

# HONORS THESIS PROJECT



New Paltz  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



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Your work as an undergraduate in the Honors Program culminates with the Honors thesis. View this project as your signature. The thesis grows out of your interests and passions. You have opportunities to connect your interdisciplinary studies in Honors with focused study in your major. Students from across campus participate in the Honors Program, and thesis work reflects the range of majors in the Honors Program. You might, for example, conduct a scientific or social scientific study, write or produce a play, or exhibit your work at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art.

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## HONORS THESIS OPTIONS

It is never too early to begin to think about thesis possibilities. Although most formal thesis work begins in the junior year, you may be reflecting on your thesis much earlier in your undergraduate career. A traditional written thesis is generally 30–40 double-spaced pages, including references. As you consider topics for the thesis, your major will inform the approach. In the School of Education and the School of Business, thesis work typically takes the form of an extended research essay. A student in Education might conduct research on a curricular issue. A Business student might prepare a business plan. Students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, depending on major, might pursue a creative thesis, a critical analysis, or a social scientific research study. Thesis projects in the School of Science and Engineering tend to be compact in size, with charts, graphs, and a write-up presenting the research outcomes. In the School of Fine and Performing Arts, students often give performances, write or adapt plays, or exhibit their art work (e.g., photography, painting, ceramics, metals, graphic design). Speak to the Honors Program Director and your primary advisor to define your project.

BFA students in the School of Fine and Performing Arts are required to exhibit their work at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art. The required exhibit for the BFA may be enhanced (e.g., submission of a paper or journal) to fulfill the Honors thesis requirement. An oral presentation in the Honors Center is required.

Many students connect their Honors thesis with their major requirements. If your major requires a senior thesis or project, consider extending this project to meet the requirements of an Honors thesis. Please keep in mind that even though we know some students will not know their senior thesis or project for their major until the last semester of their senior year, in order for you to use it as an Honors Thesis the work needs to be done through a minimum of two semesters.

## PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS

Your thesis must be presented in a public forum. You are required to present your work in the Honors Center. You may also present your work at the SUNY New Paltz Student Research Symposium, which is held every spring. In this forum students doing advanced research have the opportunity to present their work during poster sessions. The Director of the Honors Program will let you know when to sign up for the symposium, and you will need the sponsorship of one of your advisors to present.

Honors students also present their work at state, regional, or national conferences. Many disciplinary conferences have opportunities for undergraduates to present their work. Check with your thesis advisors to identify opportunities in your discipline.

- **Make sure that before you sign up for a thesis presentation time your thesis advisors are able to attend.**
- **When presenting your thesis in the Honors Center be prepared to speak for about 15 minutes with about a 5 minute Q&A at the end.**
- **Make sure to consult with your advisors about your presentation, including visual aids. You may also review your presentation plan with the Director of the Honors Program.**

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*Please note that even if you do choose to present at the Student Research Symposium or a conference, you are still required to present your thesis in the Honors Center.*

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### Helpful links as you prepare for your oral presentation

- [whitman.edu/academics/departments-and-programs/rhetoric-studies/public-speaking-resources](http://whitman.edu/academics/departments-and-programs/rhetoric-studies/public-speaking-resources)
- [prezi.com/support/manual/](http://prezi.com/support/manual/)
- [clas.uiowa.edu/rhetoric/instructors/helpful-resources-teaching-rhetoric/speaking-resources](http://clas.uiowa.edu/rhetoric/instructors/helpful-resources-teaching-rhetoric/speaking-resources)
- [owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/686/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/686/01/)

If you are looking for samples of past visual aids, please reach out to the Administrative Assistant.

### TIME LINE

The most successful thesis begins with careful planning in the junior year. Think about a topic and potential faculty advisors. Most students start serious reading and research on their subject no later than the summer following their junior year, and have a well-defined topic by the beginning of their senior year. During your senior year you will be required to turn in evidence of your progress, and the Director of the Honors Program will consult occasionally with your advisors. You will also be required to submit the Thesis Title & Advisor form and Thesis Statement form to the administrative assistant. The final draft of the thesis, which needs to be signed by your advisors, is due in the month of your graduation (December for Fall graduates and May for Spring graduates). *See the recommended thesis time-line on the following page.*



