Thesis and Thesis Exhibition Proposal Guidelines

How to Choose a Thesis Topic and Advisor
Your thesis topic should support your long term interests and research goals and make the most of available resources, including faculty, archival sources, and works of art. When choosing a topic, consider the following questions:

- Is it an original topic?
- Can you articulate why you are interested in this topic, both verbally and in writing?
- Do you think this topic will sustain your interest for a year?
- Does this topic build on your previous research?
- Have you taken coursework in a field or methodology related to your topic?
- Is there a professor who has expertise in a related topic or methodology who will be available to advise you? Please note that your advisor must be a member of the art history faculty who holds a PhD.
- Have you taken coursework with this potential advisor?
- Do you have access to primary sources and relevant artworks to support this topic?
- If you need to travel to research this topic, do you have the time and funding to do so?
- Are you familiar with works in the UWM Art Collection or nearby collections that you could study for your thesis paper or include in your exhibition?

Proposal Format
Your proposal should be a five-page essay plus images, a bibliography and, in the case of a thesis exhibition, a working checklist. Your essay should include the following:

- A working title of your paper or exhibition
- A succinct description of your topic
- The contribution your thesis will make to any relevant fields, laying out previous scholarship or exhibitions and the originality of your approach
- Your methodology and the sources you will use for your research, including any travel you hope to do
- How you will organize your paper or exhibition

Your bibliography should be a comprehensive list of literature relevant to your topic, including sources you have not yet consulted. Follow Chicago Manual of Style for formatting.

Your working checklist should include everything that you would hope to exhibit. Depending on the works’ dimensions, this may include up to 30 pieces. Include all identifying information for the works: artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, and repository. Please consider the likelihood of each loan, including cost of shipping and an institution’s willingness to loan multiple works. Do not request loans before your exhibition proposal has been approved.
**Timeline**

You should choose your thesis advisor three semesters before you plan to graduate and discuss thesis topics with your advisor as soon as possible. Your proposal must be passed by a unanimous faculty vote two semesters before you plan to graduate. For example, students hoping to graduate in May should choose their advisors by January of the preceding year and have their proposals passed by the end of August in the preceding year. You should expect to submit at least two drafts of your proposal to your advisor. Allow advisors up to two weeks to read and respond to each draft. Once you finalize your proposal your advisor will circulate it to the faculty for approval. This will also take up to two weeks.

Once your proposal is passed, you should choose a second reader in consultation with your advisor. In most cases, the second reader will be a member of the art history faculty, although faculty members from other departments at UWM or scholars with commensurate qualifications from other institutions may also serve in this capacity. Immediately after passing your proposal, you will enroll in ARTHIST 990 Thesis Research. This is independent study directed by your advisor who will work with you to set research goals, assignments, and deadlines. If your proposal for an exhibition is passed, you will receive a checklist of tasks to complete and must consult with your advisor, Linda Brazeau, and Christa Story throughout the process.