

Department of German, Russian, and Asian Languages and Literature

Senior Honors Thesis Information

Guidelines and Expectations

Who should pursue Honors?

The senior thesis program is for the student particularly motivated to work in depth for a year on a specific topic. The student must be highly disciplined, motivated, organized, and self-directed: keep in mind that most students do not write theses. We encourage rising seniors who have a GPA of 3.5 or better in their major courses to consider an honors degree. Students with a GPA below 3.5 should consult their adviser and the department Chair to determine whether undertaking an honors thesis is advisable.

Thesis Adviser:

The thesis adviser is the student's primary intellectual adviser for the year-long project. Students enroll in 99b with the thesis adviser. The student should determine her/his adviser by the first semester of their senior year.

Thesis Readers:

In consultation with the thesis adviser students must choose two additional readers for the thesis. The readers can be from departments outside of GRALL.

Evaluation of the thesis:

1. **99b:** The adviser of the student's thesis section will grade the student each semester.
2. **Program Honors:** Honors are awarded on the basis of cumulative excellence in all courses taken in the major and the grade on the honors thesis. One semester of the senior thesis may be counted toward the five/six required upper-level courses.
3. Determination of program honors is a decision of the entire GRALL faculty and depends not only on the level of honors earned for the thesis but also on the student's academic record in the Program. The level of program honors awarded will be highest honors, high honors, honors, or no honors

How to get started:

1. Eligible students, on their own initiative, conceive of a research project and seek out a faculty member who agrees to advise the project. Ideally this process begins by the end of the junior year or during the summer before the senior year. A student may contact the Undergraduate Advising Head (UAH) for help in selecting and approaching a possible faculty adviser.
2. **By the third full week of classes** students must declare to the UAH, and the GRALL program office their interest in writing a Senior Thesis. Students should also have identified and planned to meet with their prospective faculty adviser.
3. **By the Thursday before Thanksgiving** students must submit to the GRALL program office **electronically** a 2-3 page thesis proposal and a copy of what the student considers her/his best research paper for a course in their major during her/his undergraduate career. The thesis proposal is an

opportunity for students to reflect on the writing process as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

4. The thesis proposal should include:
 - the thesis topic
 - why the topic is interesting and important
 - the central questions to be examined
 - methodology
 - a preliminary bibliography
 - a proposed schedule of research and writing (incl. timeline)
 - Individual advisers may also request a writing sample (i.e. a paper written for a class prior to senior year)
5. The program faculty will review the proposal, and students will be notified within one week whether their proposal has been provisionally accepted and they have been admitted into the Thesis Program.
6. By the end of the fall semester, thesis writers must have written a chapter of 15 to 20 pages. If their work is deemed superior by their adviser, they will be allowed to enroll in 99b for the spring semester.

Requirements for the spring semester:

1. Students will meet regularly with their thesis adviser and periodically with their second and third readers. The thesis adviser will make assignments for research and writing.
2. By the third Friday in March students will submit the first completed draft of the thesis.
3. By the third Friday in April students will submit the completed version of the thesis.

Sample Thesis Schedule

Fall Semester Senior Year

September, October: Reading, search for secondary materials, excerpt, collect ideas.

Mid-November: Begin writing.

By December 1: Submit first draft of one chapter (15-20 pages).

December 10: Meet with adviser and determine progress.

December Break

December 20- January 20: Complete second chapter and hand it in to Adviser; revise first chapter.

Spring Semester Senior Year

End of January: Meet and discuss first two chapters.

Mid-January 20-Mid-February: Work on chapter 3.

Mid-February: Hand in chapter 3 (and revisions of chapters 1 and 2) to Adviser.

Winter Break

Mid-February to mid-March: Work on chapter 4.

End of February: Meet and discuss chapters 1-3.

Mid-March: Hand in chapter 4 to Adviser.

Early March: Meet to discuss chapter 4 (and revisions of earlier chapters).

March 5-10: Complete Introduction and Conclusion.

March 10-20: Formalities: formatting, printing, proofreading, bibliography etc.

Third Friday in March: First complete draft of thesis due to Adviser.

Spring Break

April: First complete draft due to Second Reader.

Third Friday in April: Final draft due.

Early May: Final Grade.