

St. Francis College
Honors Program
Honors Thesis Manual



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Honors Council 2018-2019

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The Honors Thesis

Thesis Requirement

The Honors Thesis is a culmination of your experience in the Honors Program at St. Francis College. It provides you with the opportunity to select a topic of interest from your studies and will enable you to demonstrate your growth as a scholar. While this is an independent project, you will have a mentor to guide you through the process.

A thesis can be successfully completed in two semesters; however, it is imperative that you begin to brainstorm topics and secure a mentor the semester prior to your senior year. For a suggested timeline, please see page 9 of this manual.

You will write a thesis in the format required by the discipline you have selected to study (e.g., APA, Chicago Style, MLA, etc.). The thesis will cover a topic selected by you and approved by your mentor. The Honors Thesis Topic Approval Form must be submitted to the Director of the Honors Program no later than the first Monday of October. This form can be found on page 11 of this manual.

For the purpose of this project, you will take on the role of a scholar to fully investigate the approved topic. No two theses are alike, but they all offer a detailed examination and reflection of the work completed during your final year of the Honors Program. The exact nature of the paper is to be decided by you and your mentor. Appropriate types of papers may consist of a reflection, critique, literature review, survey, experiment, or discussion of an artistic expression. The aim is to critically analyze the topic you have chosen.

Your work must be original in that it extends the existing body of literature in some way, or is your own unique examination of a topic or subject matter that interests you. You must draw upon the work of previous scholars and visionaries, citing their research. You may consider extending their research, re-evaluating the materials, or improving upon them in some meaningful way. You will provide new insight into an area, adding your own creative and critical analysis.

The Honors Thesis cannot be the same paper that has been submitted for another class or to fulfill another requirement. You may extend and/or reevaluate work you have done in a different capstone course by adding to it in a substantial way. The nature of the additional work is to be determined by both you and your mentor, and approved by your mentor.

The thesis requires you to consult literature in the field, go beyond what others have already written and analyzed, and offer a new critical analysis of the topic. A rationale for the investigation should be clearly outlined, as well as the potential contributions to the field. While the format of the paper will be different depending on the discipline, all papers should clearly delineate the implications of the investigation as they pertain to the particular sub field. You must demonstrate that you have performed serious, in-depth research, fully surrounding the issue.

If you are using music, art, theater, dance, or other media, you may work in the medium appropriate for your discipline. However, each artistic expression must also be accompanied by a

written analysis. Possible ideas for this analysis may be a reflection of the work, a written explanation of its relation to other scholarly material/artistic pieces, or a discussion of your approach to the creation of the work.

While the specific format will vary depending on the discipline selected, the following components should be included in your paper.

- **Title page-** this includes your title, full name, and institutional affiliation
- **Table of Contents-** this highlights the major sections of your paper
- **Abstract-** this is a shortened summary of your paper and should not exceed 250 words
- **Literature Review/Body-** this is the main section of your paper and may include a study (survey, experiment, etc.)
- **Results-** this section highlights your major findings
- **Discussion of Implications-** this section is the culmination of your paper and should highlight the significance of your work and contribution to the field
- **Bibliography/References**

Thesis Length

As this particular assignment will vary based upon the discipline, topic, and/or medium, there is no specific length required. You and your mentor will meet to discuss a target length, and that will be used to guide you in developing the paper. Typically, papers written in Humanities, Natural Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, and Social Sciences will range from 35-55 pages, not inclusive of the title page, references, and appendices. For those doing an artistic or performance piece, the creative reflection paper could be approximately 15-25 pages in length.

Your paper must fully examine the background literature, address the thesis statement/answer the research questions posed, give a clear analysis of any hypotheses, and outline the implications of the work. It is at the discretion of your advisor and the outside readers as to whether the paper is of sufficient length and depth.

The Thesis Process

1. Choose a topic that you are interested in.

Be sure to pick a topic that interests you, as you will be spending at least the next year focusing on it. You may consider consulting the textbooks for your classes, major literary works/studies in your area of interest, talking to professors in your major, or talking to a professor with whom you have studied and has expertise and/or interest in your topic.

