

Honors in English

Eligibility

Departmental Honors is open to any English major with a GPA in English Department courses of at least 3.5. Exceptions to the minimum GPA requirement may be made by application to the Associate Chair of the Department. Students should have senior standing-i.e., they should have completed 24 course units. Past theses have generally fallen in the range of 50-75 pages, excluding bibliography or other attachments; a minimum of 50 pages is expected.

The Honors Project

For most students the Honors Project will be a multi-chapter critical thesis. The thesis is expected to be a major project that makes an original critical argument, includes a review of relevant scholarship, and is firmly grounded in the appropriate theoretical frameworks.

Experience shows that the most successful honors theses originate in papers students have written in their 300- and 400-level English courses. These students have already identified a topic, written a successful paper, and established a relationship with a faculty mentor. Students are permitted to develop an honors thesis proposal that does not originate in such coursework, but they must discuss the topic and the possibilities for faculty sponsorship with the Associate Chair prior to writing the proposal.

Project Approval

Proposals for Honors Projects must be submitted to the Honors Committee the semester before the project is to begin. Proposals must have a faculty sponsor.

The Honors Committee, which changes membership every semester, consists of all English Department faculty who are currently supervising an Honors Project. In any semester in which fewer than three faculty members are supervising projects, the Associate Chair will appoint members as needed for the minimum of three.

Project Evaluation

Honors Projects will be evaluated by at least three members of the Honors Committee, one of whom may be the student's sponsor. The Committee will award grades of *Honors*, *High Honors*, or *Highest Honors* or may deem a project not deserving of honors.

Project Presentation

All Honors Projects must be presented publicly. Students have three options:

- Presentation at the annual Celebration of Student Achievement
- Presentation sponsored by Sigma Tau Delta
- Presentation to the Honors Committee

Credits

All Honors Projects are for two course units. It is strongly recommended that students complete the project over two semesters, taking one unit of LIT 476 each semester. However, students may complete the project in one semester by enrolling in LIT 477, which counts as two units. This option will be available only in the fall; ordinarily, a student enrolling in LIT 477 in the fall will present the project in the spring. Once the applicant's honors thesis application is approved, he or she may register by submitting the department's independent study form to the Office of Records and Registration. In doing so, students should be sure to fill in the appropriate course number.

Students completing an Honors Project are exempted from taking their second LIT 499, Seminar in Research and Theory, during the senior year.

Timeline and Policies

Each spring, prior to the fall registration period, the Associate Chair will hold an informational meeting with students interested in writing an Honors Thesis.

Applications for Honors Projects will be due on the final day of classes of the spring semester for projects that will begin the following fall.

The application will consist of the completed Honors Project Contract along with a project proposal of approximately 2-3 pages, double-spaced. The proposal should be titled and have three sections.

1. **Introduction and Thesis:** Briefly introduce your topic and clearly state your working thesis/critical argument.
2. **Critical Context and Methodology:** Situate your project in the existing critical literature on your subject. Suggest what new contributions you may make. Explain your critical/theoretical/methodological approaches. All works cited in this and other sections should be in an appended "Works Cited" page, using MLA format.
3. **Chapter outline, Timeline and Plan of Work:** Describe your intended process. Indicate the stages of your intended work, providing a timeline of anticipated points of completion (for example: Nov.1, Rough Draft of Thesis Introduction).

In addition to the proposal, the student must submit a list of all English Department courses, completed (with the grade in each) or in progress, and a writing sample; it may be from any class, but should be a clean copy (without instructor feedback). The Honors Committee will meet at the end of the spring semester to review proposals. At that time, the committee may take any of three actions:

–Approve the project as proposed.

–Grant the project provisional approval while stipulating specific changes in the project and requesting the candidate submit a revised proposal.

–Reject the proposal.

–Any student whose proposal is rejected will have the right to submit a revised proposal within 30 days.

At the end of the fall semester, each honors candidate will be required to submit to the Honors Committee a progress report including a writing sample of the work in progress. At that time, the committee will either give approval for the candidate to go forward and complete the honors project or request that the candidate withdraw from the honors project. In case of the latter, the candidate's registration for the fall semester will be converted to an independent study and will be graded accordingly. The student will then also be required to complete his or her second LIT 499.

In early March, honors candidates should contact the Associate Chair to discuss possible venues for oral presentations of the Honors Project.

The completed written Honors Thesis will be due exactly two weeks before the end of classes in the spring semester.

The Honors Committee will meet to determine the level of honors awarded to each project prior to the completion of final exams.

Approved April 8, 2015