Guidelines for History Theses and Honors Theses
Every student should write a thesis that presents a research question and answers it with a coherent explanation or argument. The following guidelines should help you appreciate the many elements behind asking and answering your question effectively. Each of these tasks form the foundation of a strong thesis, but their relevance will vary somewhat, depending on the topic.

Argument
Develops a good question,

Develops a responsible argument from primary and secondary sources.

Use of Evidence
Demonstrates command of a body of knowledge.

Selects and employs primary and secondary sources with a critical awareness of their strengths and limitations.

 Understands how others have used the sources and how the topic has been interpreted over time. (This is also known as a literature review.)

Understanding
Demonstrates sensitivity to chronology, context, cause, and effect.

Shows empathy, respect for the people being discussed.

Demonstrates an awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of one’s own perspective, the perspectives of primary and secondary sources, and the perspective of the advisor.

Employs good, clear writing, including proper mechanics and citations.

Process
Conducts independent research effectively.

Responds well to faculty direction.

Responds appropriately to challenges that arise when researching and writing the thesis.

Guidelines for Honors Theses in History
In addition to excelling at the above guidelines, honors theses should also demonstrate an expertise in the topic. An honors thesis should

Engage with the ideas of others (through a literature review and the use of primary and secondary sources) in ways that demonstrate independent thought.

Convey an argument successfully and with more rigor and depth than in a regular thesis.

Demonstrate greater attention to revision than a regular thesis.