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**Department of Political Science**

# MA in Political Science

## Thesis Format

The thesis demonstrates a student’s ability to conduct primary research and to integrate research findings into our current knowledge of the field. The thesis is based principally upon research in primary sources, but it also involves a careful review of relevant literature and often the policy setting of a particular topic or issue. In its final form, the thesis must comply with the requirements of the most recent version of [*A Guide to the Preparation and Submission of Theses and Dissertations*](https://cssh.northeastern.edu/resources/theses-and-dissertations/), which is prepared by the College of Social Science and Humanities.

The traditional thesis format is a project in which a student frames a research problem, executes a research design, and presents a thesis that integrates all parts of the project. Theses vary in length, but they typically are between 75 and 100 double-spaced, typed pages. Ultimately the length is decided upon between the student and advisor.

## Thesis Proposal

A student must first prepare a thesis proposal. The proposal represents a basic roadmap. In the course of writing the thesis it is not unusual for students to deviate somewhat from the path set out in the proposal. What is most important in the proposal is that students convey to themselves and their committee members that they know the question they want to ask, and that they have a fairly good idea — based on the existing literature in the field — how to analyze and answer that question.

The first step in the proposal process is to identify your thesis committee. The primary reader is your thesis advisor and the person you will work with most closely throughout the process. This person will go over the details of what they expect in a proposal based on your area of interest and other related factors. Working with your advisor you should identify a second reader. The graduate program director can also assist in this process. You also must decide whether you will register for a 4 credit thesis. The following is a general outline of what (at minimum) a thesis proposal will entail:

1. **Abstract**
2. **Introduction**
3. **Statement of the Problem**
4. **Background/Literature Review**
5. **Research Questions/ Hypotheses**
6. **Methodology-** *Include details of your research methods and demonstrate how the methods relate to your research question(s)*
7. **Contributions/ Limitations**- *A brief statement of what contributions you hope to make to the literature as well as likely limitations or expected challenges*
8. **References/ Bibliography**

Thesis proposals are generally 8-12 double-spaced pages of text. Students *must* submit to the department’s graduate program director a final copy of their proposal signed and dated by their primary and secondary readers. The proposal is due three weeks prior to the start of the semester, and it is reviewed and approved by a student’s thesis committee and the department’s graduate program director. The primary reader must be a full-time member of the Political Science Department at Northeastern University.

**-See Next Page for Proposal Approval Page-**

THESIS TITLE

A Thesis Proposal Submitted to the Political Science Department by

Your Name

Your Northeastern Email

Semester, Year  
4 Credits

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Prof. Aaaa Bbbb Date

Primary Reader

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Prof. Aaaa Bbbb Date

Secondary Reader

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Prof. John Portz Date

Graduate Program Director in Political Science