1st semester <b>JUNIOR YEAR</b>	Attend Juniors Thesis Meeting Select your primary & secondary advisors Prepare thesis proposal
Start 1st semester <b>JUNIOR YEAR</b> / Continue in 2nd semester	Begin research
Start 2nd semester <b>JUNIOR YEAR</b> Continue in 2nd semester <b>JUNIOR YEAR</b>	Undertake thesis research or creative work
March for <b>FALL GRADUATES</b> / September for <b>SPRING GRADUATES</b>	Submit Thesis Title & Advisor Form to administrative assistant <i>Please confirm first with faculty members that they have agreed to be your advisors before listing them on this form.</i>
March for <b>FALL GRADUATES</b> / October for <b>SPRING GRADUATES</b>	Submit Thesis Statement Form to Administrative Assistant
1st semester <b>SENIOR YEAR</b>	Write first draft of thesis
2nd semester <b>SENIOR YEAR</b>	Register for Independent Study*
By March 1 for <b>MAY GRADUATES</b> / October 1 for <b>DECEMBER GRADUATES</b>	Submit next-to-last draft of thesis to both advisors
During March for <b>MAY GRADUATES</b> / October for <b>DECEMBER GRADUATES</b>	Confer with advisors and prepare final version of thesis
Early December for <b>FALL GRADUATES</b> / Late April – early May for <b>SPRING GRADUATES</b>	Take part in thesis presentations
Late April – early May for <b>SPRING GRADUATES</b> / late November – early December for <b>FALL GRADUATES</b>	Obtain advisors signatures on SOAR Release form
Early May for <b>SPRING GRADUATES</b> / December for <b>FALL GRADUATES</b>	Submit signed SOAR Release form and completed thesis to the Honors office

\*Students are required to register for 2–3 thesis credits. This is in addition to the required Honors seminars.

## ADVISORS

Honors theses must be overseen by two faculty members. Faculty advisors must have expertise in the area you are working in, and they will have the final say as to whether or not the project is acceptable as an Honors thesis. These advisors are referred to as a “primary” and “secondary” advisor. Primary advisors bear the larger part of the responsibility of working closely with you. They should be the first person you go to with questions, and should be involved in all stages of your work. Your secondary advisor may or may not be closely involved with all stages of your work, and it is acceptable for the secondary advisor to only review the final project.

Ideally, your two advisors should come from different departments on campus, but two advisors from the same department is also an acceptable option. Normally Honors advisors are SUNY New Paltz faculty members, but in situations where no expertise exists on campus in your subject area we will try to recruit professors from other institutions of higher learning.

Faculty advisors should be full-time tenure or tenure-track faculty. In special circumstances adjuncts or lecturers will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Graduate students may not serve as Honors thesis advisors.

You should identify possible advisors no later than the fall of your junior year. You should send a friendly but professional email to each one explaining your need for a primary or secondary advisor for your Honors thesis. Ask them if they are interested and if so arrange a meeting with them to discuss your topic as well as what will be required of them. Letters are emailed to faculty members who agree to be your advisors. Attached are samples of these letters that you may bring with you during this initial meeting so that faculty may understand what is required of them. The primary faculty advisor will develop a rubric to assess your work. Attached is a sample rubric that you and your advisor may adapt to assess your project.

Once you find faculty members who agree to oversee your work you may wish to fill out the optional advising agreement form that is attached. This form is not required though it might help you and your advisors have a clearer sense of what to expect from each other.

Please inform the Director of the Honors Program when you have selected your advisors. Your advisors will receive the letter of agreement included in this publication.

If for any reason you need to delay your thesis project, please notify your advisors and the Director of the Honors Program. For example, if you are graduating in a different semester than you had planned or if you are taking a leave of absence.

## INDEPENDENT STUDY

The Independent Study will define the thesis process and guide your work. You may enroll in independent study credits through Honors (HON495) or through your major. Your primary advisor will work with you on your Independent Study. Below is the process for signing up for the independent study credits.

- You will need to fill out the attached Independent Study form.
- Your primary advisor will need to attach the following information. These requirements are specified on the Independent Study form.
  - 1) Student learning outcomes
  - 2) Topics to be covered
  - 3) Reading materials and assignments
  - 4) Schedule for quizzes, papers, and examinations with basis for mid-term evaluation
  - 5) Explanation of course grading policies
  - 6) Method of determining the final grade, including relative weight of each assignment
- Both you and your primary advisor need to sign the form.
- The form as well as all required documents needs to be brought to the Honors Program Director for review and signature.
- Once signed the paperwork will be sent to Records and Registration where it will be added to your schedule.
- If you are enrolling in an independent study through your major then you will follow all the above steps except you no longer require the Honors Program Directors signature but you will need the Department Chair and Dean’s signatures. **\*\*If enrolling in an independent study through your major you need to consult with the Honors Program Director first.\*\***

## SUBMITTING HONORS THESIS

Honors students thesis work will be available on the SUNY Open Access Repository (SOAR). Below are the instructions you need to follow in order for your thesis to be properly submitted and accepted.

