English 698: Comprehensive Exam and Thesis Syllabus

Semester: ___________________________  Section Number: 698._________________
(To be completed by Director of MAE)

Course Catalogue Description

All MAE students will take a comprehensive exam and choose to research and write a thesis or prepare a professional portfolio. The exam will consist of three essay questions tailored to each individual student’s chosen areas of interest in English Studies. Students who select the thesis option (ENG 698) will conduct academic research in a chosen area of English Studies. Students will respond in a critically, theoretically, and historically informed manner, as appropriate, to a question or problem relevant to their chosen area of interest. (3 credits)

Application and Signatures

Students must apply for permission to enroll in ENG 698 prior to the semester in which they intend to register for the course. This syllabus also serves as an application for enrollment in ENG 698 as well as a contract indicating meeting times, locations, and due dates for the exam and the thesis.

In order to apply for permission to enroll in ENG 698, students must first identify a member of the Graduate Faculty in the English Department who will serve as the Director of their work, including the comprehensive exam and the thesis. Students should select a Director who best suits their academic areas of interest. Additionally, Directors must be current members of the MAE Graduate Faculty at USI, and students must have been enrolled in at least one graduate course at USI taught by that faculty member. Students should meet with the Director of their project throughout the semester on a regular basis—typically, at least one hour per week.

In consultation with the Director of their project, students will then need to identify two other committee members who will serve as Readers of the exam and the thesis. Readers must also be members of the MAE Graduate Faculty at USI. If the Director of the student’s project and the Director of the MAE Program approve, students may select one Reader who is a Graduate Faculty member of another program at USI, provided that the student has taken a graduate course at USI taught by that faculty member. Likewise, former MAE faculty members, including Emeritus and Emerita faculty, may serve as Readers, provided that the student has enrolled in at least one MAE graduate course with that former faculty member. At least one Reader, however, must be a current member of the MAE Graduate Faculty.

A signed copy of this document must be submitted to the Director of the MAE Program before the student will be allowed to register for ENG 698.
Identify the faculty members who will serve on the committee for the culminating project:

(Print: Director of Culminating Project) ____________________ (Signature)

(Date)

(Print: Reader) ____________________ (Signature)

(Date)

(Print: Reader) ____________________ (Signature)

(Date)

Indicate the day, time, and location of regular semester meetings.

Meeting Day and Time: __________________________

Meeting Location: __________________________


Prospectus

The student must submit a 1000-1200 word prospectus describing his or her project. The prospectus should indicate the project’s title, specify the specific issues or questions the thesis will address, describe the historical scope and theoretical approach to the topic, and indicate any preliminary conclusions that the thesis might reach. The prospectus should also include a preliminary bibliography of appropriate length.

A prospectus proposes an argument that a student intends to make. Many students will find that some of their initial assumptions will change over the course of time spent researching and writing their thesis. Nevertheless, when writing the prospectus, students should indicate exactly how they expect their claims will trouble or otherwise respond to current critical and theoretical arguments about their topic. Finally, the prospectus should not only indicate the student’s primary sources, but also list the most important secondary sources the student expects to use in support of his or her argument. The prospectus, like the thesis itself, should follow the MLA documentation style.

The prospectus represents a student’s best estimate of his or her intellectual plans for a lengthy thesis project and should not be undertaken lightly. The Director of the student’s project and the two Readers the student identifies will review and approve the prospectus before it is turned in. They may suggest revisions or request further information before agreeing to sign the application form. Furthermore, they might use the prospectus, in part, to shape questions for the comprehensive exam.

Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam will consist of three essay questions designed by the student's committee. The exam will emphasize the areas that the student and his or her committee consider the most relevant for the student given his or her coursework and chosen area of interest in English Studies. Furthermore, the exam will be designed in anticipation of the student’s thesis research project.

