

Honors for the Department of Religion: Processes and Practices

I. Selection of the student

A student may be selected for departmental honors in Religion upon either (1) the nomination of any department member, or (2) the self-nomination of the student to a faculty member in Religion. The nomination should usually be submitted in the latter part of spring semester of the student's junior (third) year. The departmental nominator should discuss the nomination with the student beforehand and bring the nomination to other department members.

Approval will come upon vote of the department.

II. Criteria

The nominator and department will consider (but are not limited to) the following criteria for acceptance:

- cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or higher
- record in departmental courses and related fields
- anticipated completion of a major in Religion

III. Honor's Thesis Committee

Upon approval of the student's nomination, the department shall designate a committee of three faculty members, typically two from the Religion department and one from another department, to supervise the student's Honor's Thesis program.

Normally the nominator will serve as the director for the student's project. The student can recommend committee members to the department, though the final composition of the committee remains under the purview of the department.

The committee will report on the student's progress to the department as needed.

IV. The Honors Project

Project Prospectus

A 1-2 page prospectus of the project should be submitted at the time of nomination. This prospectus lays out the subject and scope of the project, with a short bibliography of key works. The prospectus also specifies an estimated timeline to completion and anticipated number of course credits, the latter of which correlate to the depth and breadth of the anticipated project (i.e., longer or more thorough projects will correlate to higher course credits). The student should consult with their faculty nominator to determine the appropriate number of course credits.

Final Project

The final project for Honors in Religion typically entails the completion of an Honor's Thesis, a written work of high-quality original research that demonstrates deep engagement with key theories and methods in the study of religion.

Students who are completing an Honor's Theses are required to enroll in RELI 498 (1 credit), the Senior Capstone in Religion, which provides advanced training in research methods and theories in the study of religion, typically during their senior year. This course should be taken in addition to the Senior Honor's Thesis course (RELI 499, 1-4 credits).

Religion Honor's Theses have traditionally been approximately 40-50 double-spaced pages in length (or approximately 10,000-12,500 words). The length of the Thesis can be adjusted in consultation with the department or committee depending on the nature of the project, though an Honor's Thesis typically cannot fall below these page or word count standards.

Students are required to meet with their committee chair regularly in the fall and early spring semesters of their senior year to discuss their thesis, share written drafts, and gather feedback. Students are also encouraged to garner feedback from other committee members as needed.

The project must be submitted no later than the eleventh week of the spring semester of the student's senior year (this typically falls in late March). It must be in acceptable form, using academic standards, citations, and bibliography. The precise form of citation and bibliography should be determined in consultation with the committee.

Upon completion of the written Thesis, the project must be defended orally and presented before the Department. First, the student must defend their work in a private meeting with their committee members. This defense must take place before the Honor's Thesis defense deadline of April 15th. Second, the student must present their work for Religion Department faculty and students at the year-end Religion Colloquium (typically in late April or May).

Successful garnering of honors is determined by the Religion Department, based primarily on the recommendation of the committee. The committee should consider both the written work and oral defense in making its recommendation.

Upon approval by the committee and Department, a recommendation will be forwarded to the registrar for official awarding of Honors.