Global Studies Institute: Honors Thesis Requirements and Guidelines

**Why Write an Honors Thesis?**
An honors thesis allows students to conduct independent research on a topic of a student’s interest while under the supervision of a faculty member. Students gain valuable research tools during the course of study, including development of their critical thinking and writing skills, and they gain valuable knowledge about a particular topic. Students also benefit from special attention from a faculty member, which contributes to the quality of student research and which can lead to a publication and detailed reference letters later in a student’s career.

**Eligible Students**
Junior or senior honors students who are Global Studies majors are eligible. Honors students in other majors who have completed at least nine credit hours in either 3000- or 4000-level Global Studies courses or courses taught by Global Studies core or affiliate faculty are eligible. Non-honors students that meet the Honors College requirements (i.e., minimum 3.3 GPA and in good standing) are eligible.

Students who do not meet these requirements may submit a petition to the Global Studies Institute’s Director of Undergraduate Studies, who will consult with the Honors College in making a final decision. This petition should include a detailed letter of recommendation from the prospective mentor, who will have the best sense of whether a student has the necessary background to begin work on a thesis project in Global Studies.

**Eligible Mentors**
Any full-time core or affiliate faculty member in the Global Studies Institute may supervise an honors thesis in Global Studies.

**Timeline**
There are several models for an honors project in Global Studies, as described below. With all models, students must make an original contribution to the field of Global Studies or in a scholarly discipline relevant to Global Studies. The thesis must be conducted in collaboration with a faculty advisor and must involve more effort and sophistication than would be expected from a classroom assignment. It is expected that an honors thesis will be a minimum of 20 pages, double-spaced although the format may vary. Final length and format will be decided in consultation with the mentor. The student’s product must include a written component. For example, if the student were to make a film, it must be accompanied by a major piece of reflective or analytical writing about the creative process.

**MODEL 1: Research Laboratory or Team**
Students typically apprentice in a research laboratory or on a faculty member’s research team for at least 1 semester prior to conducting a thesis. The actual thesis project may take 2-3
semesters to complete. The duration of the thesis depends on many factors, such as the amount of time needed to 1) review the literature, 2) develop a research question, 3) obtain approvals from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC; for research involving non-human animals) or Institutional Review Board (IRB; for research involving human participants) if needed, 4) become proficient with the necessary skills, 5) conduct the research and analyze results, and 6) write the thesis. Students are expected to meet regularly with their faculty mentor to set goals and deadlines, discuss progress, and provide feedback.

Students who qualify for this model may enroll in GLOS 4870 Honors Thesis: Research (1-3 credit hours) for one or more semesters during their work on their thesis. All students who qualify for this model must enroll in GLOS 4880 Honors Thesis: Writing (1-6 credit hours) during the semester they plan to defend. The exact number of credit hours for both courses and whether to enroll in 4870 depends on variables such as the student’s schedule, financial constraints, and/or mentor requirements.

MODEL 2: Independent Research under Guidance from a Faculty Mentor
Students undertake an honors project over two semesters. In the first semester, students enroll in GLOS 4870 Honors Thesis: Research (1-3 credit hours) and complete a literature review of their topic. They have regular meetings with their faculty advisor. Students are often asked to write reading summaries or construct an annotated bibliography as they do research. The final output of the research semester may be a detailed outline for the thesis or a preliminary introduction. Particular assignments and the weight for those assignments for the research semester are determined by the faculty advisor. A student’s grade for the research semester typically includes consideration of attendance and participation at meetings with her/his advisor, completion of short assignments (e.g., reading summaries) in which a student demonstrates mastery of the literature, and a more heavily weighted final assignment (e.g., a thesis outline) in which the student shows that s/he is ready to begin writing a thesis.

In the second semester, students enroll in GLOS 4880 Honors Thesis: Writing (1-6 credit hours) and write their thesis. They continue to meet regularly with their advisor to discuss their progress and go over drafts of their work. Particular assignments and the weight for the assignments for this semester are determined by the faculty advisor. A student’s grade during this semester typically includes consideration of attendance and discussion of the thesis during regular meetings, the timely submission of drafts, the student’s effective response to feedback on drafts, and an assessment of the quality of the writing and critical thinking skills demonstrated in the final version of the thesis.

The exact number of credit hours for both courses depends on variables such as the student’s schedule, financial constraints, and/or mentor requirements.

MODEL 3: Significant Expansion of Previous Work (One Semester Honors Thesis)
This option requires that students have prior coursework on the topic of their project and that students build their thesis from previous research (such as a seminar paper) with a faculty member. Students who qualify for this model enroll in GLOS 4880 Honors Thesis: Writing (1-6
credit hours). Students will likely do some additional readings early in the semester to develop their prior research, but this is not primarily a research semester. Students spend the bulk of the semester expanding and developing their research ideas through writing. Particular assignments and the weight for the assignments for this semester are determined by the faculty advisor. A student’s grade during this semester typically includes consideration of attendance and discussion of the thesis during regular meetings, the timely submission of drafts, the student’s effective response to feedback on drafts, and an assessment of the quality of the writing and critical thinking skills demonstrated in the final version of the thesis. The exact number of credit hours for the depends on variables such as the student’s schedule, financial constraints, and/or mentor requirements.

