MA Thesis Guidelines
Borns Jewish Studies Program

Fall of Second Year (at latest): Identify faculty chair
In consultation with the DGS, the student should identify and approach a BJSP core faculty member who could chair the student’s thesis committee. That faculty member should be one with research interests relevant to the student’s research plans for the MA thesis. The chair should help the student design the research for the MA thesis, including helping identify relevant methods and readings.

Feb 1: Finalize three-person committee, send abstract to committee members
Two of the committee members must be JS faculty; the third may be from outside the program. The student should send each committee member an abstract of the thesis.

Mar 1: Set Defense Time
The student will coordinate with all committee members to schedule a 1.5-hour time slot for the oral defense of the MA thesis. It should take place during the second or third week of April. Once the student has the day and time, the chair of the committee should coordinate with BJSP staff to schedule a room.

Month of March: Revising
The student will work with thesis chair to revise draft. The student may also work with the other two committee members, if they are willing to provide feedback on drafts.

Apr 1: Final Draft
The student will turn in the Final Draft to all committee members. The thesis must be no more than 40 pages or 12,000 words.

Second or Third Week of April: The MA Defense
The defense is a conversation among the student and three faculty members. It takes between 1 and 1.5 hours.
By April 1, the student will have emailed the Final Draft to committee members. All committee members will read the thesis before the defense.
The defense itself will begin with the student giving a brief introduction (5-8 minutes) to the thesis, including a short summary of the argument and the goals of the piece. The student and faculty members will then have a conversation, in which faculty may ask questions about the thesis.
After about an hour of discussion, the student will briefly leave the room while the faculty committee discusses. There are 4 possible outcomes of that discussion: (1) the thesis is perfect and needs no revisions at all, and the committee signs off on it (2) the thesis is very good, and the committee has suggestions for its improvement, but is also willing to sign off on it with the knowledge that the student will take those suggestions into account (3) the thesis is good but has major issues that require revision before the committee will sign off on it or (4) the thesis does not meet the standards of the committee and is not accepted.
(For context: #2 and #3 are the most common, and #4 has never happened.)

**Last week in April: Formatting and Submitting**

After the thesis has been approved by the three committee members, the student will need to format your thesis to Proquest’s very specific guidelines. (The university will kick it back if they see even small mistakes.) Those can be found here:  

Failure to meet any of the above deadlines may delay the process and thereby delay graduation for the student.