

Tufts University
Thesis Honors Program - "The Thesis Exchange"
2003-2004 - History and International Relations Collaborative

Basic Criteria and Processes for Thesis Honors :

The Thesis Honors Program for Liberal Arts at Tufts is detailed in the Bulletin. The key criteria are briefly described below.

Basic Criteria

Students must have made the Dean's List at least once in order to register for Thesis Honors. Honors Theses are a two course credit commitment. Thesis Honors should overlap significantly with a Senior Research Seminar. Students may not count a Senior Research Seminar for the first half of a Senior Honors Thesis - the two must remain distinct.

The Committee

The student's advisor and the chair of the department must agree to register the student for Thesis Honors through the Dean of the College Office.

The student is required to identify and secure the participation of her/ his thesis committee. In practice the thesis director often collaborates in that process. The director may not be on sabbatical or leave during either of the two semesters of thesis commitment. The thesis director and all thesis readers must agree on the student's preliminary title, thesis statement and preliminary bibliography before the student's application to the Thesis Honors Program is submitted to the Dean of the Colleges.

The thesis committee is comprised of the thesis director and two readers. For International Relations the thesis director and one reader must be IR core faculty. For history, the thesis director and one reader must hold appointments in History, and at least one reader MUST hold an appointment in another department or program.

Thesis submission and evaluation:

The completed thesis must be presented for consideration no later than two weeks before the last day of classes of the student's final semester. Each candidate for a degree with thesis honors is required to undergo examination of the thesis. The thesis advisory committee assigns a grade for the thesis and determines the level of thesis honors to be awarded, basing its recommendation on both the final oral and written presentation of the thesis.

Thesis students receive a Y at the end of the first semester. The grade assigned by the committee at the end of the second semester counts for both thesis credits. The thesis advisory committee may recommend highest honors, high honors, honors or no honors. If the thesis is recommended for no honors, but is still deemed worthy of credit the student receives two credits with whatever letter grade designation the committee assigns.

"Thesis Exchange" Faculty / Student Seminar

Thesis students typically meet weekly with their thesis committee director, and periodically with their readers. The "Thesis Exchange" Seminar, a collaborative between

History and International Relations is designed to complement these meetings, not to replace them. The Thesis Exchange brings together all thesis students and faculty for inspiration, sharing of information, and mutual support. We gather informally with wine, cider, cheese and crackers to discuss the process and challenges of thesis writing.

Thesis Exchange Meetings for 2003-2004
Fall Semester - Wine, Cider, Cheese & Crackers

Fall Semester Meetings

First Meeting - September 24 5:00 - 6:20 East Hall Lounge

As soon as all students have submitted their paperwork to History, IR and the Dean of the College, the students, their directors and readers gather to meet one another, exchange email addresses, secure a mutually convenient meeting time, and develop a strategy for the year's "Thesis Exchange." We begin a consideration of research methods and thesis support.

Second Meeting - October 15th 5:00 - 6:20 East Hall Lounge

Two faculty members (one History / one International Relations, but not History) volunteer to present their current research and discuss their personal research and writing techniques, methods and strategies. Ideally faculty will have contrasting methods, thus introducing students to different ways of approaching research, writing and the profession.

Electronic research, the consortium, interlibrary loan, microfilm, the Center for Research Libraries -- these research and reference tools are highlighted, and students are urged to front load research because it will take time to secure material through inter-library loan. The fact that a book, article or document is not on the shelf of the Tufts library is no excuse for ignoring it. Virtually everything a student needs to use can be acquired in some form or another.

If the student can demonstrate that she/ he needs to visit a research collection some distance from Tufts the student should apply to "the usual suspects" (department chair, dean of the colleges, Provost, programs, etc.) for funding at this stage. The initial "introduction to the ropes," is followed by questions, answers, and a general discussion of the problems the students face launching their research.

Student Interim Meeting -

Date, Place & Time determined by students, History & IR buy pizza.

Students gather (refreshments provided by History & IR) to discuss the challenges they are facing, questions they have, etc. If the students feel it would be useful to have another general meeting with faculty to address these questions (as opposed to simply addressing them individually with their thesis advisory committees) such a meeting is scheduled.

Third Meeting - November 19th 5:00 - 6:20 East Hall Lounge

Faculty and students gather to assess the progress made to date and to develop strategies for moving from the information gathering and organization phase to the

writing process. Inter-session writing strategies and Spring Semester Deadlines should be set. Students are reminded of thesis writing support through the Writing Center.

THIS IS OPT-OUT TIME

Any theses that are substantially behind schedule, or seem unlikely to be completed during the second semester should be identified at this point. Students who find themselves in this situation are encouraged to salvage the effort by taking an "incomplete." Students then write up a significantly less ambitious project within the incomplete grace period (the first six weeks of spring term), and submit the revised project to the director as a one credit independent research project.

Spring Semester Meetings

First Meeting - As soon as people have their spring schedules settled faculty and students meet to take stock of progress in the process of writing up the work. Students exchange thesis chapters and writing experience. This meeting tends to shift from research questions to write up strategies. Students are reminded that the Writing Center also supports presentation strategies.

Second Meeting - Early March

Final draft and oral presentation / defense questions dominate these meetings. Students will be close to final drafts by this time.

Faculty volunteer to present and critique each other's work.

****Final Spring Meeting - "The Thesis Exchange"** late April

This meeting takes place after most students have defended their theses. The full History and IR Faculty, members of the History Society, IR majors Sophomores and Juniors who are considering writing a Senior honors thesis are all invited to attend. The event is indeed open to the public and advertised in the Daily.

Students briefly "present" their thesis, and discuss what they gained from the experience and what they might do differently were they to begin again. If time allows thesis students respond to questions from the audience. The formal presentations and less formal discussions are followed by refreshments and a celebration honoring the thesis students.

Prizes for Excellence in a Senior Honors Thesis in History and International Relations:

History:

In 1996 the History Department first awarded a prize for excellence in a senior honors thesis. The prize was inspired by the extraordinary work done by Carlos Aramayo. In 2000, Vida H. Allen generously funded the History Department thesis prize, and the prize now takes her name.

A committee of history faculty who have not submitted a thesis for the prize, read the nominated theses and decide whether or not to award the Vida H. Allen prize. If a thesis is selected for the Allen Prize, the award is made at the History Department's Seniors Reception following the Baccalaureate Service the Saturday afternoon before Graduation.

**History Thesis Prize Winners
1996 - 2003**

1996 - Carlos Aramayo

1997 - Sara Byala

1998 - Molly Blank

1999 - Nana Osafo and David Boguslawsky, co-winners

2000 - Seth Blacksbury

2001 - Adrian Wilairat

2002 - Katherine Crowley

2003 - Eugene Schiff