PROSPECTUS GUIDELINES:
ENGL 591 Project, ENGL 592 Portfolio, and ENGL 593 Thesis
M.A. in English, Boise State University

PURPOSE. The prospectus for a thesis, project, or portfolio outlines a plan of work on a subject that can be explored in the 60-80 pages of the typical M.A. thesis or project in English studies; or in the documents required for the portfolio and described on the M.A. in English website. Your prospectus should demonstrate to committee members (1) that your thesis/project/portfolio will contribute to scholarship in the field and (2) that you have reviewed the relevant primary and secondary materials. It should explain your theoretical approach and indicate your proposed plan of organization, including the content of each chapter or portfolio piece. The thesis/project/portfolio prospectus is usually about 8-10 pages, offering your committee a clear and specific idea of what you plan to do and how you will go about it. A detailed plan will enable your committee to advise you on the scope and potential success of your project and help you to limit or expand your plan if necessary.

The prospectus for a master’s thesis, project, or portfolio bears some similarities to the prospectus that a scholar prepares for a book publisher, and although the primary purpose of a thesis, project, or portfolio is to give you the experience of preparing a substantial work of original scholarship as the culmination of your Master’s degree program, the thesis/project/portfolio may also provide you with publishable material for scholarly articles and/or for papers for professional conferences. For a description of a prospectus for a book proposal, see the MLA Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing (3rd edition, 2008), section 1.5.4. You should also consult “Getting It Published” in the October 2000 issue of PMLA, pp. 1053 to 1060, with particular attention to the “Originality Problem” section on p.1059.

CONTENT. The prospectus for the thesis, project, or portfolio must include the following items:

- Cover Sheet (1 page)
- A double-spaced statement of hypothesis and methodology (8-10 pages)
- Annotated Bibliography
- Outline of projected timelines for submitting chapters to your committee (one page)

COVER SHEET. The prospectus cover sheet must contain the following information:

- Name of Student
- Postal Address
- E-mail address
- Local Telephone Number
- Name of Thesis Director
- Tentative Title of Thesis/Project
- Semester in which you plan to graduate

BIBLIOGRAPHY. The prospectus must include an annotated bibliography of works consulted. If there are works you have not consulted but plan to do so, you should explain why you have not been able to review them prior to submitting your prospectus. If further research is planned, explain what that will be. The bibliography must be up-to-date, including all recent significant works of scholarship in the past 8 to 10 years as well as the most important ones of an earlier date. A dead giveaway of poor research (e.g., reliance on the bibliographies of other scholars) is the absence of recent work. In addition to printed resources, you should include any credible websites, video or sound recordings, or personal interviews that you have consulted or conducted. Again, if further work in these areas is planned, explain that clearly and, on your timelines page, indicate the schedule for these activities.
WHEN TO PREPARE A PROSPECTUS. The prospectus should be prepared no later than the semester before the one in which you expect to graduate. Writing the thesis, project, or portfolio should also begin before your final semester, so that you are able to meet the deadlines for writing/revising, defending, and preparing the final version of the thesis or project for the Graduate College. The deadlines for defending the thesis/project and submitting the final copies to the Graduate College are found in the annual Graduate Catalog as well as each semester’s academic calendar, which is available on the Registrar’s website: http://registrar.boisestate.edu/

MEETING WITH YOUR COMMITTEE. After you complete your prospectus, give enough copies to your thesis/project/portfolio director to circulate the prospectus to your committee members. Your thesis/project/portfolio director will convene a meeting of your committee at which you will defend your prospectus by giving a brief oral summary and answering questions that the director and other committee members pose. They will then determine whether you are ready to proceed with the thesis/project/portfolio itself or need to refine and clarify the prospectus and re-present it at another meeting.

AFTER YOUR PROSPECTUS HAS BEEN APPROVED by your committee, you should file a copy of it in the Writing Center, LA-200. You must also complete and submit the following paperwork to the Director of the M.A. in English

- Appointment of Supervisory Committee Form (available on Graduate College website)
- M.A. in English Thesis/Project Prospectus Outline and Record of Approval (available on M.A. in English website or outside the office of the Director of the M.A. in English)

GRADUATE COLLEGE THESIS FORMAT GUIDELINES. Before you begin writing—and as you write and format your thesis—you should consult the Boise State University Graduate College’s Standards and Guidelines for Theses and Dissertations, a guide to preparation of the final copy of the thesis to meet BSU Graduate College standards. This document is available on the Graduate College Thesis and Dissertation Office website: http://graduatecollege.boisestate.edu/thesesdissertation/ Click on the link on the left-hand side of the page labeled “Standards and Guidelines.”