LIT STUDIES THESIS/DISSERTATION PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Your proposal must be approved by Dr. Thomas at least one semester prior to submission, and attached to a proposal signature form.

The purpose of the proposal is two-fold: to require you to demonstrate serious investigation into and thinking about the topic you propose, and to allow your director and committee to give you as much useful feedback as possible. Consequently, your proposal should contain the following information:

1) An extensive description of the topic you propose. This description should include what author(s) and text(s) you will address and how you plan to address them. What kind of reading(s) do you plan to do of your chosen text(s)?

2) To the extent that you have, in these early stages of research, formulated a working thesis, include that too. Remember though, that writing is itself an exploratory process and you may find yourself amending or changing what you originally thought was your thesis.

3) Even at this early stage you should provide, in as much detail as possible, an outline of how you will deal with the material in terms of structure. How many chapters do you plan for your thesis? Does the material fall naturally into sections or will you have to impose some upon it?

4) Discuss in moderate depth the existing secondary material on or surrounding your topic. Who are the major critics or cultural historians you will employ? How do you envision your research complementing or extending what already exists? To what extent will you be alone in your research because you are branching into new areas? How do you plan to cope with the potential problems of this originality?

5) Your proposal must include a fairly extensive working bibliography. The titles included on the bibliography should be ones you have looked at, not ones that you have heard about, though in one or two instances (if you haven’t yet managed to get your hands on the texts) you may include works you plan to look at.

In terms of the structure of the proposal, make sure you articulate clearly and early on your topic and your proposed handling of that topic. It might be a good idea to address the points listed above in the order they are laid out here; if you find a good alternative, use that.

MA proposal: 8-10 pages (double-spaced, usual format and font), plus a working bibliography.
PhD proposal: 10-15 pages (double-spaced, usual format and font), plus a working bibliography.