

Schedule for honors theses in the History Major

Faculty and students should be aware that with the exception of dates determined by the Honors Committee (which include the January deadline for honors nominations and the March deadline for submissions of theses), this schedule is an ideal that may need to be modified under particular circumstances. In addition, adherence to this schedule is no guarantee that a student will receive honors.

During May of honors candidates' junior year:

Members of the History Department meet to discuss students who might be invited to write an honors thesis. Students are selected based on a combination of grade point average and demonstrated capacity to pursue independent work at a high level. Usually about 7-10% of rising senior majors are invited to write an honors thesis. Candidates should be aware that by the time of their graduation they must demonstrate reading competence in a foreign language, usually by having completed through the fourth semester of college language study.

Students who have been invited indicate their intentions and, if possible, submit a short proposal of their research project. As noted below, the proposal is due by the first day of classes of fall semester. The honors candidate should be in contact with their advisor over the course of the summer to prepare for or refine the thesis proposal.

During the fall semester:

First day of classes: Thesis proposal is due. (Guidelines for the proposal are available on the department website.)

Midsemester break: Outline of the complete thesis is due.

End of final exams: Drafts of one but preferably two chapters have been completed.

During the break between semesters, the advisor reviews the completed written work. If the advisor has questions about the quality of the work, they consult with another member of the department during the break before making a decision to nominate the candidate for honors.

During the winter semester:

End of the first week (Deadline set by the Honors Committee): Deadline for advisor to nominate student for honors candidacy. This decision is based on material submitted at the end of the fall and any consultation with departmental colleagues about this material.

February break: All chapters of the thesis are drafted.

Late March (Deadline set by the Honors Committee): On the official deadline determined by the Honors Committee the student submits written material for the examining committee.

Month of April: Honors candidate participates in scheduled examination.

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.