

Undergraduate Thesis Guide
Architectural History Department
University of Virginia

Introduction

This document provides information and guidelines for Architectural History majors who are preparing to write their undergraduate theses. The Architectural History thesis is an independent exploration that challenges students to select their own topic, carry out original and focused research, and present their findings and conclusions in an extended paper. You should embrace the fourth-year thesis as an opportunity to pursue your individual interests while strengthening your research and writing skills.

Thesis Basics

The undergraduate thesis is required for all Architectural History majors and must be completed during the fall or spring semester of your fourth year. Well before your fourth year, you should begin discussing possibilities with faculty members in the department, one of whom must agree to serve as the advisor for your thesis. Through discussion with your advisor and your own initial research, your task is to develop a topic for your thesis project (see below for further discussion of this part of the process) that must be approved by your advisor. In the semester you undertake your agreed upon thesis work, you must register for ARH 4999 Thesis, a three-credit, pass/fail course. The final thesis should be approximately 30 pages, double-spaced text (plus necessary figures and images), properly formatted, and include appropriate citations and a complete bibliography (see the last page of this guide for a complete checklist).

Selecting a Thesis Topic

Selecting a thesis subject can be challenging, but it is an opportunity to pursue a research question you find particularly interesting. Some questions to ask yourself when choosing a topic include:

- What is an era of architectural history that I would like to learn [more] about?
- Is there a building, site, or location that I find especially fascinating?
- What topic have I learned about in a past classes that has left me wanting to know more?
- Which aspect(s) of architecture, cities, cultural landscapes, historic preservation, or architectural history intrigue(s) me?
- Which debates in the history or theory of architecture are compelling to me?

In choosing a topic, be sure to select something you truly enjoy, you want to learn more about, and you can see yourself researching in depth for an entire semester. You may also consider returning to a topic you have already examined in a previous class for further exploration.

As you finalize your thesis topic in dialogue with your advisor, ask yourself the following questions:

- **Topic:** What is the scope of the topic I am researching? Have I established clear limits to the subject I am pursuing and the questions I will be asking? Is my research question realistic for the given amount of time?

- **Research:** What types of research will I be doing? What resources are available to me as a student at the University of Virginia? Will I need to travel to other institutions/locations for research?
- **Questions & Organization:** What questions must be answered through my research to answer my overall thesis/question? How can I organize these questions into sub-topics and chapters?

Preparing a Thesis Proposal

The above questions regarding **Topic, Research, Questions & Organization** will allow you to hone and polish the scope of your topic as well as your research plan. This preliminary work is essential to complete before writing a thesis proposal to submit to your advisor. While proposal expectations vary from advisor to advisor, a standard proposal should include:

- A background/introduction to and explanation of your topic.
- An outline of questions and topics you will explore (organized into chapters, if possible, which will make researching much easier for you).
- A research plan and annotated bibliography.

Your thesis proposal should be reviewed with your advisor before or as you begin your thesis semester to ensure that you have a solid plan in place and are off to a good start. At the beginning of your thesis semester you will also need to discuss a deadline for your thesis proposal and for the submission of your final thesis.

Selecting a Thesis Advisor

The undergraduate thesis provides you with the chance to work directly with a member of the department faculty whose research interests align with yours. In deciding who you would like to work with, consider:

- Which professor studies an era that pertains to my thesis subject?
- Whose approach to architectural history best aligns with mine?
- Who has taught a course that I particularly enjoyed?
- Who would I like to work closely with over the course of a semester?

Approach a faculty member the semester before you plan to undertake your thesis work so that you have time to discuss your ideas and the possibility of working with him or her. Keep in mind that professors in the department also works with graduate students, and early requests to advise theses are beneficial for all concerned.

The following are the current members of the department faculty and their fields of interest:

- Sheila Crane (scrane): Modern architecture of the Mediterranean, Europe, and North Africa
- Andrew Johnston (asj4w): Industrial & infrastructural heritage, cultural landscapes, critical heritage studies, heritage preservation in China
- Shiqiao Li (lishiqiao): contemporary Chinese cities, Asian Architecture, 17th-18th century British architecture, architectural theory & criticism
- Louis Nelson (ln6n): Early American vernacular and sacred architecture of the South and Greater Caribbean
- Erin Putalik (esp2s): Imbrications between architectural production/consumption and contemporaneous ideas about the finitude of natural resources and the limits of nature
- Lisa Reilly (lar2f): Medieval architecture and visual culture of western Europe and the Mediterranean; digital humanities as applied to the study of architectural history
- Jessica Sewell (jes4gd): Relationships between gender and architecture, urban space and material culture
- Members of the History of Art faculty may also serve as thesis advisors by special arrangement with the Director of Undergraduate Studies

NOTES FOR WRITING BArH ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY THESES

All of these items apply to both rough and final drafts.

