

The Department of Rhetoric Honors Program 2025-2026

The Department of Rhetoric Honors Program offers students the opportunity to design an advanced independent research and writing project in their final year. Students in the Honors Program work closely with a faculty supervisor to produce a 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.

During the academic year, students in the Honors Thesis program will meet biweekly in an Honors Thesis Workshop. The workshop will be led by the Faculty Undergraduate Advisor, and entails developing each student's research, writing, and editing skills, as well as provide a regular pattern of peer feedback and the development of the final forms of the thesis, including a thesis presentation. Students in the Honors program are required to regularly attend a workshop (frequency TBD), as well as to meet regularly with their faculty supervisors throughout the academic year.

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, and either 103A or 103B;
- c) completed at least two other upper division courses in their concentration and at least one course in the outside concentration;
- d) maintained a minimum 3.7 Rhetoric GPA and an overall UCB GPA of 3.5; and
- e) approval of the topic of study by the supervising faculty member and faculty undergraduate advisor.

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 an upper-division 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.

Writing the Thesis: Program Requirements and Deadlines

Students must work with the Thesis Advisor 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 Advisor throughout the year, meeting deadlines and providing informal progress reports when needed. The Thesis Advisor, 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 Advisor will schedule and facilitate several required 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. Regular meetings will be scheduled for the Fall and Spring semesters, all Honors students must 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 Advisor, 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 Advisor 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 Advisor 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 Advisors 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.

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). 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.

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

<hr/> <p>Name</p> <hr/>	<hr/> <p>SID</p> <hr/>
<hr/> <p>Email</p> <hr/>	
<hr/> <p>Overall GPA: _____</p> <hr/>	<hr/> <p>Rhetoric GPA: _____</p> <hr/>
<hr/> <p>Signature/date</p> <hr/>	<hr/> <p>Semester/year</p> <hr/>

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: Friday May 16th, 2025 (For FA 25 – SP 26 Honors)*

1) Review your proposal with Thesis Advisor and obtain their signature. 2) Present form to the undergraduate advisor with the thesis research proposal attached. 3) UMA will submit the form to the Faculty Advisor for approval 4) Once approved, UMA will enroll you into H190A.

<hr/> <p>Date</p>	<hr/> <p>Undergrad Advisor</p>	<hr/> <p>GPA Verification/comments</p>
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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 a timeline with the student for completing the thesis. (See Reverse for guidelines)

<hr/> <p>Date</p>	<hr/> <p>Name of Thesis Advisor</p>	<hr/> <p>Thesis Advisor's Signature</p>
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<hr/> <p>Date</p>	<hr/> <p>Signature of Faculty Advisor</p>	<hr/> <p>Comments</p>
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*If an extension is required, contact the Rhetoric Undergraduate Advisor, Grayson Johnston, at gjohnston@berkeley.edu