



FOR PROSPECTIVE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES THESIS WRITERS

Juniors who are interested in doing an honors thesis must carry a B+ average in the major and must submit a brief proposal (minimally 2-3 pp.) by the Friday after Spring Break ends. The proposal should include the following:

- A description of the topic. While you will not yet have crafted a specific argument or thesis, you should indicate some of the questions you will be asking and how you plan to conduct research to answer them, i.e., what sources and evidence will you consult. The thesis proposal should set out what you want to do, the methodology by which you will do it, and why it is worth doing. It should also make clear that you have done the necessary preliminary research (literature review, understanding of the topic,) to embark on a successful independent research project. (In the case of a project that is more creative than research-oriented, you will need to explain how it relates to your course of study in the major.
- Related courses and research: Note the courses and assignments that have shaped your thinking on this topic.
- A short review of existing literature (what's been written about this topic?).
- Three faculty names you would like as your thesis advisor. (Any member of the Wesleyan faculty who agrees to serve may advise your thesis; your thesis tutor does not have to be a member of the AFAM core faculty.)

The faculty will meet to approve viable theses. AFAM faculty will make every effort to help you find a thesis advisor if we approve your thesis proposal. We encourage you to draft a preliminary topic description (with bibliography) before you contact any faculty members with whom you would like to work. This kind of preparation shows forethought and organization. The faculty member can also help you to refine the topic and your proposal for final submission.

If you plan to conduct research that includes interacting with people, you must clear your proposal with the campus Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting that research. The purpose of an IRB is to provide a comprehensive standard of protection for human subjects in research. In this context, as stated on the Wesleyan IRB site, “research” is defined as “any systematic investigation designed to contribute to a body of generalized public knowledge,” and the use of “human subjects” refers to “data collection through interaction with individuals or the collection of identifiable private information about individuals.” See the website for more information and deadlines: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/acaf/support/reviewboard.html>.

The deadline for submission of thesis proposals is May 1st. Please note that if you wish to apply for a grant, such as a Davenport Grant if your project deals with social/public policy or an Olin Fellowship if your project is a literary study, to support summer research, you will need to craft a preliminary proposal and find an advisor in time to meet those grant deadlines. These deadlines tend to be in the first week in March.

Davenport Study Grant:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/pac/davenport/apply.html>

Olin Fellowship:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/english/prizes/submissions.html>

Send proposals, formatted as Word documents, to Professor Elizabeth McAlister, Chair of African American Studies, at emcalister@wesleyan.edu by 5 p.m. on Friday, May 1st. You will be notified by email whether you are authorized to proceed, and who your faculty tutor will be.

Please title the proposal file with your name → i.e., Douglass_AFAM Thesis Proposal

Students who miss the deadline will have to petition for permission to submit a thesis proposal