

# DePaul University Honors Program

## Thesis Guidebook

### 2018-2019

*Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.*  
Zora Neale Hurston

*My Honors Senior Thesis became the writing sample and cornerstone of all my applications. It was by a wide margin the most important thing I did as an undergraduate, and perhaps the singular reason for my grad school admissions successes.*

Adam Syvertsen, Class of 2016  
Ph.D. candidate in English, Northwestern University

*Working with Sam on this project was very rewarding, indeed.  
Chatting with Sam about Derrida...was honestly one of the highlights of my quarter.*

Sean Kirkland, PhD  
Associate Professor, Philosophy  
Thesis Director

## Honors Senior Thesis Information

The Honors Senior Thesis provides a capstone experience, offering students an opportunity to reflect on and synthesize their years of education at DePaul by designing a meaningful project that they research and write independent of a classroom structure. The project can take many forms, including creative work, building on work in the major or concepts gained from honors and other coursework.

The thesis project requires extensive research and it should be original in the sense of bringing ideas together in a way that is the student's own. It allows students to work with two faculty members on a topic that interests them all.

Thesis students receive 4 credits for HON 395, which replaces the honors capstone course (HON 350/351) and completes the Honors Program requirements. A grade of C- or higher is required to pass the Honors Thesis.

### **The Honors Thesis is a 2-quarter endeavor:**

- In the first – or *pre-thesis* – quarter, you will **prepare for your thesis**:
  - Identify your topic and thesis type
  - Locate a thesis director and faculty reader (see page 5)
  - Set up a timeline and research/creative schedule
  - Step into preliminary research by locating and evaluating possible sources
  - Create a Thesis Proposal (see Proposal Instructions in thesis packet)
  - Submit your proposal to the Honors Office
- In the second – or *thesis completion* – quarter, you will **finish your thesis**
  - Meet regularly with your thesis director
  - Research – Read – Draft – Write – Create!
  - Submit a near-finished draft to your thesis faculty for revision suggestions
  - Revise!
  - Submit your completed thesis to your thesis director, faculty reader, and the Honors Program
- In May of your thesis year you will present your project at the Honors Student Conference: Spotlight on Research & Creativity

## **Are You the Right Student for an Honors Senior Thesis?**

Do you have a strong academic record?

Do you like to take initiative? Work independently? Follow where your curiosity leads?

Do you have a previous project or paper that you want to keep working on?

Are you thinking about graduate school?

Do you want to contribute to your field of study?

**If your answer to any of these questions is YES, then you are a good candidate for a thesis!**

### **Advantages of Completing an Honors Thesis:**

- A thesis project is a transformative experience that allows you to pursue your academic and creative interests with independence and initiative.
- You will become an expert on your thesis topic while contributing to your field of study.
- You will develop a strong and important relationship with your thesis faculty.
- A thesis project provides significant preparation for graduate school.
- Your thesis will be an important addition to your resume and portfolio, identifying you as a student who went beyond expectations to define and own your education in a truly distinctive way!

### **Choosing a Topic**

**Consider the following:**

What inspires you?

What troubles you?

What makes you curious?

What do you love to think about?

What do you want to know?

What paper did you most enjoy writing?

What project would you love to design?

What piece of prior work do you want to develop further?

**Copies of past theses are available in the Honors Office  
and in the program's digital archive.**

## **Five Types of Honors Thesis Projects**

The Honors Program accepts five different types of thesis projects. The precise parameters for each type of thesis project should be defined in consultation with the thesis director.

### **Conventional Written Thesis**

A conventional thesis builds on existing scholarly research and includes the student's own creative and critical interpretations of that research. This work differs from a regular classroom paper in terms of its rigor, complexity, depth and reach. It should engage, in some fashion, a broad theme of interdisciplinary interest. Requiring more than a literature review or summary of the existing scholarly research, this kind of thesis culminates in the student's own distinctive contribution to a scholarly discussion. (20-40 pages.)

### **Science or Math Project**

The main components of a scientific or math-based thesis consist of an abstract, introduction to the problem, definitions of concepts and theorems, discussion of methods and/or experimental design, presentation of results, description of main findings, discussion of how those findings fit into the field of study, and a listing of references. (15-20 pages.)

