

## Department of History: Honors Thesis Requirement and Guidelines

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 detailed reference letters later in a student's career.

### **Eligible Students**

Students who are eligible include junior or senior honors students who have completed at least three upper division classes. Non-honors students that meet the Honors College Requirements (i.e., minimum 3.3 GPA and in good standing) are also eligible. Students who do not meet these requirements may submit a petition to waive the requirements. This petition should include a letter of recommendation from the prospective mentor. Petitions should be submitted to the History Honors Advisor. Students need not major or minor in History to write a thesis in the Department. However, students must complete at least three courses in History at the 3000 or 4000 level before they begin thesis work, and whether a student has the necessary background to begin work on a thesis project in History is, ultimately, at the discretion of the faculty mentor.

### **Coursework**

There are two models for an honors project in History, as described below. With both models, students must write a polished research paper, or its equivalent in digital media, wherein they make an original contribution to the historical literature. 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. Although length may vary, it is expected that an honors thesis will be approximately 20-50 pages, or its equivalent in a digital format.

*Model 1:* Students undertake an honors project over two semesters. In the first semester, students enroll in HIST 4870: Honors Thesis I (3-4 credit hours) and complete a literature review of their topic. They have regular meetings with a faculty member (weekly or biweekly), and they 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 his/her 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 he/she is ready to begin writing a thesis. In the second semester, students enroll in HIST 4880: Honors Thesis II (3 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.

*Model 2:* Students undertake an honors project in one semester. This option requires that students have prior coursework on the topic of their project and that students build their thesis from previous research (e.g., a term paper) with a faculty member. Students who qualify for this model enroll in HIST 4880: Honors Thesis II (3-4 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. Rather, 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.

### **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, 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 April 1 for summer registration, August 1 for fall registration, and December 1 for spring registration.

### **Final Product**

No later than one month prior to the last day of classes the student will turn in a complete draft of the honors thesis to her/his faculty mentor, after which the student will revise the thesis based on feedback from her/his mentor. Students must notify the Honors College that they have successfully completed their honors thesis by completing the Certification of Successful Completion Form. This form is due by the last day of final exams during the semester in which the thesis is completed.

### **Required attendance at Honors Thesis Sessions**

Students are required to attend three 2-hr sessions led by the Honors College Thesis Team each semester that they are working on their honors thesis. The three sessions are held at the beginning, middle and end of the semester. The last session is the Thesis Pitch, which is an oral competition event where students have 3 minutes to communicate the importance of their research. Presenting at the Thesis Pitch is voluntary, but attendance is required.

### **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 to the three required sessions, 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 History Honors Advisor, the Honors College Research Program Coordinator, and/or the Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships Director.

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