2. Find a thesis mentor.

The role of your mentor is to support and encourage you as you complete your thesis. He/she will also be able to guide you as you select relevant articles/references for your paper. As such, you should pick someone who has expertise in the field.

You should choose a mentor whose class you have taken and enjoyed, and someone who is familiar with the quality of your work. It is important that you have a good rapport with your mentor, as you will be working closely with him/her during the academic year. All mentors must be full-time faculty members. If you wish to have a non-full-time faculty member mentor, you must first receive written permission from the Director of the Honors Program.

Your mentor will be responsible for assigning deadlines, reading your drafts, and helping you select one outside reader. Your paper will likely go through several iterations before being accepted by your mentor. This is normal and part of the process. As such, you should make sure that you pick a mentor that you are comfortable approaching and who has a schedule that works for you.

3. Submit the appropriate paperwork.

You must have your mentor sign off on your topic. The Honors Thesis Topic Approval Form must be submitted to the Director of the Honors Program no later than the first Monday of October. Please see page 11 of this manual to obtain the form.

You do not need to have a detailed plan of study at this point. You must, however, have a topic listed. This shows that you have secured a mentor and have already begun the discussion of how you will approach your investigation. Should your topic change at any point, make an appointment with the Director of the Honors Program to fill out a new topic approval form.

In addition to submitting the topic form, you must also submit an Independent Study form to the Registrar so that you are enrolled in the thesis course. This form can be obtained from the registrar or on the St. Francis College portal.

4. Discuss your meeting schedule and plan of action with your mentor.

It is important that you and your mentor create a plan of action, with accompanying deadlines, at the beginning of the semester. You should stick closely to the plan, so that you can successfully complete your thesis on time.

Some students work better if they have weekly or bi-weekly meetings with their mentors in which they hand in sections of the paper to be reviewed. Others work better independently, handing in only a rough draft. This is up to you and your mentor. Please be sure to follow the plan once it is created. If an issue arises, be sure to schedule a meeting with both your mentor and the Director of the Honors Program.

5. Select your outside reader (with the help of your mentor).

Your committee will consist of three members: your mentor, your selected outside reader, and an outside reader assigned by the Honors Council.

You will work closely with your mentor to select one additional outside reader. This should be someone who has familiarity with your topic or someone who can help enhance your study. For example, if you are conducting an experimental study and you anticipate needing help with your results section, you may want to select someone who is skilled in statistical analysis. If you are working on an interdisciplinary assignment, you may want to select a faculty member from the discipline not already represented.

The second outside reader will provide you with a fresh perspective, guide and enhance your existing work, and sign off on the final project (see page 12 of the manual). You must secure your second outside reader by the end of the fall semester. Your reader may ask to review your work as you complete it, or may just ask to read the final product. The extent of the outside reader's involvement is up to him/her, but it is important that a discussion is had early on, so that all expectations are clear. At minimum, your reader will send his/her feedback on your thesis to your mentor.

Your third reader will be a member of the Honors Council and will be assigned to you prior to your thesis presentation. He/she will also be required to send comments to your mentor and to sign off on the final project.

6. Submit a progress report.

You must submit a progress report to your mentor, outside reader, and the Director of the Honors Program by the last day of classes during the fall semester. This progress report need not exceed two pages typed, however it must highlight the work that has been completed, and the work that remains. You must also include the tentative title of your thesis. You must receive a grade of B or above in HON 5997 to enroll in HON 5998.

7. Complete your paper.

With the help of your mentor, you will work to complete your paper. A final draft must be submitted by the first week of April. At this point, you must e-mail a copy to your two outside readers. You must also CC your mentor and the Director of the Honors Program. Your outside readers will provide comments to your mentors to help you fine tune the paper and strengthen your analysis. Any changes must be made prior to your final paper submission. The completed paper is due by the last day of classes. This paper must be submitted in hard copy, along with the Honors Thesis Final Approval Form (see page 12 of the manual), to the Director of the Honors Program. Two out of three signatures are needed for final approval. One signature must be your mentor's and the other must be from the

reader assigned by the Honors Council. You will only receive a grade of P (pass) or H (high pass) and approval to graduate as an Honors student if the paper and Honors Thesis Final Approval Form are submitted on time.

