

UNC Folklore MA Requirements—the Critical Literature Review:

The critical literature review is an extended bibliographic essay (18-25 pages), based primarily on readings that the student encounters in coursework, in which the student:

- displays an awareness of the historical and intellectual connections among issues, works, and authors that have most strongly influenced the student's own developing interests and research trajectory and
- demonstrates a broad grasp and critical assessment of the discipline.

Goals and Timing

- The critical literature review enables the student to conceptualize synthetically the field of Folklore and his/her emerging place in it; this synthesis, in turn, will ground the writing of an original thesis that contributes substantively to our discipline.
- The student is encouraged to work on his/her critical literature review during the summer between the first and second years of coursework. S/he should be prepared to submit the document—along with his/her thesis proposal—to the thesis committee chair by mid-September of the second year, to make revisions if requested by the committee chair, and to submit the revised document to all committee members by the end of September.
- An oral examination based upon the critical literature review will form a crucial part of the thesis proposal meeting, enabling the thesis committee to ascertain that the student is adequately prepared to embark upon the thesis project.

Detailed Requirements

The written critical literature review is a scholarly synthesis that substantively reflects the breadth and depth of the field in three areas:

- the historiography of critical concepts and methodologies encountered through the student's coursework;
- the application of these concepts and methodologies within the field;
- how these concepts and methodologies inform future directions in the field, including the student's own research.

The review may take any of a number of forms, as determined by the student in consultation with his/her thesis advisor. For instance, it could be:

- an exploration of three or more major critical positions and their application in various media (e.g., ethnography, literature, film) and genres (narrative, music, foodways, material culture, landscape, architecture, etc.);

- a compilation of 2- to 3-page critical assessments of core concepts and applications drawn from each of the student's courses, beginning with an introduction that explains the interests and intellectual trajectory that inform the selection of texts, and concluding with a synthesis;
- a broadly conceived state-of-the-field assessment.

The critical literature review is thus not simply a list of works read, but rather an intellectually generous and methodologically informed assessment of a clearly articulated sense of the field. We intentionally do not specify the exact number or provenance of the readings to be covered. The faculty will evaluate the bibliography in relation to the full range of courses that the student has taken (which, in turn, have been chosen in consultation with faculty advisors in order to provide breadth of knowledge in the field).