, establish a schedule for completion of the research and writing of your senior project.
October and November	Be in regular contact (every week or two) with your faculty mentor to be sure you are on track.
The second or third week in November	Give a complete final draft of your project to the faculty mentor for comment and suggested revisions.

Mid-November	Submit a 150-word abstract in English describing your project to the MCL department coordinator for publication in the printed December senior project presentation program. The department coordinator will send an electronic copy of your abstract to all faculty members and majors in your language program.
December 1	Submit a final draft of your project to your faculty mentor and all faculty members in your language program.
First or second week in December (TBA)	Senior project presentations (10-20 min. per project), followed by a question-and answer period. There may be a department reception.
By 4:00 p.m. on the last day of finals week in fall semester	Make all final corrections to your senior project and electronically submit the final copy to your faculty mentor by 4:00 p.m. on the last day of finals week. Faculty mentors submit an electronic copy of every senior project they mentored to the department coordinator to keep on file.