The exam will be completed approximately one-third of the way through the 15-week fall, spring, or summer semester in which the student is enrolled in ENG 698. Exam dates for the 2015-2016 through 2019-2020 academic years are as follows:

| Date and Semester of the Comprehensive Exam: | __________________________ |
| Signature of Student: | __________________________ |

| Fall 2015: Sat. 09/26 | Spring 2016: Sat. 02/13 | Summer 2016: Sat. 06/11 |
| Fall 2016: Sat. 09/24 | Spring 2017: Sat. 02/11 | Summer 2017: Sat. 06/10 |
| Fall 2017: Sat. 09/23 | Spring 2018: Sat. 02/10 | Summer 2018: Sat. 06/09 |
| Fall 2018: Sat. 09/22 | Spring 2019: Sat. 02/09 | Summer 2019: Sat. 06/08 |
| Fall 2019: Sat. 09/21 | Spring 2020: Sat. 02/15 | Summer 2020: Sat. 06/13 |
The exam will be graded by the three committee members (the Director and the two Readers) of the student's culminating project. If the student passes the exam, he or she will be given approval to begin work on the thesis.

If a student does not pass the exam, he or she will meet with the Director and the two Readers of his or her committee, and set a date for the student to take a second comprehensive exam. This date should be approximately five weeks after the date of the first exam, but if the Director of the MAE Program, the Director and Readers of the student’s project, and the student agree, a different date can be set. However, if the student does not take the second exam by the end of the semester in which he or she is enrolled in ENG 698, then a grade of “IP” or “In Progress” will be recorded and the student will need to re-enroll for one additional semester in ENG 698. Regardless of the date of the second exam, when the student passes it, he or she will then be given approval to begin work on the thesis.

If the student does not pass or for any reason does not take the second comprehensive exam, a grade of "F" will be recorded for ENG 698, and the student will be dismissed from the MAE program.

**Thesis**

The thesis will consist of 30-50 pages (7,500-12,500 words) of well-written prose, excluding bibliography and footnotes. The thesis will respond in a critically, theoretically, and historically informed manner, as appropriate, to a question or problem relevant to the student's chosen area of interest. The student's thesis will be reviewed and judged by the committee according to standards that demonstrate competence in the discipline. That is, the thesis should demonstrate the student’s ability to navigate complex critical arguments, theoretical debates, and historical texts and contexts in order to advance an original argument appropriate to the student’s area of interest. Likewise, the thesis should reveal the student’s ability to produce advanced academic discourse in English Studies.

Each thesis project topic will be generated by the student. The Director of the culminating project and the two Readers are responsible for guiding the student throughout the research project, but it is not the responsibility of the Director or the Readers to produce a project topic or engage in any of the research or writing of the thesis.

The completed thesis must be circulated in digital format and submitted to the Director of the culminating project at least ten working days prior to the Defense.

Indicate the due date of the final draft of the thesis:

Thesis Due Date: __________________________
**Oral Defense**

In order to receive credit for ENG 698, **students must successfully complete their exams and defend their thesis**. The oral defense will be evaluated by the Director and the two Readers of the student’s project. The defense will take place in the Graduate Studies office, and the Director of Graduate Studies will be invited to attend the student’s defense of his or her thesis.

After defending the thesis, students may be (1) granted the hours for ENG 698 based on a successful defense, (2) asked by the committee to provide minor written revisions to the project prior to being granted credit, or (3) asked to conduct major revisions requiring a second oral defense before receiving credit.

Indicate the day and time of the thesis defense:

**Thesis Defense Day and Time:** __________________________

**Grading**

ENG 698 is graded on a pass/fail (P/F) basis. Occasionally, students will find that they need additional time to complete a graduate thesis. If, after the end of the semester in which the student is enrolled in ENG 698, the Director of the student’s project concludes that the student has made adequate progress on, but has not finished his or her thesis, then with the permission of the Director of the MAE program, the student may take an “IP” or “In Progress” grade in ENG 698 and re-enroll for one additional semester in ENG 698. On such occasions, once the student has completed his or her thesis and successfully defended it, the grade of “In Progress” for ENG 698 will be changed to a “Pass” grade.

In rare circumstances, and with the approval of the Director of the MAE, a student may take a second “IP” grade and enroll in ENG 698 for a third semester. When the student has completed his or her thesis and successfully defended it, the grade of “IP” for ENG 698 will be changed to a “Pass” grade.

If a student does not complete and successfully defend his or her thesis within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which the student initially enrolled in ENG 698, a grade of "F" will be recorded for ENG 698, and the student will be dismissed from the MAE program.