1. Examine completed and successful BArH thesis, which may be available from professors in the department.
2. All material submitted to your advisers must be typed and may not be handwritten.
3. It is expected that you will proofread and correct all copies. Do not expect your reader to correct spelling and grammar. All material submitted in preliminary stages (i.e.: chapters and rough drafts) should be as finished a product as possible. Do not submit material that you know is poorly written and disorganized. Use footnotes or endnotes, which must accompany all drafts. Parenthetical citations are not acceptable.
4. All pages must be numbered in the upper right corner.
5. It is the responsibility of the student to arrange with the thesis advisor a timetable for submission of chapters. The student should submit to the advisor an outline of the thesis before commencing writing.
6. Do not wait for advisor to find you and return drafts, you should be in touch with them frequently.

7. The final copy must be typed in 12-point type, double-spaced, 1" on all margins.
8. The sequence of material should be:
 - a. Title Page
 - b. Table of Contents
 - c. List of Illustrations with captions and sources
 - d. Acknowledgments (this may be combined with the introduction)
 - e. Introduction
 - f. Chapters, in sequence (the conclusion will be either a chapter, or part of the final chapter).
 - g. Endnotes (or notes may appear as footnotes at the bottom of the page).
 - h. Bibliography
 - i. Illustrations (all illustrations will be grouped at the end).
9. **INTRODUCTION:**
 - a. Your introduction should include a thesis statement that clearly and concisely explains your argument and conclusions.
 - b. A brief synopsis of the scope of your thesis, the organization of your chapters, as well as the stakes and significance of your project.
 - c. A brief discussion of how your thesis responds to major published writing on your topic or in this area. It may also be helpful to note any special research challenges you may have faced.
 - d. Acknowledgments (optional).
10. **CHAPTERS:** Each chapter should be a sub-portion of your thesis, and obviously should have a title and (a) thesis sentence(s) to orient the reader. The final chapter or the final portion of the last chapter should contain your conclusion, summarizing the thesis and its implications.
11. **SCHOLARLY APPARATUS:** Endnotes or footnotes acknowledge the sources used and can be used to expand certain elements, or discuss the strengths and/or weaknesses of the sources. Follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* or *MLA Handbook*, using full citations, not parenthetical citations.
12. **APPENDIX OR APPENDICES:** While not always necessary, these can be useful for lists, for discussing topics that lie outside of your main argument, or for reprinting lengthy letters or documents of importance.
13. **BIBLIOGRAPHY:** This is not simply a list of sources cited, but a list of all sources consulted. It may need to be divided into to published and non-published materials, drawings, archives etc.
14. **ILLUSTRATIONS:** These should be included at the end of the thesis; they must have a figure number and caption, and be keyed to the text. They may be either black and white or color.
15. **ABSTRACT:** The thesis is to be accompanied by one copy of a 600-word abstract suitable for

publishing. Its title page should be the same as that used for the thesis itself; see below. In addition, at the head of the abstract's first page the name of the student, the title of the thesis, the degree, the month and year of submission, and the names of the Department of Architectural History, School of Architecture, and University of Virginia must appear. **An electronic copy must also be submitted to Shelley Miller at swm3r@virginia.edu.**

16. The deadline for submission of your thesis will be determined by you and your thesis advisor. It must be set for such a date as will allow the advisor to submit a grade by the registrar's deadline for grade submission in the semester in which the student is enrolled in ARH 4999.
17. Clear, grammatically correct writing should be the goal of each student.
18. Maintaining close contact with your thesis advisor is important; do not expect them to pursue you.

SAMPLE COVER PAGE

TITLE

Subtitle (if applicable)

Name

Month, Year

School of Architecture
Department Architectural History
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

Thesis Advisor:

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Bachelors of Architectural History*

Thesis Checklist

Before submitting your final thesis, be sure you have the following completed and assembled:

- ✓ Title page
- ✓ Table of Contents
- ✓ Page numbers
- ✓ Proper introduction and conclusion
- ✓ Chapter structure and headings
- ✓ Appropriate citations
- ✓ Numbered figures with captions
- ✓ Bibliography
- ✓ Printed copy to submit to your thesis advisor