

The Senior Honors Capstone: English 499 / English 405

Please start by reading the “Senior Capstone Overview (ENGL 404/499 and 405)” handout

Departmental Honors Thesis Qualifications:

- Overall GPA of at least 3.50
 - A scholarly research project or creative writing project that merits extended study/preparation and lends itself to a longer paper or collection of work (minimum page lengths will vary according to the type of project; see specifications below)
- NOTE:** You do not have to be a member of the University Honors Program to write a departmental honors thesis.

The Scholarly Research Honors Thesis:

- This deeply researched thesis will be at least 50 pages in length. Honors students doing a literary project typically read and consult 20-30 published sources and actively engage and cite at least ten of these sources in the final project. These sources must be scholarly, rigorous, and up-to-date. The scholarly project must represent new and original work. However, as long as the project significantly reframes and further develops past work, it may grow out of previous research completed in an advanced literature course.

The Creative Honors Thesis:

- The creative thesis is composed of three parts:
 1. The proposal. A project description that explains the scope, focus, and intent of the project; situates the project, providing an analysis of how it engages with other contemporary works in the same genre and/or its historical precedents.
 2. The creative project. The length of the creative project will vary according to genre: for screenplays, 90-120 pages; for prose, 20,000 words; for poetry, 25-30 pages.
 3. A 10-page critical introduction. Honors students doing a creative writing project typically compile a reading list of at least ten sources to consult in the preparation of the critical introduction and reference a significant portion of these sources in the introduction.
 - **NOTE:** *The critical introduction will be presented at the senior symposium. All students completing the creative honors thesis are invited to read a selection of their creative work at the Creative Writing Capstone event at the end of April.*

TIMELINE AND PROCESS:

In March of the junior year, qualified students will:

- Attend a group meeting with department chair to review requirements of the English Department Honors Thesis
- Consult with possible faculty directors regarding possible thesis topics, **bearing in mind that the department expects faculty to direct no more than ONE honors thesis per year**
- Determine in consultation with the faculty director the total number credits to be taken and whether those credits will be taken in both the fall and spring semesters of the senior year or in only one of those semesters.
 - Note: Except in unusual circumstances, Honors students are expected to enroll in a minimum of 4 credits of Honors Thesis.

By May of the junior year, qualified students will:

- Receive verbal approval from a faculty director to move forward with the project
- Determine thesis committee (one reader from within the department and one from outside the department)
- Submit to the English Department Administrative Assistant a one page thesis proposal that includes a preliminary bibliography and that includes the signature of the faculty director. (See ***Note** below this list).
- Fill out the English 499 form (found in the English Department Office) no later than the end of the first week of the semester in which a student wishes to earn credit for the thesis project, and submit to registrar
 - * **NOTE:** *in some cases, proposals will be accepted as late as the end of the first week of the first semester of the qualified student's senior year.*

During the Semester(s) of ENGL-499/405 Enrollments

- Honors thesis students will routinely meet with their faculty director to discuss submitted drafts and/or other work completed toward the project (e.g., this might include annotated bibliographies, notes on secondary and primary sources, etc.). They will be expected to meet regular deadlines and to respond in a timely fashion to all faculty director communications.
- **Required mid-term assessment meeting:** Honors thesis students will participate in a mid-term assessment meeting with the thesis director, and, if need be, other members of the honors committee, by the 8th week of the fall semester (for students who expect to complete their project in December) or the 8th week of the spring semester (for students who expect to complete their project in April)
- After the assessment meeting, a decision will be made whether to continue with the honors thesis or to convert the thesis to a project that complies with the Scholarly Research Thesis option described on the Capstone Overview handout. Students and faculty director will complete an out of classroom form and convert four ENGL-499 credits to ENGL-404 credits.
- During Spring term, all Honors students will enroll in ENGL-405 and will attend all required ENGL-405 sessions, with other senior thesis students. The required 405 sessions will be focused on the compilation of the portfolio and the successful presentation of research. They may also be invited and encouraged to attend other sessions of ENGL-404 that offer support for the research process.

Honors Defense

Honors thesis students will:

- Schedule the honors defense for mid to late April (at least three weeks prior to the end of spring classes), contacting all members of the thesis committee and finding a common meeting time
- Typically submit their completed manuscript to all readers on their honors committee a week prior to the scheduled defense
- Request the English Department Administrative Assistant to prepare a title page following the proper format
- Participate in an hour-long question and answer discussion (i.e., the honors defense) with their faculty panel

The Honors committee will:

- Determine whether the student has achieved honors after the student leaves the room; usually honors will correspond to a grade of A or A- on the work
- Convert ENGL-499 hours to ENGL-404 (out of classroom) if the director and readers decide that the quality of the work does not reach the threshold for awarding honors
- Award honors if the director and readers decide that the quality of the work reaches the threshold for awarding honors; all three readers will sign the title page form and the registrar will be notified that the student has achieved honors

After the Defense

Honors thesis students will:

- Have the option to make substantive changes or edits to the manuscript after the defense (sometimes students will be awarded provisional honors upon the promise of subsequent changes)
- Prepare a clean, hard copy, complete with title page, and submit it to the English Department Administrative Assistant
- Submit an electronic copy to Suzanne Smailes, reference librarian, for the university's online thesis archives (this submission requires the completion of an electronic waiver form)