EARTH, ENVIRONMENTAL and PLANETARY SCIENCES

GUIDELINES FOR HONORS  2017-18

The University specifies that a student who has a superior record in his or her concentration and who completes an Honors thesis may be awarded a degree with Honors. The University rules governing Honors degrees are summarized on the last page, and the EEPS departmental rules are summarized below, together with a timeline.

Please note that the student must take the initiative in asking to be considered for Honors, and in completing all of the various steps by the specified deadlines.

Honors in Earth, Environmental & Planetary Sciences

Overview: Honors may be awarded to candidates for either AB or ScB degrees; the departmental requirements are essentially identical (see below for details), and include an Honors thesis completed during a GEOL1970 Independent Study course. ScB students are required to take one semester of 1970, and AB students may take 1970 as one of their elective concentration courses.

The Honors requirements are more stringent than just the satisfactory completion of a 1970 course. An Honors degree requires a strong academic record and completion of a high quality thesis, as judged by departmental faculty. Most Honors students take 2 semesters of 1970, sometimes in addition to research during at least part of the previous summer. A senior who is considering Honors should discuss this with his or her concentration advisor early in fall semester, to think about the balance of thesis demands with other coursework, extracurricular commitments, and time planning for post-graduation.

Requirements

1. Superior academic record in the concentration.

   In order to qualify for Honors, a student must have a superior academic record in his or her concentration, defined in part as a GPA of 3.5 or greater in all of the required concentration courses plus any additional geosciences courses (at the level of Geo 220 and above).

2. Completion of an honors thesis and oral presentation

   An Honors thesis should demonstrate effort and scholarship beyond a regular thesis. This does not necessarily mean a longer paper, nor does it mean more lab work. Rather, the honors thesis should demonstrate fundamentally strong, original research similar to publishable papers in the field. In addition to the usual requirements for an Independent Study course (see separate sheet; note requirement for written proposal by last day of Drop-Add period), there are additional requirements, as specified below. (see timeline p.3)

(a) An Honors project is supervised by a faculty member, usually in EEPS, but occasionally in a different department such as EEB; in the latter case you must identify a faculty in EEPS to serve as co-advisor.
(b) During the fall semester of your 1970 course you should discuss with your faculty advisor the possibility of pursuing Honors and his or her expectations for what work that would entail. If you plan to take 1970 in spring semester also, make sure to discuss the faculty’s expectations for what you will write up and submit at the end of fall semester (for a grade).

(c) By the end of Drop-Add period in February you must submit a well-written ~2 page document indicating your intention for Honors, including the project title and brief but thorough descriptions of:

- the research question being addressed,
- the methods being used,
- any results to date,
- the applications or broader significance,
- your estimated time table (weekly) for completion.

This document should be given to the faculty advisor and the EEPS advisor if the main research advisor is in a different department, and to all the concentration advisors. (Obviously you are free to decide later that you do not wish to complete the Honors requirements, only the 1970 course.)

(d) Identify two additional thesis readers, and inform your concentration advisor who they are. Usually the readers will be other EEPS faculty members (tenure track or research). If the main research advisor is in another department, one of the readers will be the EEPS co-advisor, and the other should also be an EEPS faculty. If the main research advisor is in EEPS, then one of the 2 additional readers could be a senior graduate student or post-doc with whom you have worked. These readers will provide feedback to you, and provide feedback to the department on the quality of the thesis to assist in evaluating whether it is an honors thesis.

(e) Your written thesis must go through several drafts and revisions (see timeline). It should follow the format of standard scientific papers; see separate handout for guidelines and suggestions. (Theses from recent years are in GC028.)

(f) You must present your work orally to a general audience that includes the faculty advisor and the two readers, and at least one of the concentration advisors, who will also assist in evaluating the quality of the thesis research. Presentations are normally during the last week of April (see timeline).

(i) It is your responsibility to identify a date and time (that your readers and concentration advisor are available), to reserve a room (with Pat Davey), and to make and post fliers a week in advance. (It is common for 2 or 3 seniors who have similar research advisors and/or readers to present their theses in one longer session.)

