

Honors Thesis: Policies and Procedures

Introduction:

The thesis topic will usually be in your major. If you are an interdisciplinary major, the topic may be drawn from any area of the interdisciplinary program. For those students who have a double major in which each major requires a senior project, the Honors thesis can substitute for both major senior projects (when applicable) if certain conditions are met. Those conditions are outlined at the end of this document.

The Honors Thesis is an opportunity for significant research or creative work in an area of individual interest. Different disciplines have different standards and expectations for length in the Honors Thesis project. Your thesis director will be able to tell you what is typical for your discipline.

Since 2001, the Memorial Library has archived theses by discipline; they are available for review. Look for one in your discipline to give you an idea of what is expected from you. Here is a sample of thesis titles:

- *Hope and Nihilism: Leo Strauss and his Students (Philosophy)*
- *The Magical Allure of Allende (Spanish)*
- *The Effects of Modeling and Topic-Stimulus on Self-Referential Touching (Psychology)*
- *Analyzing the Effects of the HOPE Scholarship Program (Economics)*
- *Political Motivations Understood Through The Federalist (Government)*
- *Differential Gene Expression Between Mictic and Amictic Populations of Rotifers (Biology)*
- *BRT Polynomials of a Link Family (Mathematics)*
- *Development and Testing of a "Safer" Tranquilizer Dart (Animal Science)*
- *Uncovering Egypt: The Lives and Collections of Giovanni Belzoni and E. A. Wallis Budge (Art History)*
- *Electrochemical Investigations of Acetylated Cytochrome c (Chemistry)*

General procedures:

The honors thesis is a two-term project undertaken as a two-course sequence, Honors 450 and Honors 451.

In the process of developing materials for HON 450, a student will meet with the thesis director for "review of progress" discussions. The supporting committee member(s) should meet with the student at least once, probably sometime near or during the tenth week, for a review of progress and to offer suggestions before the final review in the thirteenth week. Of course, more frequent meetings are recommended.

Two weeks prior to the deadlines outlined in the policies for HON 450 or HON 451 below, the Honors director will send a reminder notice to all thesis committee members and students who are working on an Honors thesis of an impending deadline.

Honors 450:

The Honors Thesis Committee should have two or three members: you must have a director, usually someone who is in your discipline/ department, and a second member from any discipline or department. Optional is a third member, also from any discipline/major within the college. Consult with your thesis director as to who would be appropriate second and third members for your committee. It is then your responsibility to ask these faculty to serve on your committee.

1) The purpose and required work in Honors 450 is as follows:

- to discover and define a focus, subject, topic, or creative project for the Honors thesis;
- to do preliminary work as defined by the Honors thesis director (e.g., an annotated bibliography, literature review, field or lab research, general research to narrow topic's focus, creative work, etc.); and
- to submit a report, prospectus, annotated bibliography, literature review, partial draft, or some combination of these, or whatever was required in the HON 450 syllabus. The materials should be submitted to each member of the committee by the thirteenth week. Each committee member will comment on the materials, sending those comments to the thesis director and the student.

2) If a supporting member of the thesis committee does not receive a draft by the thirteenth week, s/he will notify the chair of the thesis committee and the Honors director.

3) Unless each member of the committee has agreed prior to the thirteenth week, no extensions will be granted. Instead, a grade of "U" will be assigned for the course. The student may then repeat HON 450 the following term. (Please note: incompletes for this course must conform to the college policies adopted for all incompletes.)

4) Any grade awarded for work in HON 450 should reflect a consensus of the entire committee.

Honors 450 is graded with an H (Honors), S (Satisfactory), or U (Unsatisfactory). Three hours credit is awarded for either an "H" or "S." No credit is awarded for a "U." If a student receives a "U," the course must be repeated. None of these grades affects a student's grade point average. The Honors Thesis director, in consultation with the other committee member(s), will determine the grade to be awarded. All members must agree on the grade to be awarded.

Unless a student is on a study-abroad program, he/she should enroll in Honors 450 the second term of the junior year. If a student is studying abroad in the second term of the junior year, enroll in Honors 450 in the first term of the junior year (if possible) or in the first term of the senior year.

