

Process for International Relations Honors Theses

2008

- 1) An IR major who successfully completes an honors thesis and has a GPA in the major of 3.5 or higher at the time of graduation receives Departmental Honors.¹
- 2) An IR major with senior standing may undertake an honors thesis provided that a member of the Department agrees to serve as primary supervisor. Students do not have an automatic right to undertake an honors thesis if the student cannot gain the agreement of a supervisor. Students are encouraged to seek the advice of their major advisor or the Chair in identifying possible thesis supervisors. Students should consult with as many potential supervisors as possible or appropriate for the project that they have in mind.
- 3) The Department strongly recommends that students considering an honors thesis should begin planning for it during the 2nd semester of their junior year.² They should acquire copies of:
 - This document;
 - “International Relations Honors Thesis Proposals;”
 - “International Relations Department Policy on Plagiarism;” and
 - “Calculation of International Relations Major Grade Point Average.”All of these can be obtained from the student’s major advisor, from the Department, or from the Department’s web site. In addition, the student should begin thinking about a thesis project and possible supervisors. Conversations with potential supervisors are encouraged.
- 4) By the beginning of the senior year, thesis students should have identified the question(s) that they propose to explore and should prepare a brief written statement describing the proposed project—in effect, an initial draft of parts 1 and 2 of the thesis proposal. Some supervisors may make this statement a requirement before considering whether to take on a thesis student.
- 5) Each thesis student will register for one semester of IR 388 (4 credits). During the first semester the thesis student will prepare a detailed proposal under the supervision of the primary supervisor. Early in the first semester, the primary supervisor, in consultation with the student, will assemble a committee composed of the supervisor and at least one, preferably two, other faculty members, one of whom could be from another Department. The thesis student is expected to consult the additional member(s) of the committee on a frequent basis while preparing the proposal. The primary supervisor and the other advisor(s) will also

¹. A student may begin an honors thesis even if their major GPA at the time they begin is less than 3.5, although they cannot receive Departmental Honors without both a successfully completed thesis and a major GPA of 3.5 at the time of graduation.

². In some places this document assumes that the student will begin the thesis in the Fall semester. All theses must be started two semesters before the anticipated date of graduation; students who expect to graduate in January may begin a thesis the previous January.

consult with each other as necessary.

- 5) The proposal must meet the standards laid out in “International Relations Honors Thesis Proposals.” It must be defended orally no later than the last day of Fall classes—before the student’s thesis committee. Supervisors may set earlier dates for individual theses. The oral will conclude in one of three ways:
 - a. the proposal is **approved** as is. The student proceeds with the writing of the thesis in the second semester of IR 388.
 - b. the proposal is **approved with revisions**. The student is permitted to proceed to the second semester of IR 388 and the writing of the thesis mindful of the recommendations of the committee for changes.
 - c. the proposal is **disapproved**. The student may not continue the project as an honors thesis and may not register for a second semester of IR 388. The student and the primary supervisor could, if both agree, continue the project as a special topics course (IR 394).
- 6) At the conclusion of the oral, the outside reader(s) will provide recommendations for revisions and render opinions about whether or not the proposal should be approved. The primary supervisor, mindful of the comments of all members of the committee, is charged with the tasks of making the final determination of whether the proposal is approved and, if it is approved, explaining to the student the revisions that may be expected.
- 7) The primary supervisor will assign the grade for IR 388 and determine whether a completed thesis qualifies for honors.
- 8) Each year the Department will set a due date for completed theses. Supervisors may set earlier due dates for individual theses. Theses not submitted to the primary supervisor in completed form by the due date are ineligible for honors.
- 9) Later in April, students who have successfully completed an honors thesis will present their research before faculty and students. This includes students who have completed successful theses but who may not meet the GPA requirement for Departmental Honors.
- 10) Students who have successfully completed both the proposal and the thesis, and who have achieved a major GPA of 3.5 or higher at the time of graduation will be awarded Departmental Honors.