

The Department of Rhetoric Honors Program

The Department of Rhetoric Honors Program offers students the opportunity to design an advanced research and writing project. Students in the Honors Program work closely with a faculty mentor to produce an honors thesis with a depth of investigation and analysis beyond what students encounter in lower-division survey courses or upper-division lectures. The Honors Thesis is more than a term paper; it is an extended research project that presents an original and comprehensive response to a well-focused research question. The completed honors thesis should be on par with typical first-year graduate work in the humanities, and it should provide students with a competitive writing sample when applying to graduate programs.

Eligibility

The Honors Thesis is required of Rhetoric Majors who seek a Bachelor of Arts with Honors in the Major. Applicants must have a) senior standing (90 units or more), b) Completed Rhetoric 10, 20, 103A or 103B and at least 2 other upper division courses in the department, c) a minimum 3.7 Rhetoric GPA and an overall UCB GPA of 3.5, and d) approval of the topic of study by the supervising faculty member and faculty undergraduate adviser.

Developing the Honors Thesis: A Suggested Timeline

Before applying to the Honors Program, students must work independently to generate a topic and to devise research questions. That is, students should have completed significant preliminary research and acquired the background information that will be needed to draft a clear, well-constructed research proposal. This process should begin *before* the year during which the student plans to research and write the Honors Thesis.

For instance, a student who plans to complete the thesis and graduate during the spring semester might do the following:

Fall of Year 3: Take a course that sparks interest in writing an Honors Thesis. Use course materials to identify an initial area of interest and to guide preliminary research. Use course assignments as an opportunity to begin writing on the topic and ask the course instructor for further reading in the field. If her area of interest proceeds from a previous course, she might revisit course materials and contact the course instructor about potential thesis advising.

Spring and Summer of Year 3: Immerse herself in the existing literature on her area of interest, looking for under-researched areas of inquiry (aspects of the topic that have not been explored or resolved), questionable arguments or assumptions, or ways in which the introduction of a new methodology or critical lens might shed new light on the topic. Formulate research questions around these “holes” in the scholarship, and a (hypo)thesis that responds to those questions. Identify and make contact with potential thesis sponsors. Begin formulating a research proposal.

APPLICATION FOR RHETORIC HONORS THESIS (H190A/B)
Department of Rhetoric

 Name:

 Student I.D. number

 E-mail

Overall GPA: _____

Rhetoric GPA: _____

 Signature/date

 Semester/year

Proposed Thesis title:

.....
Thesis Proposal:

The most important aspect of this application is the research proposal, which should a) offer an argument; b) situate that argument in the field of existing scholarship; c) explain/justify how this argument and research project offer original insight into the field; d) propose research methods and critical approaches; and e) outline a projected research and writing schedule. The research proposal should be approximately 250 words long.

Application Process: DUE May 30th (For FA 18 – SP19 Honors)

1) Review proposal with Thesis Adviser and obtain signature. 2) Present form to the undergraduate adviser with the thesis research proposal and transcript attached. 3) UMA will submit form to Faculty Adviser for approval 4) Once approved, UMA will issue class entry code to enroll in H190A.

Date

Undergrad Adviser

GPA verification/comments

I have read and approve the proposed topic of study and agree to supervise this Honors Thesis. As Thesis Sponsor, I agree to review requirements and establish timeline with student for completing the thesis. (See Reverse for guidelines)

Date

Name of Thesis Adviser

Thesis Adviser's signature

Date

Signature of Faculty Adviser

comments

Four units of credit will be given for Rhetoric H190A and H190B, 2 units each during a two-semester sequence. An In Progress grade will be given at the end of the first semester, and a final grade will be given after successful completion of the final two units during the second semester (a total of 4 units will be awarded with the final grade the last semester). This course may count as one upper division elective in major. Honors candidates who complete the 4 unit course with a letter grade of A- or better, have at least a 3.7 GPA in all Rhetoric courses, and an overall UC Berkeley GPA of at least 3.5 at the time of graduation will receive a BA with honors in the major.

Writing the Thesis: Program Requirements and Deadlines

Students must work with the Thesis Adviser to develop a detailed timetable for thesis research and writing. This timetable should include due dates for an outline/bibliography, a full draft of the thesis, and the completed thesis. Students must maintain contact with their Thesis Adviser throughout the year, meeting deadlines and providing informal progress reports when needed. The Thesis Adviser, in turn, will provide feedback on research and writing and evaluate the first and final drafts of the completed Honors Thesis.

Honors Meetings:

The Faculty Undergraduate Adviser will schedule and facilitate several recommended workshops during the term. These meetings serve as an opportunity for students to share their research projects with their peers and to offer peer review and support. All Honors students will be invited to attend these sessions.

Thesis Content and Format

The Honors Program is designed to help students prepare original scholarly work. An Honors Thesis is an extended, rigorous course of independent research and writing designed by the Honors student, guided by the Thesis Adviser, and supported by Honors Program meetings, and other Department of Rhetoric resources.

Students are expected to use the knowledge of reason and argument, rhetorical interpretation, and rhetorical history and theory that they have acquired through coursework to develop a body of pertinent textual evidence (be it scholarly, literary, visual, or material) and to evaluate it carefully using appropriate critical lenses. Students must advance a thesis—must make an argument—that is clear and concise, supported by textual evidence and careful interpretation. A successful Honors Thesis will not offer statements of opinion or a “take” on a particular problem; it will not attempt to solve a problem or “prove” a point of view. Instead, it will advance an argument; its original insights will constitute a scholarly contribution to the field.

Students should observe appropriate conventions for English usage, style, and punctuation. Students must proofread each thesis draft before submitting it to the Thesis Adviser who will not perform copyediting.

Students are required to distinguish their arguments from those of other scholars by correctly acknowledging such influences in complete endnotes. Students should consult the Thesis Adviser about the citation format appropriate for the field in question. Students should rely first on primary, then on secondary texts; translations should be promptly acknowledged. Thesis Advisers may provide more specific guidelines on the type of research materials that are appropriate to individual projects.

The text of an Honors Thesis should be 30-60 pages in length, not including endnotes, appendices, and bibliography. Students may illustrate analysis with visual evidence if necessary, using captioned figures that are referenced in the body of the text and listed and provided in full at the end of the document. Students who choose to include images in this way are encouraged to limit themselves to 20 illustrations.

Note: Mandatory Workshops will be offered in Fall and Spring to help you through the process. Keep an eye out for the dates!