Honors 451:

Having successfully passed Honors 450, a student should enroll in Honors 451. A student will work on creating the final draft of the thesis in Honors 451. By the eleventh week, a reasonably polished final draft of the thesis should be submitted to the faculty member who is directing the thesis and to the other committee members. The committee has one week to review, provide criticisms, and make suggestions for revisions. Once the student receives the committee's response, he/she revises and then submits a final draft to all committee members.

Thesis submission timeline:

- Students should begin the first thesis course, HON 450, the second semester of their junior year. This semester will focus on research/drafting efforts. For Honors 451, if a student began work during the spring term in Honors 450, he/she should meet with his/her director and committee by the second week of the fall term to discuss work done over the summer and to agree to the kind of work to be completed for the remainder of the Honors 451 semester.
- Students must complete a "review draft" of the full thesis by the 11th week of the semester in which s/he is enrolled in HON 451 and submit that draft to each committee member for review and commentary. The thesis director and the two supporting committee members will evaluate the review draft materials. Commentary and suggestions for revisions will be sent by all committee members to the student; the two supporting committee members will send copies of their commentary to the thesis director as well.
- A student may submit a "late review draft" if, prior to the 11th week, all the committee members have agreed to the late submission. In no case may a review draft be submitted beyond the 13th week.
- Any supporting committee member who does not receive a review draft by the 13th week will notify the thesis director and the Honors director. At that point, the entire committee will meet and decide how to proceed. Options might be: a) allow the student to complete the project as a "directed study" in order to receive 3 credit hours and to graduate but not with an Honors degree; b) if the student and committee agree, give an "I" for the course, allowing the student to complete the requirements in the following term in accordance with the new policy adopted by the college for incomplete grades, fall 2010; or c) submit a "WF" for the course.
- If a student does not pass the thesis defense, the student should be assigned an "I" for HON 451, and must complete the work by the deadline(s) designated on the Request for Incomplete form. (This presumes that a student began work on the Honors Thesis during his/her junior year and completed HON 451 during the first term of his/her senior year.) Upon fulfillment of the requirements and a satisfactory second defense, the student's incomplete will be changed to the appropriate letter grade, and the student will be allowed to graduate with Honors as long as all other requirements for the program have been fulfilled.

General guidelines for the thesis defense:

A defense should be held during the last two weeks of a given term. An earlier date is acceptable if the student and all committee members agree. A copy of the final thesis should be available to all committee members far enough in advance so that questions may be prepared for the defense. When the thesis committee members meet for the defense, questions or concerns are posed and the student's response is noted. At the end of this discussion, the student is asked to leave the room so that the committee members may review the student "defense" and decide whether the student's defense will positively or negatively affect the final grade. The committee, if possible, agrees on a final grade at this point and calls the student in. Final comments are offered and the grade announced. If the committee wishes more time to discuss a final grade, the student should be told that the final grade will be reported by the thesis director as soon as possible.

There are standard first and second page formats for the thesis, and they are available online from the Honors Program page in VikingWeb. Make sure you follow this format. Obtain the required signatures for the second page of the final draft of the thesis once the defense has been successfully completed.

How to register:

To register for HON 450, you will need the signatures of your thesis director and the director of the Honors Program. The form to register for HON 450 is available on the Honors Program page in VikingWeb.

To register for HON 451, you will need the signatures of the Honors Director and the school dean (if you want to double count HON 451 in honors and your major). The form to register for HON 451 is available on the Honors Program page in VikingWeb.

For those students with a double major:

For those Honors students who intend to graduate with two majors that both require a senior project, the following policy and procedure will apply. An Honors student may substitute an Honors thesis for two senior projects in different disciplines if:

- 1) Both departments have reviewed and agreed to the Honors thesis proposal as a substitute for the departmental senior project requirement.
- 2) The Honors thesis will address its topic in such a way that significant research will be drawn from both disciplines.
- 3) The Honors thesis will be substantial enough in development, research, and presentation so as to be sufficient to satisfy the expectations implicit in two senior projects and an Honors thesis.
- 4) The Honors Committee directing an Honors thesis to satisfy two departmental senior project requirements will have representation from both departments on the Honors Thesis Committee.