

4.187: SMArchS: Thesis Development Workshop, Spring 2021

Class Overview:

This is the first of two required subjects for SMArchS AD aimed at preparing you to develop your thesis at MIT. This subject should be seen as the starting point for your thesis preparation and inspire the coming three semesters of research. The goal of this subject is to introduce you to the thesis process, the various thesis types, review former thesis documents, identify potential fields and start to formulate a literature review towards the start of your thesis topic. After taking this class you should have the goals and parameters of the thesis project well in view, including a statement and bibliography even if those will change over time. You should also have developed a clear plan for the summer and for the future two semesters leading to the successful completion of your thesis. A secondary goal of this subject is to create a working group of peers and faculty to give input, feedback, criticism and inspire one another towards a more focused thesis area of interest.

Outline & Schedule:

This course is designed as a series of group discussions among the class. The group discussions will explore weekly topics from thesis types, thesis questions, research strategies and literature reviews etc. Throughout the course you are expected to attend all of the classes, thoroughly participate and engage in discussion with the other presenters.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify the discipline, the field of study, or ‘the body of knowledge’ that frames your work
- Identify and diagram your allies and opponents
- Develop a critical bibliography
- Develop a ‘thesis statement’ & thesis title
- Define potential thesis advisors and readers

Evaluation and Grading Criteria:

The breakdown for evaluation of the subject is as follows: (50%) for assignments and (50%) for class participation.

The two main components of the class are: (1) Assignments: How well did students respond to the specific assignment and how clearly did they write/present their position and (2) Participation: How actively and how constructively are they involved in class discussions?

Attendance:

Attendance for the full duration of each class is mandatory. This class is an exceptional learning environment that requires your presence as well as your input. You are allowed one excused absence for the semester. An excused absence is defined as one that was discussed with and approved by the professor at least 24 hours prior to the date of absence, or a family or medical emergency that is confirmed by your physician or a dean. Absences beyond the allotted will result in a decrease in your final grade.

Academic Integrity:

Massachusetts Institute of Technology students are here because of their demonstrated intellectual ability and because of their potential to make a significant contribution to human thought and knowledge. At MIT, students will be given unusual opportunities to do research and undertake scholarships that will advance knowledge in different fields of study. Students will also face many challenges. It is important for MIT students to become familiar with the Institute's policies regarding academic integrity, which is available at Academic Integrity at MIT: [A Handbook for Students](#).

Writing and Communication Center:

The WCC at MIT (Writing and Communication Center) offers free one-on-one professional advice from communication experts. The WCC is staffed completely by MIT lecturers. All have advanced degrees. All are experienced college classroom teachers of communication. All are published scholars and writers. The WCC works with undergraduate, graduate students, post-docs, faculty, staff, alums, and spouses. The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing classroom presentations & conference talks as well as designing slides). The WCC also helps with all English as Second Language issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. The WCC is located in E18-233, 50 Ames Street. To guarantee yourself a time, make an appointment. To register with our online scheduler and to make appointments, go to <https://mit.mywconline.com/>. To access the WCC's many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations, go to: <http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/>.

Student Support Services and Grad Support:

If you are dealing with a personal or medical issue that is impacting your ability to attend class, complete work, or take an exam graduate students should contact a dean in GradSupport. These offices are here to help you. The deans will verify your situation, provide you with support, and help you work with your professor to determine next steps. Please visit the GradSupport websites for contact information and more ways that they can provide support.

Disability and Accessibility Services:

MIT is committed to the principle of equal access. Students who need disability accommodations are encouraged to speak with Disability and Access Services (DAS), prior to or early in the semester so that accommodation requests can be evaluated and addressed in a timely fashion. Even if you are not planning to use accommodations, it is recommended that you meet with DAS staff to familiarize yourself with the services and resources of the office. If you have already been approved for accommodations, please contact DAS early in the semester so that they can work with you to get your accommodation logistics in place. Please visit the DAS website for contact information.

Diversity:

MIT values an inclusive environment. I hope to foster a sense of community in this classroom and consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect. I welcome individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. If this standard is not being upheld, please feel free to speak with me.

4.221 Tentative Schedule:

W	Week	TOPIC
1	1/31	Introduction
2	2/7	Review Intro Presentations
3	2/14	Discipline - 10 books/articles
4	2/21	Discipline V2: Editing
5	2/28	Diagram field of study
6	3/7	Diagram field of study: Editing
7	3/14	Go to SmarchS AD Year2 Reviews
8	3/21	Spring Break
9	3/28	Mid Review
10	4/4	Write Thesis Statement & Title
11	4/11	Thesis Statement & Title : Editing
12	4/18	Thesis Advisors/Readers
13	4/25	Summer/Fall/Spring Plans
14	5/2	Future Vision
14	5/9	Final Review