The Product
It is expected that an honors thesis will be a minimum of 20 pages, double-spaced although the format may vary. Final length and format will be decided in consultation with the mentor. The student’s product must include a written component. For example, if the student were to make a film, it must be accompanied by a major piece of reflective or analytical writing about the creative process.

Most honors theses will result in a journal article style paper whose approximate length is 20 double-spaced pages, inclusive of references (exact length may vary). The faculty advisor will choose the most appropriate style guide for the work (e.g., APA, Chicago with parenthetical citations, Chicago with footnotes, MLA, etc.)

Model A: An empirical thesis
In this model, students either collect new data or analyze existing data to address a research question. The written product often comprises an Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Reference Section although the exact format may vary depending on the disciplinary audience for the paper (such as an ethnography). The amount of time needed to complete an empirical thesis is more substantial than the amount expected in a 1-semester class. In many cases, students will analyze data that have already been collected in the faculty supervisor’s lab. Students who collect new data will likely need 3 semesters to complete the thesis.

Model B: A critical literature review
In this model, the student summarizes, synthesizes and critiques the published scholarly literature on a particular topic. The review could include a new interpretation of the findings, a timeline of the progression of knowledge, or themes. The overall goal of the critical literature review is not only to demonstrate comprehensive, sophisticated knowledge of the current literature on a particular topic, but also to create new understanding of previous findings.

Evaluation
The thesis will be evaluated by a committee comprised of the faculty mentor and a second reader who is selected by the mentor. The second reader may be in any department or school of Georgia State University. The checklist in Appendix A will be used to evaluate the thesis. The
committee will consult with each other to determine the final grade, and the Honors College Liaison will determine the final grade in cases where committee members cannot agree.

Undergraduate Research Conference
All students working on an Honors Thesis are encouraged to share their research with the wider Georgia State University community by participating in the Undergraduate Research Conference, which is held annually in the spring.

Proposal and Course Authorization
Before students enroll in honors coursework, they must notify the Honors College of their intent to conduct an honors thesis by completing the online Intent to Conduct a Thesis Form (http://honors.gsu.edu/intent-conduct-honors-thesis/), which requires that students 1) identify the faculty member who has agreed to supervise their project; 2) write a 200-word summary of their project; and 3) provide a tentative title for their project. This form is due 1 April for summer registration, 1 August for fall registration, and 1 December for spring registration.

Deadlines
The faculty mentor will impose deadlines along the way for components of the project and drafts of the thesis. No later than three weeks prior to the last day of classes the student will turn in a complete draft of the honors thesis to their faculty mentor and the second reader. The faculty member and second reader will evaluate the thesis using the rubric found in Appendix A. The student will then revise the thesis based on feedback from their committee members, if required. The final approved thesis must be submitted to the Global Studies Institute Director of Undergraduate Studies no later than the last day of final exams during the semester in which the thesis is completed. Students must also notify the Honors College that they have successfully completed their honors thesis by completing the Certification of Successful Completion Form (http://honors.gsu.edu/certification-successful-completion-honors-thesis/). This form is due by the last day of final exams during the semester in which the thesis is completed.

Honors College Support
Honors College students participating in Honors Thesis are eligible to borrow a laptop computer from the Honors College for the semester, contingent on availability. These students may also apply for financial support to present at conferences and purchase supplies for their research. In addition, there are several workshops held in the Honors College each semester to provide support to Honors College students engaged in research and theses activities. The Faculty Associate for Research and Theses and the Research Program Coordinator are available to advise students and their mentors.

Questions
Contact the Global Studies Institute’s Director of Undergraduate Studies, the Honors College Research Program Coordinator, or the Honors College Faculty Associate for Research and Theses.

This policy was last updated on April 25, 2018.
This policy was approved by the Global Studies Institute faculty on April 25, 2018.
Appendix A. Global Studies Honors Thesis Rubric

Please provide a rating of 1 = excellent, 2 = satisfactory and 3 = unsatisfactory for the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stated a clear, novel, and specific research question (or hypothesis)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used appropriate methods to answer research question/hypothesis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated an understanding of relevant literature, terminology, and theory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated understanding of the scientific method or scholarly inquiry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critiqued and analyzed relevant studies and presented an integrated synthesis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzed information or data collected using appropriate research methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drew appropriate conclusions supported by evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated understanding of results and their interpretation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicated effectively in written form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writing was consistent with the chosen style and free of typographical and grammatical errors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommended grade:____________________