

Guidelines for Writing an Independent Concentration Honors Thesis **Last updated: December 2007**

I. General Description of the Honors Thesis

The honors thesis is a year-long research project that provides the student with an opportunity to explore a topic of his or her particular interest, while working closely with members of the faculty (usually the faculty sponsor and other professors who have been important throughout the course of the student's IC). The honors thesis has been conceived as the honors-level capstone experience of the IC, in that much of the interdisciplinary coursework undertaken in the IC culminates in this research project.

II. Thesis Requirements

Advisor and Honors Committee

An honors thesis requires three faculty readers to serve as the honors committee (the advisor and two other readers of the thesis). The faculty sponsor for the independent concentration is often, but not necessarily, the advisor for the honors thesis. The additional two readers may be chosen by the student, very often in consultation with the faculty sponsor/thesis advisor. The student should identify the thesis advisor and readers by October 1 (see the Key Dates calendar in section III for additional information), and is advised to maintain regular communication with them during the research and writing of the thesis.

Registration

The student must register for two semesters of honors coursework in the thesis advisor's department.

Thesis Components

While the structure of the honors thesis varies from one academic discipline to another, in general, the honors thesis necessarily features the following components:

1. a clear and sustained thesis or argument,
2. a theoretical framework,
3. primary sources,
4. persuasive, academically honest, and engaging argumentative writing,
5. conformity to proper academic presentation protocol (e.g., table of contents, full and properly formatted notations, subheadings, etc.) The student may wish to consult the Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, The Chicago

Manual of Style, the APA Manual, or other scholarly handbooks appropriate to the student's disciplinary background.

In many instances, it is possible to complement a non-written component as part of the honors thesis. The form of this component will vary according to the concentration. Past honors theses have been complemented by non-written components such as creative projects (multimedia installation, performance) and laboratory experiments. However, the non-written component cannot substitute for the extensively researched and carefully written thesis itself.

Thesis Format

1. The title page must be submitted in the appropriate format. See the end of this guide for a sample title page.
2. Theses should be submitted in bound copies; margins should be set at 1 inch, except for the left margin, which should be set at 1.5 inches.
3. The honors thesis is an extended essay, usually between 50-100 pages in length. The exact format and length of the thesis will be determined at the discretion of the thesis advisor and the student.

Planning an Honors Thesis while Studying Abroad

Students who plan to go abroad in the junior year are advised to think about potential topics before leaving, and to write to the appropriate professors from abroad, indicating their potential thesis interests. Optimally, it may be possible to devise a summer reading list for thesis research, so that the project already has some momentum when senior year begins.

III. Key Dates

Semester VI

February-March - Begin thinking about potential topics; contact potential advisor and readers.

May 15 - Submit a working bibliography to potential advisor and readers.

Semester VII

October 1 - Submit a working title, outline or one-page abstract, and names and signatures of the thesis advisor and readers to UHall 203.

December 15 - Submit a partial draft (at least 1 chapter) to the honors committee.

Semester VIII

March 15 - Submit the complete draft to the honors committee.

April 15 - Submit the final version of honors thesis, in bound copies: one copy to each reader, and one copy to Dean Rodriguez's office, UH 201.

April 30 - Honors committee's letters of recommendation are due to Dean Rodriguez's office, UH 201.

IV. Recent IC Honors Thesis Titles

2005

Adam Green - "Rationality and Decision Making: The Rational Ideal in Choices Under Risk and Uncertainty."

Sage Morgan Hubbard - "Lorna Simpson: Re-Imaging (In) Visible Black Female Bodies, Creating 'Back-talking' Resistant Performative Images."

2004

Bennet Barbakow - "Moving Scraps."

Lindsay Clarida - "Legalizing the Ivory Trade and 'New' Conservation.

Miriam Markowitz - "Double Agency: Stories of Writers and Writing."

Reem Mobassaleh - "Cease Fire vs. Resolution: Continued conflict in Post-Civil War Lebanon."

V. Tips for Thesis Research and Writing

1. The student should work closely with his/her advisor and thesis readers throughout the senior year; it is often helpful to schedule regular appointments with the thesis advisor during or outside his/her office hours.
2. Students are encouraged to peruse honors theses recently written by students in departments related to their concentrations (theses are kept on file in department offices), as well as the honors theses written by past independent concentrators (these are housed in Dean Rodriguez's office).
3. In order to benefit from the level of (inter)departmental networking and support that students in standard concentrations often take for granted, IC students are encouraged to review honors thesis requirements in the departments most related to their concentrations, and to dialogue with students in related departments about their theses projects. In the past, students have found the "thesis buddy" system to be helpful: students with related interests and thesis topics meet regularly, over the course of the year, in groups of 2 or 3, to discuss ideas and problem-solving strategies, and to provide each other with mutual support.
4. Students are advised to set aside a substantial amount of time in their weekly schedule for thesis research and writing, so as not to leave all the work until the last minute. Students will want to arrange their overall research and writing schedule according to the Key Dates (in section III).
5. Students are encouraged to make appointments at the Writing Center (Room 206, Rockefeller Library, x3-3524) to brainstorm topics, review drafts, and proofread final versions.

[Title]

Honors Thesis Submitted by
[Name]
in partial fulfillment of the
[A.B./Sc.B] in [Title of Independent Concentration]
Brown University
[Date]

Prepared under the Direction of
[Advisor's Name], Advisor
[Reader's Name], Reader
[Reader's Name], Reader