

**Guidelines for Proposal + Prospectus + Reading Committee
Medical and Health Humanities Program
Fall 2023**

Before you begin your dissertation, you will write a proposal and prospectus and search for dissertation committee members. This document describes those steps. Please contact the director with any questions.

Step 1: Proposal and Reading Committee

Your *proposal* consists of the following sections:

1. Student Name, ID Number, Email and Phone
2. Brief Statement of the study – one or two sentences.
3. Main research questions or brief outline of claims, defined perspective that you will examine in your Dissertation – in two or three sentences. In the MHH program, you can choose between three types of dissertations. The program director can provide you with a proposal format for each type of dissertation.
 - a. Theoretical/conceptual dissertation based on a literature review/analysis. This type of dissertation usually begins with a problem statement leading toward an hypothesis or claim that you will examine.
 - b. Empirical research combined with a literature review. The empirical research can be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods research. This type of study usually begins with a problem statement and research questions.
 - c. Creative Dissertation. Students are eligible to apply for a Creative Dissertation with a minimum of three relevant electives, or extensive training as an artist outside of Drew, approved by the director (not including Joy of Scholarly Writing).
4. Overview of your study (approx. 500 words). This overview must also include:
 - a) a problem statement: the rationale of your study

- b) the main research claim and/or question(s), dependent on your choice of dissertation type
- c) a brief statement on the way/s in which your Dissertation is interdisciplinary and relevant to the Medical and Health Humanities
- d) mention of two or three main concepts and accompanying primary texts to be consulted.
- e) if an empirical (type b) or creative dissertation (type c): choice of methodology and methods (in 1-2 sentences) or creative or artistic approach.
- f) Planning
- g) References/bibliography.

5. Suggested Committee Members.

You will work with a Committee consisting of a First Reader/Advisor, a Second Reader, and the option for a Third Reader. Doctoral students are responsible for finding dissertation readers. You need to have asked your readers about her/his availability prior to completing your proposal: your readers will likely want to have a say in your proposal.

The program director can support the search for readers and needs to approve the selected reading committee members. Ideally, your proposed First Reader/Advisor should be a CSGS faculty member. If you wish to work with a First Reader/Advisor who is not a faculty member in the Medical and Health Humanities Program or in another Drew Program, please list that person's name with a brief rationale for why you wish to have this faculty member as your First Reader/Advisor and reach out to the Program director for approval.

If you want to work with a Second Reader who is not a faculty member at Drew, you must provide that professor's email to the program director with a brief rationale for why you wish to include this faculty member in your Dissertation project.

You may choose to have a Third Reader on your Dissertation Committee. It is not required to have a Third Reader. If you are proposing a Third Reader who is not a faculty member at Drew, you must provide that professor's email with a brief rationale for why you wish to include this faculty member in your Dissertation project.

Any Reader to be appointed to a Dissertation Committee who is not from Drew will be required to submit a curriculum vitae in advance of the official appointment.

Sending your proposal to MHH Director and GAS Office and GS Dean's Office

Your completed proposal must be presented to the director of the Medical and Health Humanities Program. When you send your proposal, also include the filled-out form 'Dissertation Proposal Form'.

If the director has any questions or comments s/he will be in touch with the student. As part of the approval process, the director will be in touch with the proposed First Reader/Advisor, Second Reader, and if applicable, the proposed Third Reader. The committee member/s must agree to accept the assignment. After review of the proposed study and consultation with the proposed committee, if the proposal is successful, it will be approved by the director.

You are then ready to send it to the Graduate Academic Services (GAS) Office gacservices@drew.edu, and the Graduate Dean's Office (gsdean@drew.edu). When you submit your proposal also, include this filled out 'Dissertation Committee form'.

The GAS Office handles the administrative process.

Upon director approval of the proposal, the student then meets with the First Reader/Advisor and Committee to discuss and outline the Dissertation project towards developing the Dissertation Prospectus

2. Dissertation Prospectus

The dissertation Prospectus is the formal document you present to your doctoral dissertation Committee. The purpose of your Prospectus is preparing to move on to the dissertation. Normally you should plan to make this Prospectus available to your committee soon after you are officially designated a candidate for the degree. At that point it is usual (though not necessarily mandatory) to have a meeting of the committee, at which meeting your prospectus and Prospectus will be the subject for discussion.

