

RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAM
PROPOSAL FOR HONORS RESEARCH: COVER SHEET

Name (Last Name, First Name): _____ Email: _____

Date of expected graduation: _____

Proposed Title of Thesis: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Please complete the following tasks by April 15 of your junior year and submit four copies of the documentation to Professor Kim Haines-Etizen (Director of Religious Studies). These copies will be distributed to your committee members and one copy will be kept for office files.

1. A formal research proposal containing six components (not to exceed ten pages):
 - a. A description of the topic or project, including discussion of research methodology
 - b. A statement of the importance of your project within its field
 - c. Timetable of relevant research
 - d. Outline of project—conceived in weeks or months, not days
 - f. Working bibliography and list of materials with indication of the availability of primary and secondary sources
 - g. Identification of notation style for the project's final version
2. Attach this cover sheet to your proposal.
3. Names and signatures of the thesis advisor and at least one committee member:

Thesis Advisor's Name (print or type name): _____

Committee member: (print or type name): _____

Optional Committee member: (print or type name): _____

Each fall, a small number of highly qualified seniors enter the Religious Studies Honors Program. The Honors Program is open to RELST majors who have done superior work and who wish to devote a substantial part of their senior year to advanced, specialized, independent research and writing of a thesis.

Note well: Successfully completing an honors thesis will require sustained interest, exceptional ability, diligence, and enthusiasm. Students must also take two honors courses RELST 4995 in fall and RELST 4996 in spring, in addition to the regular major requirements. While admission to the Honors Program and completion of a thesis do not guarantee that students will be awarded honors in Religious Studies, most students find the experience as intellectually rewarding as it is rigorous.

Requirements: In order to be considered for the Honors Program, candidates must fulfill all of the following requirements:

*Minimum grade point average of 3.5 in the Religious Studies major with no grade lower than B-

Application Process:

Students should submit an honors application by **April 15** of their junior year. The application process consists of the following:

- 1) **Identify a Topic:** By the beginning of the spring semester of their junior year, students should have identified a topic or research question of abiding intellectual interest. Students should bear in mind that an honors thesis is far more than a research paper, and therefore should propose a topic based on original research using primary sources. Students should make sure that they have the appropriate language skills for their proposed thesis.
- 2) **Select a Thesis Supervisor:** Once students have a thesis topic in mind, they should approach a faculty member to supervise their work on the honors thesis. The student's major advisor or Director of Religious Studies can help identify a thesis advisor appropriate to the topic. The student and the thesis advisor will then review the student's transcript to make sure that s/he is eligible for admission to the Honors Program (see admission requirements above). The thesis advisor should also ensure that the student has appropriate and sufficient language skills for the proposed topic.
- 3) **Select a Thesis Committee:** The student and the thesis advisor will together identify two additional faculty members to serve on the thesis committee. It is the student's responsibility to contact (at least) one of these faculty members to request their participation on the committee before they submit their honors application. The three members should be:
 - a. The professor who has agreed to work closely with you over the year and to be the supervisor/grader of your project (Chair of committee)
 - b. Another knowledgeable person
 - c. Religious Studies major advisor (Required)

Sometimes your adviser is the supervisor/chair. If that is the case, you need two additional knowledgeable professors for your committee of three.

- 4) **Submit a Thesis Proposal:** After consulting with the prospective thesis advisor, the student must prepare a formal, well-thought out proposal for honors research. The proposal must include a statement of the research question, discussion of the relevant methodology, and a preliminary bibliography of primary and secondary sources. Additional components of the proposal are outlined on the honors application cover sheet. The proposal and this cover sheet should be submitted to the thesis advisor, committee member(s), and the Director of Religious Studies by April 15.

****Note to Study Abroad Students:** Students who are not in residence during their junior year (e.g., because of participation in a Cornell Abroad Program) should correspond with the Director of Religious Studies early in the spring semester regarding application to the Honors Program. Keeping in mind that being off campus prolongs the application process, students who are abroad should plan ahead and make sure they begin in a timely manner in order to meet the April 15 deadline.

Admission to Candidacy: At the end of the spring semester, the Director of Religious Studies will notify students whether or not they have been admitted as candidates in the Honors Program.

Summer before senior year: Begin to gather research materials or supplies, identify and approach contacts, and, if possible, begin actual research on the project.

Honors Program Requirements (Fall Semester):

- If you have not already, select the third member of your thesis committee.
- Regular meetings with the honors thesis advisor and committee member(s) throughout the year.
 - Be sure you and each member of the committee are clear about how often you will meet, either individually or collectively. And be clear about due dates for pieces of the project.
- Enrollment in RELST 4995
 - At the end of fall semester, submission to the supervisor for evaluation 15-20 pages of the thesis along with an outline of the whole project.

Honors Program Requirements (Spring Semester):

- Enrollment in RELST 4996
- The thesis draft, between 60-100 pages in length, is **due no later than March**. Unbound copies should be prepared for the thesis advisor, committee member(s), and Director.

Final Thesis Evaluation:

- Students must successfully complete the RELST major and must continue to maintain a minimum 3.5 GPA in the major and a minimum GPA of 3.3 overall.
- After submitting the thesis draft, **no later than March**, students will receive feedback from their advisors and other committee members about required revisions; students will generally have two-four weeks to submit a final draft of the thesis. Be sure to set a clear date for submitting the final copy of your project to your committee.
- In early to mid-May, a 'thesis defense' will be held with all committee members. The defense is a conversation between the honors candidate and her/his full committee, providing the candidate with the opportunity formally to present her/his research in oral form and to address the substantive concerns of the committee.
- Final evaluation of the thesis will be determined by the committee after the thesis defense.
 - Students will be given a grade for RELST 4996 based on their **effort**.
 - Your committee determines whether your project deserves *Latin* honors, and, if so, will recommend you to the members of the advisory board of the program. Students *may* be awarded Latin honors based on the board's evaluation of the **scholarly achievement** represented in the thesis.

Determination of Latin Honors: In evaluating a thesis, faculty members take into consideration intellectual creativity, methodological innovation, scholarly rigor, and overall quality of presentation. Students should therefore ensure that the thesis is also well-written, impeccably edited, and abides by the footnote format conventional for their discipline of choice (e.g., Chicago, MLA).

- A student whose thesis is meritorious, well-argued, and relies on a methodologically sound use of primary sources may be awarded *cum laude*;
- A student whose project shows considerable originality and scope, methodological sophistication, and uncommon quality may be awarded *magna cum laude*;
- A student whose project is of truly exceptional quality, makes a real contribution to the field, and is deemed publishable may be awarded *summa cum laude*.

In deciding on the specific level of Latin honors, the committee may consider a candidate's **complete** academic record, not merely the thesis.

Submit a final copy of your project (if copies can be made) to the administrator of the program for the permanent library of the program. These are in a bookcase in the program office for you to consult