
POLITICAL SCIENCE HONORS THESIS CHECKLIST

Overview:

- 1) The honors thesis is a 50-60 page original research paper that includes primary research you have conducted.
- 2) You must assemble a committee consisting of a political science honors thesis advisor and 2 additional faculty readers, one in political science, one outside of political science.
- 3) The culmination of the thesis project is an oral defense with your thesis committee.

Why write an honors thesis?

- It allows you to explore an interesting problem or puzzle in depth.
- It is a challenging academic experience that will expand your writing and research skills.
- It is good preparation for graduate school!

What does an honors thesis qualify me for?

- Graduating with Honors if you also completed the University Honors program.
- Graduating with Departmental Distinction if you did not complete the University Honors program.

Who is eligible to write an honors thesis?

- Is your GPA in Political Science at least a 3.7?
- Is your GPA overall at least a 3.5?
- Did you complete PLSC 2901 during the junior year? (or year before you seek to write the thesis)

If you answered yes to each of these questions, you are eligible to earn credit for an honors thesis: typically students register for 8 credits of "Honors thesis" over the senior year.

How do I prepare an honors thesis?

Junior Year:

- Think about possible research questions that interest you
 - Consider "puzzles" or unanswered questions from upper-division courses
 - Discuss possible questions with faculty teaching your upper-division courses
- Think about which faculty member could advise you on questions of interest:
 - What subfield of political science does your question engage?
 - Which faculty members teach in this subfield?
 - Who is on sabbatical or other type of leave during your final year at the University?
- Enroll in PLSC 2901: Political Inquiry this year:
 - Discuss research questions with this professor
 - Discuss the modes of inquiry and methodologies appropriate to your question
- Register for honors thesis credits for fall quarter during spring advising/registration:
- Seek the signature of your faculty thesis advisor on an "add/drop" slip

Senior Year: Fall quarter

- Week 1: Make an appointment with your faculty thesis advisor to discuss expectations and timing
- Regularly visit your faculty thesis advisor during office hours to discuss your progress
- Seek assistance from Penrose reference librarians
- Retrieve and read the scholarly literature related to your topic

- Begin to collect evidence
 - Outline the project
 - Begin to draft the framing of the question and situate it within the context of what others have said
 - Contact faculty who may serve as the second and external readers: discuss expectations and the likely timing of the oral defense
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Senior Year: Winter quarter

- Regularly visit your faculty thesis advisor during office hours to discuss your progress
 - Check in with the second and external readers if they indicated they want progress reports
 - Collect all necessary evidence
 - Analyze evidence
 - Reflect on how findings relate to your original expectations
 - Begin to draft discussions of your evidence
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Senior Year: Spring quarter

- Regularly visit your faculty thesis advisor during office hours to discuss your progress
- During Week 1, send an email to your committee (thesis advisor, second departmental reader, external reader) to schedule the oral defense for *no later than* the 10th week of classes or final exam week
- Draft a complete version of your thesis as soon as possible
- Give your thesis advisor at least a week to evaluate the draft
- Revise your draft, given the feedback from your thesis advisor
- Give your thesis advisor at least a week to evaluate the revision
- Revise your paper again if necessary
- Submit the draft approved by your thesis advisor to the other readers *at least one week* before the oral defense
- Prepare a brief discussion (5 mins) of your project to begin your oral thesis defense
- Prepare to field questions about the theoretical and empirical components of your thesis, its relation to existing scholarship, its broader implications, and remaining questions for future research.