

Recommended timeline

Let me start with a disclaimer that none of this is part of the FLL graduate handbook, nor is it part of the graduate school handbook. Take this as advice and my preferred way of working together. Please also know that I am not able to work on your project as a chair or a committee member if I had never had you as a student.



I don't know about you, but I find a good timeline soothing. It helps me keep organized and keeps enough pressure for me to produce and achieve all I have to do. I find that 2 years during your masters is a short amount of time. But you can make the best of it thanks to this recommended timeline I will share with you.

Ok, here we go!

Fall Semester: Your very first semester!

While your first semester is likely super exciting and the beginning of an amazing adventure, it can be daunting, overwhelming and busier than you'd have expected! Here are my tips for your very first semester.



- Take a myriad of classes offered in our department and on the exchange if you have to. This will get you acquainted with all the professors in the department, their mentorship style and feedback style, which is crucial as you start getting a feel for who could direct your project or be part of your CP committee.
- You still have no clue about what your project is going to be your first semester? **It's O.K.!!!!** Like I said, think of this first semester as **a taste sampler**, a unique way for you to get to think and stretch your mind and get introduced to different ideas and concepts. For your final papers, try new things and start researching different topics that are of interests to you. Deep in the research you may find that you love or hate that project!
- At the end of your first semester, you should have a good idea of what you may or may not like. Take note of that, and even if it's not super detailed at this point, move on!

Spring Semester: Your second semester

- Same advice as mentioned above, especially #1
- You should get more of a sense by the end of that semester of what you like most. You may have favorite authors or theorists you would want to study further for instance. Take note of that.
- I recommend approaching a professor to ask them to be your chair. If it's me, I'd like to send you to [my blog post about my expectations](#) and [another blog post about the kinds of CPs](#) I am willing and able to direct.

Summer of your first year



Relax and unwind! YES, REALLY! Summer is a good time to unwind and decide to take some rest. But I do have two different approaches you could take that summer if you feel up to it! Here we go!

- **Mild Approach:** The Wandering Mind. Between your naps, and pool time if you're lucky or your job if you have one, do some pleasure reading. What I mean by that is that I recommend taking a proactive stance on your project while you have a bit more free headspace and

therefore more creative space as well. Open yourself up to a few novels, graphic novels, films related to what it seems that you like.

- **Spicy Approach:** The Deep Dive. If you'd like to take a deep dive, I recommend asking your chair AND other professors you are interested in working with, for book recommendations AS WELL AS doing a bit of research yourself! I have tons of curated reading lists that are mixing theory and practice (novels, art in general).
- If you have time and are around in the summer, while you take library trips to pick up a few items, always opt to go to the stacks and find this book yourself. Once you found it, now take a look at the shelf and explore the kinds of books that are probably very related to your research area! My advisor always used to say that the book you really need is next to the one you are looking for! It has become true for me more than once!



- No matter what, don't forget to take notes or do some free writing! I'm serious! You do not know when your project will "appear" to you. I highly recommend taking some notes on what you are reading. And to structure your free writing, you could go over your notes about a particular text and jot down what other questions you may have about a particular quote? Do you strongly agree or disagree about what the author says? Why so? This will boost your creativity and flow of ideas and keep your eyes on your future CP without the pressure of producing anything super polished or structured yet.

Fall Semester: Your third semester

- Take more classes in the FLL department AND maybe try to venture out of the department to a WGS course, or a HIS course or another course! Exposure to different fields (what we commonly call interdisciplinarity) isn't built in a day, and certainly not in a single semester. BUT, exposure to themes in which you are most interested, in a new field, could make that CP so much richer! I definitely encourage you to take ONE class outside of the department. Do consult with Dr. Jim Michnowicz before making a final decision.
- Try to focus on a single theme for all of your final papers, across all classes. This will make your experience so much easier and you will make you take a deeper dive into the issues you love! Sounds tricky you say? How do you do this when you're interested in contemporary Black women's lit and you are taking a 19th century course? Use your creativity! Can you do a project on the representation of Black women in the 19th century and la Belle Epoque? OF COURSE you can. Can you research the postcolonial intricacies of that time period? OF COURSE you can. And so on and so forth! Possibilities are **ENDLESS** and believe me, it's work that won't be wasted, instead it can make for an amazingly beautiful and rich historical introduction to your CP. It'll give you depth and "longue vue" of your project in the long run. DO discuss the possibility of doing a project like that with the professor in question of course. And if they seem reticent to the idea, argue (like I have done above) that it would give you such great insights into what you are interested in doing for your CP.
- **Time to "propose"** to other committee members! YES, I said propose, because you will likely have to explain your CP or write up or draft up a proposal to your committee members to convince them to be in your committee. Everyone is so busy and I do think that you would need to approach each committee member with a solid proposal of what your CP is going to do. Do identify the committee members in conjunction with your chair, never approach a faculty member that you know without having talked to your chair about it first.
- Talking about the proposal, by the end of this semester, you should have something resembling **a detailed outline, an abstract and a bibliography** of the works at the core of your CP.
- If I am your chair, I am expecting **monthly visits to my office or virtual meetings** of 45 minutes to check-in on your project, and the direction you should take.

Spring Semester: Your fourth and final semester!

Can you believe this will be your final semester? Time flew by, didn't it? You guessed it, it's now time to buckle down and write, just like Kermit below!



Check out my writing tips in this same folder. But here's what ahead for you this semester:

- If I am your chair, those 45-minute meetings will become **bi-monthly** from January to March (before spring break), and **weekly** (after spring break). Pressure is on! And I want to make sure that you will defend on time at this point.
- Your chair (me) and you should come up with a timeline for completion and writing of your chapters. Personally, I like the following turn in calendar:
 - January: Chapter 1
 - February: Chapter 2
 - March: Chapter 3
 - April: Intro and conclusion
 - Early May: CPR or thesis defense

You may understand now why it is so important to get ahead and always think about your CP whenever you have the time, even 5 minutes! Understand that the first chapter will be likely the most difficult to produce, you've never written something like this before, I understand! Expect a lot of comments, a lot of revisions, possibly feeling overwhelmed when opening up these comments. All of these are NORMAL things to feel. Do **NOT** think for a minute that your first draft will be perfect, but do think that it is in what I call a P.P.P., **Perpetual Process of Perfection™** Dr. JMG, (LOL, but I should really trademark this though!). You are perfecting your ideas, and it's a whoooooole process. After the revisions are done, you will see, you will produce your other chapters quicker.

- Meeting with your committee members: during your writing period, I do encourage you to meet with your committee members and/or update them on your writing process. Some committee members do not want to be involved until 10 days before your CPR or thesis defense. That is fine. But DO know and ask how these committee members want to be involved. I personally like to be involved along the way and I would expect most committee members would as well. Ask them if they want to be sent chapter one-by-one, if it's ok to

Recommended timeline for working together - May 2020 - Dr. Montlouis-Gabriel's Guidelines

meet with them once a month to give them an update on the project... The more eyes or ears you get on your project along the way, the better! It is at least my opinion and my style. I would also say that it prevents you from getting to the CPR and having a professor tear down all of your work for lack of a better word! So do keep in touch with your committee members, please.

- As we get close to the CPR, please check out the **CPR FAQ** in this folder to help you with expectations.
- Be **patient** and **kind** to yourself. During this time, you won't have other classes and I recommend that you do not take anymore. This CP will take a lot of energy out of you, and I recommend you do take the time to relax, exercise, take care of yourself, especially during the weekends! See my writing tips in this same folder in order to achieve as close as possible balance.