PREPARING FOR YOUR THESIS
The Summer Before and Weekly Thesis Advising Meetings

The Summer Before Your Senior Year
Students are not required to work on their thesis projects over the summer, but we highly encourage students to do so. During the summer, students are expected to do their own research without assistance from their advisor. Summer is also a time when faculty do their research, so advisors will likely not be available to you until school resumes in the Fall semester. If you choose to begin work during the summer months, try to do the following:

- **Begin research.** “Research” can take many forms depending on your project. Generally, research means reading around your chosen subject, but also visiting locations, speaking with people, watching movies related to your thesis, and sketching out a rough plan or script. You should ideally meet with your advisor before summer break to get reading and viewing recommendations.

- **Annotations:** Get into the habit of creating an annotation for each text you read or view over the summer. Each annotation should address the following:
  1) What is the author’s argument (if film: what is this work about?)
  2) List or transcribe some important passages or scenes
  3) What does this have to do with my thesis?

- **Shooting:** If you’re working on a primarily creative or integrated project, shoot some footage if you can. Again, this could qualify as “test” or “research” footage that might not make it into the final project, but your project stands a much better chance of being successful if you can begin developing the visual element early. Remember that as a thesis student, you do have access to checkout equipment for the summer, although the cage will not be staffed between June and August, so please make sure to think about what you would need and arrange this with Prof. Levine and the cage staff as soon as possible.

First Fall Meeting
Ideally, you should come to your first meeting with your advisor in Fall having wrestled with some ideas. You will submit a revised thesis proposal to your advisor before this first meeting. The point is to revisit your thesis proposal in light of your summer research. Describe your project in more complex terms, and
show what has altered based on your thinking/reading over the summer. If you are working on a creative thesis, try to identify the central question driving your thesis film (should not be a question with a yes/no answer, should be a “how,” “what,” or “why” question), and try to articulate how the shape of your planned film responds to this question.

Before this meeting, you will also submit your own syllabus of readings and films, and a shooting schedule (if primarily creative) or writing plan (if primarily critical), or both (if fully integrated) for the first six weeks of the semester. Once you complete these six weeks, you’ll reassess where you are and draw up a syllabus for the next six weeks. And so on.

**Weekly Meetings**
During Fall & Spring you will meet weekly with your advisor (sometimes bi-weekly) for an hour (time TBA). Often, you will have work due at these meetings (eg: a syllabus draft, shooting schedule, annotations, rushes, or rough cut). This work should be submitted **24-48 hours before each meeting**.

When you meet with your advisor, together you will discuss/watch what you’ve handed in, and your advisor may give you written comments. Your advisor’s role will be to provide structure and conceptual orientation, to give you pointers when appropriate, and to be a sounding board. But the initiative and research for your thesis has to come from you.

**Additional Consultations**
In addition to your weekly meetings with your primary advisor, you will meet with a faculty member who specializes in the complementary practice (for instance, if you are primarily working with a Critical Studies advisor, you will also meet with a Filmmaker, and vice versa).

Required consultative meetings will be scheduled as follows:
- **Mid-October** (once you have a clear plan in place);
- **Early-December** (once you’ve made a plan for your complementary creative or critical practice);
- **Mid-February** (to review what you’ve accomplished in your complementary practice, and prepare for completion)