Honors and the Senior Thesis in Hispanic Studies

Seniors wishing to graduate with a Hispanic Studies major must enroll in HISP 198a (Seminar in Literary and Cultural Studies) in the Fall Semester of the senior year. Those seeking departmental honors will also take HISP 99d in the Spring to complete the Senior Thesis.

Departmental Honors are awarded on the basis of cumulative excellence in all courses taken for the major, but with primary emphasis on the excellence of the Thesis. The degree of Honors, if any, is voted at a Departmental meeting at the end of the Spring semester upon review of a student's complete and final record.

THE SENIOR THESIS

The Senior Thesis, a year-long research project culminating in a 50- to 75-page paper, is a serious and difficult undertaking. The Thesis develops an argument concerned with Spanish, Latin American, or Latino literature and culture, incorporating original thought and analysis. The Thesis is written in Spanish, with quotations from sources and literary works in the original language.


Writing a satisfactory Thesis requires a high level of academic ability, self-discipline, and independent initiative, in addition to a strong grasp of the principles of composition and grammar. For these reasons, only the highest-ranking majors (based on at least a 3.6 cumulative GPA in the major, and an application submitted to the Spanish / Latin American / Latino literature and culture faculty by the Monday preceding Thanksgiving) will be given provisional permission to proceed with a Senior Thesis.

Should you decide that you would like to apply to write a Thesis, and should the faculty approve your application, you must understand that this commitment will demand a significant amount of time and energy throughout the rest of your senior year. In fact, it should be your major focus during your last two terms at Brandeis.

During the Fall Semester, you should participate fully in the Senior Seminar, in addition to consulting regularly with the person you would like to serve as your Thesis director. By the end of the Fall Semester, you should have produced a preliminary paper or chapter (of no fewer than 20 pages) on your chosen topic. If your proposal has been accepted and your work for the Seminar has been of superior quality, you will be allowed to enroll in Span 99d in the Spring. In this case you will choose a second reader for your Thesis before the mid-year break.

Those embarking on the project should note the following points:
• Even before you are provisionally selected to write a Thesis, you must consult regularly with your potential Thesis director as well as the Seminar instructor about the possible directions your research might take.

• The deadlines for the various steps required during the Fall and Spring Semesters of your senior year can be found on page 4. Please note: Failure to complete Fall Term assignments on time will make you ineligible to write a thesis, and you will not be allowed to enroll in Span 99d in the Spring semester. Consequently, you will not receive departmental honors.

• All written work submitted must be polished, proofread, and grammatically correct, and have all appropriate diacritical marks. Never hand in sloppy or unfinished work.

• Always turn in two copies of written work: in the Fall, one for your Seminar instructor and one for your director; and in the Spring, one for your director and one for your second reader.

• Plan to meet regularly with your Thesis director, as often as the two of you determine is necessary. Between meetings, set aside a couple of hours every day for research and, later, writing.

• No matter how much research you do, the basic thought and analysis going into your paper must be your own. Work must be original to qualify for honors.

• Assuming that you successfully complete the Fall Semester’s assignments, you and your director together will determine your schedule for the Spring Semester. However, the deadlines for handing in a draft of the Thesis and the final copy are determined by the Hispanic Studies faculty (see p. 4 below).

• Writing a Thesis is no guarantee of honors. The work must be of exceptionally high quality and each step must be completed on time. Because the project involves a learning process in close consultation with your director and second reader, your readers must have a reasonable amount of time to examine your written work and provide feedback so that you can absorb it and produce the best Thesis possible. Part of your grade will depend on whether your work shows that you have taken comments and criticism seriously. Late work short-circuits this process, and may prevent you from receiving honors and the grade for which you were hoping.

• Both copies of the Thesis should be bound in a suitable binder. The title page should observe the indicated format, which is found below.

• Students electing Honors in two different but related majors may arrange to satisfy the requirements of each major with a single Thesis. Double majors should consult with the
Undergraduate Advising Heads of each major to determine their academic responsibilities.

- One copy of the Thesis will be presented to Goldfarb Library; the other will be placed in the Department library.

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Below is the title page format for the Thesis

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TITLE OF THESIS
[centered on page left to right, top to bottom]

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[at the bottom of the title page]

Name of Department               Your name
Name of Thesis Director           Course name
Name of Second Reader             Date
IMPORTANT SENIOR THESIS DATES, 2011-12

Fall Semester

1. By the Thursday of the third full week of classes (September 22)
   
   Declare to the Undergraduate Advising Head and the Senior Seminar professor your intention to apply to write a Senior Thesis. You should also have identified and planned to meet with your prospective Thesis director.

2. By the Monday before Thanksgiving (November 21)
   
   Submit to the Undergraduate Advising Head four copies of a two-page proposal with a bibliography, four copies of your unofficial transcripts, and four copies of what you consider your best research paper written in Spanish for a Hispanic Studies course during your undergraduate career.

3. During the week following the Thanksgiving Break, the Undergraduate Advising Head will notify you whether your proposal has been provisionally accepted.

4. If you have been provisionally accepted to write the Senior Thesis, you should meet with your Thesis director to discuss your progress thus far and to confirm your choice of a second reader for the Thesis.

5. By the end of the Fall Semester, you will have written a paper or chapter of no less than 20 pages that can be applied toward your Thesis in the Spring Semester.

Spring Semester

1. You will meet regularly with your director and periodically with your second reader. Your director will make assignments for research and writing.

2. By the third Friday in March (March 16): submit the first completed draft of your Thesis.

3. By the third Friday in April (April 20): submit the final completed version of your Thesis.