

Lakehead University

Department of History

History 4901

Senior Honours Dissertation

Guidelines for Students

The Senior Honours dissertation is a research essay, neither more nor less, and should be regarded as such. The research methods, organization skills, and writing techniques are exactly the same as those that have been called for in your previous history courses. However, you may have to apply them with even more rigour and ingenuity that you have done in the past, since you will be dealing with a greater variety of sources, and the final product should constitute the culmination of your undergraduate experience and training in history. A research paper of this length should comprise several chapters.

Subject and Supervisor

You should approach a possible dissertation supervisor, preferably toward the end of your third year and certainly no later than the September of the final year. The subject of your dissertation is entirely up to you. You may deal with any geographical area at any time in the past. It must be manageable, however, so beware of “biting off more that you can chew: in terms of size and complexity of the subject and the probable availability of sources. The use of primary sources is encouraged, but not required. Such primary sources include:

- archival material
- published official documents, collections, etc.
- letters, published correspondence or private collections
- diaries, published or unpublished
- oral records
- newspapers or magazines
- memoirs, published or unpublished

You are not expected to travel outside of the Thunder Bay area to do research in archives. However, you may choose to do so. In this respect, you may apply to the

“Vast and Magnificent Land” Research Fund or other scholarships and bursaries for financial assistance.

Once you have found a subject, you should submit a short written proposal to your supervisor, outlining as precisely as you can what you intend to do and how and when you intend to do it. You should be aware that a Dissertations Committee of History will review all proposals to ensure that they are appropriate topics. As well, it will offer bibliographic suggestions. If the committee believes that the proposed dissertation is not suitable, you will be so informed.

Format

Your dissertation should be a maximum of fifty (50) double-spaced pages in length, including a title page, table of contents, introduction, body, conclusion, footnotes, bibliography, maps, appendices and any other accompanying material. A paper of this length should comprise several chapters. Students are expected to adhere to the “University of Chicago” style outlined in Kate L. Turabian, *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (most recent edition).

Timetable

April – May of Third Year Choose supervisor and start discussion and delimitation of subject

June – August Compile preliminary bibliography and begin research

Early October of Fourth Year Submit proposal to supervisor

November – February Continue regular consultation with, and submit draft chapters to supervisor

March Submit final draft of entire dissertation; dissertation is read by second reader in the Department

April Prepare and submit two copies of dissertation

Note that the final few months of the year are likely to be hectic and it is therefore wise to plan to have the bulk of your dissertation research completed by December, or January at the latest; since your dissertation will be read and evaluated by a second member of the History Department (in addition to your supervisor), the process can sometimes be time-consuming. **It is therefore imperative that you do not “leave it to the last minute”**. The timetable outlined above must be adhered to if the student wishes to graduate.

A Senior Honours Dissertation, like any other piece of historical research, will test your powers of imagination and judgement and call for the best of your organizational and

writing skills. So, the Department's advice to the student is to choose a topic which appeals to you. There are many exciting subjects available – ones that will “suck you into the turbulent waters” of original historical research.