Neither an “examination” nor a rite of passage, this meeting is the occasion for genuine conversation and dialogue about what you plan to do, why, and how you plan to go about doing it. It is a good time to ask questions of your committee members, and for them to ask questions of you. The purpose, very simply, is to get everyone “on the same page” with regard to your project, and to offer an opportunity for the sort of additional brainstorming that can very often be really productive for everyone.

The Prospectus should include the following:

1. A title that succinctly indicates the nature and direction of your study.
2. A problem statement: clearly describe the societal and scientific (MHH) problem that leads to your main research question. Here you demonstrate your concern emerges from a societal or scientific context: also explain the relationship of your concern to the societal and scientific developments/state of affairs you will bring to your dissertation.
3. The central question your dissertation will address. Every dissertation is essentially the answer to a single question, and so you need to begin by formulating the question before you can approach devising an answer.

Because dissertations tend to be long, it is reasonable to assume that the question is probably a complex one, formulated in an informed and sophisticated fashion. Even a very long and complicated dissertation, however, may be driven by a startling simple question. So aim first for the simplest and most direct articulation of the question. Complications and qualifications can follow: they should not lead or dictate.

that you indicate the particular need for the sort of project you propose to undertake.

4. Write a paragraph where you list two or three central theoretical concepts from previous scholarship in the field, both specific to your study itself. For each theoretical concepts, write at least one paragraph about the most recent insights on that concept (for example, when the concept of “vulnerability” is central to your research, draw on literature on vulnerability – either sociological, philosophical, ethical or other (interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged)).
5. Yet another paragraph, this one detailing the methodology and methods that will guide your dissertation. Methodology entails the general approach. Will it be a close reading (formalist or not)? An application of some particular

poststructuralist theoretical model? A psychoanalytical study? A genre study? A phenomenology? The methods can vary, but examples of empirical methods are: interviews, observations, etcetera. Here, if you work with empirical research, also include a paragraph about ethical considerations and another paragraph about the quality criteria you suggest readers to use to assess the quality of your work.

6. Another paragraph, this one assessing the feasibility of your project. Can you do it wherever you are at the moment? Are the necessary materials available? If not, how will you get access to what you need? Can you do all that needs to be done in the time available to you? Do you have the special tools (e.g. languages, computer skills, archival experience, etc.) required for the sort of project you are proposing.

7. A paragraph on sometime that is all too commonly overlooked: the attractiveness of your project. Put most simply, is this a project you really want to do? Why? Get beyond the superficial and consider the professional aspects of the project. Will this project help you develop particular professional skills you want to have? If so, why do you want those skills? Will the project lead to publication(s)? If so, of what sort? Will pursuing this project help you when it comes to formulating and pursuing other projects--on other (related or not) subject--later in your career? What do you really want--and need--to get from this project?

8. Finally, you should present a selective bibliography of primary and secondary sources most immediately central to your project. In compiling this bibliography (and all bibliographies), you should develop annotations for the entries for your own use, so that you will be able to keep straight what is what, and which are the materials to which you will need to return. The bibliography you include in your prospectus (and which need not be annotated) should include some or all of the following:

a. Primary sources.

b. Literary, critical, theoretical, or other studies directly related to your primary subject (particularly your author and her or his work[s]);

c. Critical or theoretical works not necessarily about your primary subject but significantly related as paradigms for some of the things you may wish to do in your own study.

d. Works that furnish methodological paradigms for what you might wish to do.

While there is no set length for this prospectus, you may wish to think in terms of 8 to 10 pages as a general guideline.

Next steps.

After approval of your Prospectus, you can execute your project. Many times these phases overlap. We suggest you schedule meetings with your first and second Readers once every six weeks, either separately or as a team. Send your draft texts and questions at least one week (5 working days) before the meeting, so your Readers have enough time to prepare for the meeting.