### **Artistic Work with written supplement**

The creative thesis project is an artistic work such as visual art, music recital, theatre production, novella, or film. While the main work in this kind of thesis is produced in a medium other than standard academic writing, it is accompanied by a 7-10 page research essay that analyzes the work in terms of its historical, social, or cultural framework and explores the personal aesthetic choices that inform the work and the artistic tradition that it represents. Students who produce this kind of thesis will provide the Honors Program with a durable copy or image of their product.

### **Problem-Solving Project with written supplement**

This action-oriented paper or applied project is a problem-solving report, campaign proposal, curriculum, or assessment plan which identifies a problem or issue and proposes a possible solution supported by researched evidence. The context and significance of the proposed action plan would need to be discussed in the thesis, either as part of the narrative or in a supplemental essay, with appropriate scholarly references included. (20-40 pages.)

### **Model, Design, Game, or Computer Program with written supplement**

This type of thesis will take the form of an original model, prototype, design, or computer program, with its main work produced in a medium other than standard academic writing. It will be accompanied by a 7-10 page research essay that analyzes the scholarly or professional literature that relates to the project, the design process and decisions that the student made, or the historical and ethical considerations raised by the work. Students who produce this kind of thesis will provide the Honors Program with a durable copy or image of their product.

## **Research Is...**

- Systematic, scholarly, goal-oriented, and sustained inquiry
- Guided by a hypothesis, interpretation, conjecture, central idea, or proposition
- Aimed at the interpretation or discovery of ideas, facts, theories or frameworks
- Driven by a question or problem
- Fashioned in a methodical, cumulative, and iterative way with close attention to concepts, definitions, and the precise meaning of words
- A way of situating the researcher's ideas, interpretations, designs and findings in a broad field of study
- Analysis of connections and disconnections between the researcher's work and existing scholarship on the topic
- Identification of a clear strategy of inquiry

## **Research Is Not...**

- A literature review or an annotated bibliography that simply summarizes the work of others;
- A list of facts without a clearly stated proposition or interpretive lens;
- Reliant on sources that are not peer-reviewed, or materials where the identity and expertise of the author are not clearly established.

## **Interdisciplinary Research Is...**

- Examination of issues beyond the reach of one major discipline, with movement toward a new or broader context;
- Communication to audiences across multiple perspectives and fields of study;
- Consideration of questions that connect two or more fields;
- Drawn on ideas, arguments, and theories that have emerged in multiple fields.

## The Faculty Role

You will be assisted in the thesis process by two faculty members, preferably from different departments, who are familiar with the area of study you wish to research. One faculty member will serve as the thesis director and the other as the faculty reader. It is important that faculty working with thesis students be on campus during the two quarters in which students design and complete the project. **The thesis director must be a full-time faculty member. The faculty reader may be full or part-time. It is NOT required that thesis faculty teach in the Honors Program.**

The thesis director will meet regularly with you, the frequency and topic of these meetings decided on an individual basis. The thesis director's role is the same as it would be for any independent study – to offer guidance, suggestions on readings, and critical responses to your written drafts. The faculty reader will read a “near final” draft and offer suggestions for revision.

The thesis director and faculty reader will read the finished work and confer on the final grade, which the thesis director will submit.

## Selecting and Approaching Prospective Thesis Faculty

The thesis packet includes a list of faculty members from throughout the university who have worked with thesis students. If you are interested in working with honors faculty, you can find the names, departments and email addresses of all Honors Program faculty members on the honors website:

<https://academics.depaul.edu/honors/faculty-and-staff/faculty/Pages/default.aspx>

Your Thesis Packet includes two copies of a Faculty Information sheet, which provides prospective thesis faculty with information about their role and responsibilities should they agree to take on the project.

You should schedule an appointment with your prospective thesis director and faculty reader early in your thesis preparation process, provide each with a Faculty Information sheet, as well as a sample of your recent academic or creative work and a brief written description of your proposed thesis project. These will help the faculty members determine if they will be a good fit to work with you on the project.

## Honors Thesis Preparation Course

In fall quarter the Honors Program offers a 2-credit seminar to help students design a thesis project and complete the process of proposing an Honors Senior Thesis. This seminar may be taken in the junior or senior year.