(ii) You should give a professional presentation, aimed at a general audience, of about 20 minutes, and allow ~10 mins for questions. It is imperative to practice this talk in advance, and get feedback from your main advisor and others. See separate sheet for suggestions.
(g) After your oral presentation, the faculty advisor and readers will let the concentration advisors know (in writing) if they agree that the thesis is of Honors quality. The concentration advisors will consider your academic record as well as the thesis work, and make the final recommendation for Honors to the University (and inform you).

(h) After your oral presentation, you will complete a final revision of the written thesis (commonly ~10-15 pages single spaced, plus figures), taking into account suggestions from the advisor and two readers, as well as points that came up in discussion after your talk.

(i) You should make one bound copy of the thesis for the department (give to Jan, to be placed in GC028); ask your advisor if he or she also would like a bound copy. (Financial support for printing costs is available; ask Jan.) Finally send an electronic version to Pat Davey; verify with your advisor that it is OK for your thesis to be posted on the department website.

Timeline and Checklist

(the dates below represent the latest date to accomplish the tasks)

The dates below are for students completing their degree requirements in May. For those completing requirements in December, there will be equivalent dates in first semester; talk to your concentration advisor if you have any questions.

End of drop/add period in September: Turn in ~1 page proposal for your fall 1970 research project to your faculty advisor (including your EEPS co-advisor if your main advisor is in a different department or institution).

End of drop/add period in February: Declare your intention to pursue Honors, in writing, to your research advisor and your concentration advisor. Include: project title, and a brief but detailed account of the research question, methods, results to date, anticipated broader implications, and a weekly outline of remaining work for 2nd semester.

End of 2nd full week in March: In consultation with your research advisor, identify your 2 readers, and meet with them to ask if they are willing to serve in that role (read your draft thesis, supply you with written feedback, and attend your oral presentation).

End of 1st week in April: Give your research advisor a complete first draft of your thesis (text plus figures), so that you can get feedback from him or her by 2nd or 3rd week in April, and undertake a thorough revision before giving it to your readers.

End of 3rd week in April (hard deadline) (a): Give a copy of your revised thesis to your 2 readers and your advisor. (b) Identify a date and time for your oral presentation, in consultation with your advisor and readers and concentration advisor. (c) Reserve a room with Pat Davey. (d) Create an engaging flier to advertise your presentation and post it around GC and LF.
End of 1st week in May: Give your oral presentation (before the first Friday in May).

End of final exam period: Turn in your final revised thesis: 1 bound copy for the department, to Jan; and 1 to advisor, bound if he or she wishes it; and send electronic version to Pat Davey.

University Rules and Regulations for Honors

1. The University shall, at graduation, grant Honors to students whose work in a field of concentration has demonstrated superior quality and culminated in an Honors Thesis of distinction.

2. The designation "Honors" shall be included on the student's transcript and diploma.

3. No distinctions shall be made among quality levels of Honors work.

4. Students considering Honors work should consult their departmental or independent concentration advisor. If the advisor accepts the student as an Honors candidate, the advisor will request the Registrar to record the fact.

5. The Educational Policy Committee shall administer the Honors Program. It will:
   (a) Assume overall responsibility for the Program;
   (b) Arrange to issue timely procedural reminders to students and to departmental and independent concentration advisors;
   (c) Act on recommendations for Honors awards
   (It will not: file or specify formats for Honors theses; or maintain records of Honors candidates).

6. Recommendations for Honors awards shall be submitted to the Educational Policy Committee and shall include an evaluation of (1) the student's overall performance in concentration, and (2) the quality of the Honors Thesis.
   (a) For students pursuing a standard concentration in a department, the Honors recommendation will be made by the department.
   (b) For students in an inter-departmental program of study, the Honors recommendation will originate in the appropriate committee.
   (c) For students pursuing an independent concentration, the Honors recommendation will be made by the student's sponsor with the approval of two other faculty members familiar with his work.