

Ethel Waddell Githii Honors Program
Honors Senior Thesis Guidelines
(revised August, 2015)

The Honors Senior Thesis is a culminating or “capstone” research-based or supported paper or project emerging from your four years of study. (Projects will usually include a written component putting forth the research and study undergirding the project.) At its best, the thesis can signal important directions for post-graduate study or professional development and production.

Process:

Students who plan to complete a thesis for Departmental requirements and / or for Honors recognition, cannot begin thinking about their research interests and questions too soon. Some things you should know:

- Theses require departmental (faculty) mentoring and supervision, therefore, students must identify their faculty and work with her/him to develop the outlines of their proposed research/creative project for each stage: the proposal; research, writing and revision.
- Chairs may approve a specific methodology course as the first semester thesis course or as prerequisite to the thesis courses in the senior year. Thesis courses may be designated as such or Independent Study courses may serve as thesis writing courses.
- The Honors Thesis may be developed *within the major* as a capstone experience, or (if the Honors student's academic major does not require a thesis for completion of graduation requirements) the thesis may develop as an independent research/creative project *outside of the major* for Honors recognition. In either case, theses are supervised by Spelman faculty (even if they are directed by a faculty attached another institution). *Honors theses are not directed by the Honors Program Director.* Disciplines define methodology, length and the standards of scholarly research.
- Independent projects will conform to appropriate standards guided by the supervising faculty.
- Interdisciplinary theses must be guided by faculty advisors who have scholarship and teaching experience in interdisciplinary areas within or across disciplines.

Learning Outcomes:

The student's thesis must demonstrate her ability to design, synthesize and conduct research based on current methodology; and, the student must demonstrate effective and appropriate communication skills within a context of independent research.

Evaluation and Honors Recognition:

The Honors thesis will be evaluated by the thesis advisor based on appropriate standards, which must be clearly established at the initiation of the thesis process, and agreed upon by the student and her faculty. If the thesis is serving as a capstone requirement, evaluative input may also come from the department chair and or departmental thesis committee. In case of an interdisciplinary thesis where two advisors or a committee of different departments are evaluating the thesis, coordination of departments is required and specific primary advisors will evaluate the thesis. The Thesis advisor/s will assign the

course grade for the two-semester thesis course. The **Honors Thesis Final Approval Form**, when signed by the supervising faculty and department chair, indicates to the Honors Program Director that the work that appears over the appropriate signatures, has been approved for Honors Program recognition and that the student has been cleared by her supervising faculty for inclusion in our Honors roster of graduating seniors.

GUIDELINES: The Thesis

1. FORMAT

A consistent thesis format is required of all majors irrespective of the sponsoring department. The requirements are as follows:

- written theses must be bound (you can have this done at no cost to you in the basement of Rockefeller Hall in the Administrative Support Services Office).
- A creative thesis that culminates in a performance or series of paintings or film/video project, etc., must be supported by a significant written critical/research preparation of its development and contribution to the field. The approving faculty must anticipate in advance how the work will be recorded, represented for archive;
- must be accompanied by an abstract;
- must contain a title page;
- must contain a bibliography, and
- must be typed, double-spaced, a standard 12 pt font.

2. THESES FORMAT STANDARDS CONFORM TO SPECIFIC ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

Each academic department must set standards of evaluation and thesis quality and develop procedures to enforce them. This includes:

- 1 minimum / maximum thesis length
- 2 footnote style (if appropriate);
- 3 number of hours to be awarded for the thesis; and
- 4 when the student should begin her thesis process and the period of time provided the student for completing it (with attention to the deadlines of the Honors Program). The thesis is due in the Honors Program office in May of the year the senior is graduating.

3. MECHANICS OF THESIS SUBMISSION AND DEADLINES

- Submission of the completed and signed *Honors Thesis Proposal Registration Form* (see “Current students” on web page or visit Giles 103). This form affirms your faculty commitment to oversee your work and requests other materials related to completion of the work.
- The form must be reviewed and signed by the Advisor and the Department Chairperson and filed with the Honors Program office on or before October 15.

4. DEADLINES

- **October 15** for spring graduation; (**March 15** for Fall graduation), Thesis Proposal Registration Form due in HP office.
- Thesis/ Honors Thesis Final Approval process begins in **April**.
- **April 12.** the thesis advisor should have a complete draft sufficient to affirm that the thesis student is on schedule to complete writing/editing and submit her final revisions for approval by the May 1.
- **April 22.** The thesis draft must be presented to the Department Chair and/or the departmental Thesis Review Committee for approval and final notes on revision provided to the student.
- **May 1. Honors Thesis Final Approval form due in HP Office.** The second copy must be included in the completed and bound thesis. The signature form should be signed in duplicate.

5. STUDENTS IN DOUBLE MAJORS

- In the event that an Honors student wishes to complete work for a double major *where each major requires a thesis for graduation completion*, the student must acquire a clearance for graduation completion from the Department Chairs of each department. This clearance will specify how the Departments have determined to permit the student to choose and complete her thesis subject. This may require that the student write for one area and negotiate additional course work in lieu of thesis in the other, or some other acceptable solution.
- A copy of the student’s thesis will be provided to each department.
- Students will be asked to provide a signed “Release” if they wish their thesis to be submitted to the Woodruff Library thesis archive.

6. INTERDISCIPLINARY THESIS

Students who choose to write an interdisciplinary thesis will solicit appropriate faculty advisors from relevant departments to supplement the thesis evaluation committee within the department; however the student must identify, in her Proposal Registration form, the Department Chair and Primary Advisor responsible for **submitting course grades** and final thesis signature approvals.

CREATIVE THESIS

Students majoring in the Arts, or in English with a Creative Writing emphasis, may propose a thesis that foregrounds performance or creative writing. The relevant departments must provide a structure of review consistent with the professional standards of the field. For example, arts projects may be submitted to a jury review that includes visiting professionals in addition to the departmental faculty review. The creative writing project will be evaluated by the standards of the genre, or if the work is experimental, meet the standards affirmed in the critical appendages to the work.

The Honors Program requires that the creative thesis student develop a critical paper that supports the work and demonstrates the student's understanding of the intellectual work of the creative artist. It is recommended that students pursuing the creative thesis declare her intentions early, no later than first semester (spring) of her junior year, in order to identify mentors who will guide the development of portfolio and mentor in the appropriate reading, local arts venues and activities that will support her critical writing and knowledge of the relevant artists and theory appropriate to her project.

HONORS THESIS PRESENTATION REQUIREMENT

Presentation of the thesis (or some portion or version aspect of the Thesis) can be presented at Research Day, at an off-campus conference (sponsored by Honors Program or other academic venues) attended by a reviewing faculty, or to a committee organized by Honors Program faculty. However, all Honors students are required to present their thesis materials in a public setting or for panel review in the reviewing Department or for an assembled Honors Program panel.