8. Prepare the presentation.

Your Honors Thesis presentation will take place in an Honors Symposium that is held at the end of April/beginning of May (date TBD). For this presentation, you will prepare a 10 to 15-minute PowerPoint presentation highlighting your work. You must have this presentation reviewed by your mentor. Please time yourself, as you will be stopped at the 15-minute mark, so that all students have an equal allotment of time.

For the presentation, you must cover all of the main points presented in your paper. You should be familiar enough with your own work so that you do not read directly from your paper or the slides. After you conclude, there will be approximately 10 minutes of Q&A. Symposium attendees will be invited to ask questions about your work/your process. This is meant as an opportunity for the audience to learn more about your work.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How long does my thesis need to be?

You and your mentor will decide the appropriate length for your project. Each project is unique, and as such, will require a different length for a detailed and complete analysis of the topic. Please see the thesis length section on page 4 for a discussion of typical paper lengths.

2. What format should I use for my thesis?

You should use the format required by the discipline you select for the focus of your thesis (e.g., APA, Chicago Style, MLA, etc.). Please consult all necessary manuals to be sure that your work adheres to the format required.

While the specific format is up to you and your mentor, your paper should all have the following components:

- Title page
- Table of Contents
- Abstract
- Literature Review/Body (this may include a study)
- Results
- Discussion of Implications
- Bibliography/References

3. Can I use human subjects for my research?

If you and your mentor decide that you should carry out a study, you may use human subjects, provided that the study has been approved by the St. Francis College Institutional Review Board (SFC IRB). Please contact both the Director of the Honors Program and the Chair of the IRB to receive the appropriate forms.

Please note that it may take several weeks to receive IRB approval, so starting this process early is imperative.

Checklist/Timeline

Assignment	Due Date/Timeframe
1. Select a topic and secure your mentor	Spring semester junior year/beginning of senior year
2. Submit the Honors Thesis Topic Approval Form to the Director of the Honors Program	First Monday of October
3. Create timeline and select due dates with mentor	Early October
4. Select outside reader	Mid December
5. Submit your progress report to your mentor, outside reader, and Director of the Honors Program	Last day of classes- fall semester*
6. Send final thesis draft to your committee (mentor and two outside readers) + the Director of the Honors Program	First week of April
7. Presentation	Late April/Early May (TBD)
8. Submit thesis and Honors Thesis Final Approval Form	Last day of classes- spring semester

* You must receive a grade of B or above in HON 5997 to enroll in HON 5998.

Important Thesis Forms

Honors Thesis Topic Approval Form

This form must be submitted by the student directly to the Director of the Honors Program.

Student Name: _____ **Student Email:** _____

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the distinction of Honors:

Thesis topic:

The undersigned agree to serve in the role of mentor for the above-mentioned student.

Name: _____ (Mentor)

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Program Director Signature Required:

_____ Date: _____

Honors Thesis Final Approval Form

This form must be submitted by the student directly to the Director of the Honors Program for final thesis submission.

Student Name: _____ **Student Email:** _____

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the distinction of Honors:

Thesis title:

Date of presentation: _____

As the thesis mentor for the above student, I certify that I have read this student's thesis (title above), have approved changes required by the outside readers, and recommend the thesis for approval by the Honors Council. _____ (initials)

The undersigned examining committee members certify that they recommend this thesis for acceptance:

Note: Theses require a minimum of two signatures of approval. One must be from your mentor and the other must be from the outside reader assigned by the Honors Council.

1. **Name:** _____ (Mentor)

Approval Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

2. **Name:** _____ (Honors Council Reader)

Approval Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

3. **Name:** _____ (Selected Outside Reader)

Approval Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Program Director Signature Required:

_____ **Date:** _____