**HON 300 – HONORS RESEARCH SEMINAR: THESIS PREPARATION** is designed to prepare students for the honors thesis. If your fall quarter enrollment (including HON 300) is 18 or fewer credit hours you will not incur additional tuition costs for taking this course. The course meets fall quarter for fifteen contact hours during a three-hour block on alternate Fridays, and offers students the following:

- Hands-on dedicated support from the Honors Program associate director
- Overview of the step-by-step process of planning and creating the Honors Senior Thesis
- Assistance with selecting a topic and determining a researchable and focused area of study
- Suggestions for finding and approaching faculty to oversee the thesis project
- A library research session to help locate research materials and resources
- Presentations by former thesis students and thesis faculty
- Assistance in completing the Thesis Proposal, including the clear articulation of a central objective, and guidance for preparing the annotated bibliography
- Preparation for the poster or visual element that will accompany the project and be presented at the Honors Student Conference and displayed at the Honors Senior Gala

Please note: HON 300 is **not** required for the thesis process. You may proceed directly to the thesis proposal without enrolling in this class. The Honors Program staff will provide you with guidance, whether you take this class or not.

### How do I Find Other Resources?

Most commonly, the resources you need are found in the library. Your thesis faculty, along with reference librarians, will provide useful information to guide you toward appropriate resources. You will need to spend time reading about your topic and analyzing what other scholars have written about it. Look for a variety of writings and works that interpret your topic in different ways. In addition, you may apply for grants or assistantships to support your work.

**Some information about undergraduate research opportunities, by college and program:**

<http://www.depaul.edu/academics/research/Pages/undergraduate.aspx>

<http://las.depaul.edu/Research/Undergraduate/GrantPrograms.asp>

<http://facweb.cti.depaul.edu/research/vc/medix/>

<http://www.caurs.com/>

## **Expectations for the Final Project**

Precise expectations should be worked out between the student and the thesis director during the Pre-Thesis Quarter. The following guidelines should be helpful:

A strong Honors Senior Thesis should contain these elements:

- Sound thesis statement, well-articulated central argument or controlling idea
- Clear sense of purpose and solid explanation for the significance of the question
- Identification of strategies for investigating claims, hypotheses, arguments or for conveying the central idea
- Substantial support for the central idea
- Awareness of the limitations of the study
- Awareness of an array of arguments or interpretations developed by other scholars, analysts, designers and artists, and ability to situate this work within them
- Sense of focus, and ability to bring all elements of the study to bear on the central idea, and to avoid irrelevant material or digression
- Complex or nuanced thinking
- Logical, well-ordered and internally consistent argumentation
- Sources with scholarly merit and demonstration of ability to differentiate between high quality and poor quality source materials
- Balance between quotations and paraphrasing with clear differentiation between the writer's views and those presented in the source materials
- A citation format that is appropriate to the discipline, followed correctly and consistently, with complete and accurate entries on a Works Cited page

## **Project Format**

In general, a completed thesis will have the following components:

- Title Page
- Abstract (100 word summary)
- Table of Contents
- Acknowledgements (optional) to thank those who contributed to your academic and personal growth
- Body of Project (typically organized into chapters or sections)
- Endnotes or footnotes
- Works Cited Page
- Appendices

(The research addendum that accompanies a thesis based on creative work may take a different form, as defined in consultation with your thesis director.)

## **Design of cover page**

Thesis Title

Student Name

Quarter and year of Thesis Completion

Thesis submitted in completion of Honors Senior Capstone requirements for the  
DePaul University Honors Program

Thesis Director's Name, Department

Faculty Reader's Name, Department

## **The Final Steps**

It is your responsibility to submit a “near-final” copy of the completed thesis to the thesis director and the faculty reader on Monday of the ninth week of the Thesis Completion Quarter. Following faculty comments and any necessary revisions, you will submit the final copy of the thesis to the thesis director and the faculty reader on or before the first day of finals week. Exact deadline dates are in the thesis packet. If you require any additional time, please consult with your thesis director. He or she may be able to allow you a few more days to complete your work, but it is crucial that the thesis director and faculty reader have enough time to read and evaluate your project before grades are due. **You will also submit an electronic copy of the thesis project to the Honors Program (honorsprogram@depaul.edu), with the understanding that a PDF version of the thesis project will be posted on the Honors Website and will be available for public viewing. The thesis will also be made available to future honors students considering the thesis option.**

The thesis director will confer with the faculty reader before assigning the final grade. Ultimate responsibility for determining the thesis grade rests with the thesis director.

You will also create a poster or visual element to present at the Honors Student Conference and display at the Honors Senior Gala. This will bring your work to a wider audience. Further information about creating the visual element is available in the thesis packet.

**For additional information please call or visit the  
Honors Program Office,  
990 W. Fullerton, Suite 1300  
Or schedule an appointment to discuss your thesis plans by calling  
(773) 325-7302**