

Honors Thesis Guidelines for Students and Faculty

Writing an honors thesis is a significant commitment of time and energy for both the student and the faculty advisor. Following these guidelines will help each student write a successful honors thesis:

Start early:

- Students should start planning their thesis work when they enter the history honors program. Academic advisors can help guide students into appropriate courses, suggest possible thesis advisors, and provide guidance about the real difficulties and pleasures of writing an honors thesis. Sample theses are available for review for students who wish to get a better idea of what a thesis entails.
- Students should pick a thesis advisor and speak with that person well in advance of writing the thesis. The advisor should be a history faculty member with whom the student has a good working relationship. Most often, the student will have already taken an upper-division course (perhaps with an honors contract) with the advisor.
- Students should take an honors directed readings course with the intended thesis advisor the semester *before* writing the thesis.
 - The directed readings course should provide the student the time and guidance to complete most of the outside reading on the thesis topic by the end of the semester. Usually, the student's interests (and therefore readings) will start broadly, but will narrow as the semester advances.
 - Students should have settled on a thesis project by the end of this semester.
- By the time a student starts HIST 4996, s/he should be ready to spend most of the semester conducting primary research, analyzing that research, and writing/revising the thesis.

Length and formatting:

- History honors theses should be approximately 30-50 pages in length.
- They should follow the formatting guidelines posted on the Helen Harden Honors College website.

Content and Scope:

- The thesis must reflect the student's individual research and analysis of primary and secondary sources. It should do more than simply repeat the findings of others. Instead, it should offer the student's interpretation based on his/her in-depth investigation of a historical topic.
- The thesis should demonstrate a solid grasp of the historical literature on the topic, and it should include an examination of the historical and historiographical significance of the topic. It does not, however, need to make a historiographical intervention in the way an MA or PhD thesis would.