- You will need to convert your thesis to a PDF document.
- Save your thesis in the following format: Lastname\_Honors.pdf
- The first page should be your title page with an acknowledgment to your advisors. Your thesis must include an abstract and keywords. Your major should be your first keyword.
- You are required to fill out the attached SOAR form and have it signed by your advisors. We require signatures from both of your advisors, so you will need to print, sign, and scan the document, or have them sign it digitally.
- Your thesis (in PDF format) as well as your signed SOAR form need to be emailed to the Honors Program Administrative Assistant.
- Your thesis will then be reviewed by the Honors Program Director. Once your SOAR form is signed by the Honors Program Director it will be submitted to the Sojourner Truth Library.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

### Getting Started

*When do I need to start thinking about my thesis project?* The most successful thesis begins with careful planning in the junior year. Think about what topic you would like to pursue and faculty members with whom you would like to work. Most students start serious reading and research on their subject during the summer following their junior year, and have a well-defined topic by the beginning of their senior year.

*Does my thesis topic have to be something in my major?* No. Students may choose a topic in their major, minor or interdisciplinary field.

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### Choosing an Advisor

*I have a few possible advisors in mind; what are my next steps?* When you have identified a few possible advisors, you should send a friendly but professional email to each one explaining your need for a primary or secondary advisor for your Honors thesis and ask them if they are interested in working with you. If faculty members are interested in serving as advisors, arrange a meeting with them to discuss the thesis.

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### Presentation Questions

*What is the process for presenting my thesis?* Your thesis must be presented in a public forum. It is required that you present your work in the Honors Center. You will have 20 minutes to present your work. The Honors Program Administrative Assistant will send out an e-mail with presentation dates. When you receive the e-mail, select one of the available dates and respond to the Administrative Assistant. Please be certain that your advisors are able to attend the presentation on the date you select.

Most students use visual aids such as Power Point or Prezi to facilitate the presentation.

You may also present your work at the SUNY New Paltz Student Research Symposium or at a state, regional, or national conference but you are still required to present your thesis in the Honors Center.

BFA students who are exhibiting their work in the Samuel Dorsky Museum are required to do an oral presentation in the Honors Center.

### Independent Study

*When should I enroll for my Independent Study?* You need to enroll in independent study credits during your senior year. You do not need to enroll in the independent study credits during the advance registration period. The independent study may be added any time before the add/drop period ends in a given semester. Please see the attached Independent Study form.

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### Submitting a completed Honors Thesis

*What is the deadline for submitting my thesis?* For Fall graduates your thesis is due in December and for Spring graduates your thesis is due in May. You can find a more detailed time frame on the timetable form that is attached.

*What do I need to submit at the end of the semester?* You need to submit the PDF version of your thesis as well as the SOAR form to the Honors Program Administrative Assistant. The SOAR form is attached. This form needs to be filled out and then signed by both advisors.

We also ask that you submit a link to your presentation so that we may include it on our website.

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### Global Engagement Program

*Can the Global Engagement Program count towards the independent study?* Yes it can count as the independent study.

*Does it count as Study Abroad?* Yes it does count as a study abroad experience.

*Can the seminar paper that is done through the Global Engagement Program be used as an Honors thesis?* Yes it can be used as the Honors thesis but it needs to be enhanced or extended in some way through consultation with the Honors Program Director and your primary advisor.

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### Misc. Questions

*Is the thesis project graded?* Your primary advisor will use a rubric to determine whether your thesis project is satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Your primary thesis advisor will submit to the Honors Director the rubric used to assess your thesis project. You will email the Honors Program Administrative Assistant as well as the SOAR Release form signed by both thesis advisors. You will receive a grade for the thesis/project independent study you undertake with your primary advisor.

*Can I use my major thesis or project as my Honors Thesis?* Yes. If your major requires a senior thesis or project you may count it towards your Honors thesis. You will need to extend this project in some way (e.g., extend the thesis paper, exhibit, performance, journal, etc.).

Please keep in mind that even though we know some students will not know their senior thesis or project for their major until the last semester of their senior year, in order for you to use it as an Honors thesis the work needs to be done through a minimum of two semesters.

*Can students view previous Honors thesis work?*

Yes, students can view past thesis projects that may be used as reference material by going to <https://soar.suny.edu/handle20.500.12648/22>

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**The Honors Program**

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