Honors Thesis Guidelines
"Little Blue Book"

Purpose

The thesis is required for completion of the Honors Program.

The aim of this "little blue book" is to clarify the process and lead you to a successful completion of your Honors thesis. Please read and follow the guidelines. If you have comments or questions, contact the Honors Program office. These guidelines are written with the intent of clarifying what needs to be done, when and by whom. If the guidelines fall short of that mark for you, we need to know.

The Honors Thesis requirement is satisfied with two Honors courses, HOPR 3899 Pre-Thesis Seminar (1 credit) and HOPR 4899 Honors Thesis (2 credits).

The Honors thesis provides a valuable educational opportunity for an Honors Scholar to engage in an in-depth investigation of a topic while working with the guidance of a faculty member of the scholar's choice. The thesis experience can be a source of intellectual stimulation for the student and the faculty member. One of the by-products of the thesis is that each Honors Scholar has the opportunity to be an "expert" on a topic of his/her choosing. Completion of the Honors thesis is a requirement of the Honors Program. Students are encouraged to begin work on the thesis in the junior year. DO NOT postpone your Honors thesis until the second semester of your senior year.

HOPR 3899, Pre-Thesis Seminar: required in the junior year for Honors Scholars, lays a foundation for the Honors thesis. Seminar activities include the following:

- Exploration of topics of interest for the thesis
- Development of questions and possible solution processes
- Development of a thesis topic
- Selection of a specific thesis advisor
- Arrangement to work with the advisor
- Development of an annotated bibliography
- Development of a thesis proposal that includes a research/development plan for the thesis topic
- Submission of the thesis proposal to the Honors Council for approval

Successful completion of HOPR 3899 is a pre-requisite to registration for HOPR 4899 Honors Thesis. HOPR 4899 is to be taken in the junior or senior year on an arranged basis. In it, the thesis will be completed and the oral defense will take place.
Types of Honors Theses
There are four types of theses available for Honors Students:
1. Traditional scholarly paper
2. Empirical study
3. Creative thesis
4. Application of scholarship in a project

The four types of theses differ in terms of the final product, but all four share certain characteristics that make the work worthy of the honors designation. All theses must contain:
1. An appropriate demonstration of relevant scholarship
2. A high quality presentation
3. Demonstrated high quality of writing
4. A final product appropriate to the type of thesis

The products will follow these recommendations:
   a. A scholarly paper will present a synthesis and interpretation of research from a particular field
   b. An empirical study will present and interpret data collected by the student
   c. A creative thesis will consist of a creative work as well as an artist’s statement
   d. An applied thesis will consist of a conducted, research based project and a reflection paper.

Choosing a Topic and a Thesis Advisor

You are encouraged to investigate a topic and to look for an advisor prior to taking HOPR 3899. The topic you choose is often in your major discipline, but it is not required to be. You may consider an interdisciplinary topic or a topic outside of your major. Take time to think about your interests, course topics that piqued your curiosity; topics you desired to investigate further in class but didn't have the time; topics that you truly want to explore in more depth and become a "local expert." Make a list of topics that interest you and do some preliminary investigation of those topics in the library.

It is at this point that you should be thinking about a faculty thesis advisor. The faculty thesis advisor may be any member of the faculty; he/she need not be your academic advisor nor does he/she need to be a member of the Honors Council. The topics you have listed as your interests can help narrow your list of faculty members. Choose a faculty member whose interests are close to yours and with whom you feel rapport. Keep in mind that the thesis is an opportunity for you as an outstanding student to perform serious research under the close supervision of a faculty member with similar interests.

Set up an appointment to talk to that faculty member about your thesis topic ideas. An open discussion can focus the thesis topic, redirect you if the topic is dead-ended or inspire you to deeper pursuit of the topic. When you have decided with which faculty member you would like to work, be sure to formally ask the faculty member if he/she would be willing to be your thesis advisor (do not make assumptions here - the faculty member may be interested but unable to take on the additional work load).
You may want to consult with the Director of the Honors Program to explore possible topics and an appropriate thesis advisor. The Honors office has a copy of each completed thesis on file, arranged by academic area. Stop by the office to see and read examples of theses in your academic discipline.

**Format of Thesis**
The appropriate format for the final submitted work will depend upon the topic chosen. The Honors Director has on file all successfully completed theses, and can give individual guidance to the student, in cooperation with the thesis advisor, on the appropriate format, bibliographical and citation style.

**Academic Area Senior Thesis and Honors Thesis**
There are many academic areas on campus which require a senior thesis for their academic major. If your academic area requires a senior thesis and you would like to combine the Honors thesis requirement with the academic area senior thesis requirement, there is a possibility of doing so. It is important that you make this decision early in the process so that the Honors Program is a full participant in the development of the thesis. As an Honors Scholar you must inform the Director of your intent to satisfy both requirements with one thesis. HOPR 3899 is required. A thesis proposal must be submitted as described in HOPR 3899 and all requirements for the Honors thesis including your oral defense and any additional honors requirements must be met to the satisfaction of the Director and the Honors Council. You may have your academic area advisor serve as your Honors thesis advisor, and when your proposal is accepted, you will register for the thesis under your academic area's course number. You will NOT use the arranged course form as described above because you will be meeting both requirements with one course (the course in your academic area). You will be paying for and receiving three thesis credits in your academic area. Upon successful completion of the thesis, including the oral defense, the Honors Director will send a memo to the Records office, with copies to you, your advisor and your file, indicating that the academic area course satisfies the Honors' thesis requirement. Note that you will have two free elective credits that may be taken in your major or in any area that you choose.

**Development of the Thesis**
You will work individually with your faculty advisor to detail your thesis, conduct your research and report your results in written and oral form. The thesis should demonstrate your ability to analyze and integrate concepts as well as your ability to use techniques employed in your field of investigation.

**Thesis Completion, Oral Committee and Oral Defense**
As you near completion of your thesis, you will need to establish your oral thesis committee. In addition to your thesis advisor and the Honors Director, you will need to have at least one additional reader from the Honors Council on your oral committee. Contact the Honors Director for names of appropriate Council members.
When you and your advisor are satisfied that your thesis is completed, you are ready for your oral defense. You will need to make a copy of your thesis for each member of your committee. The copies should be in the hands of your oral committee at least three weeks before you plan to have your oral defense. You will need to establish a time common to all members of the committee for your oral defense. You may invite additional faculty or students to your oral defense. The Honors office is typically used as the site for the defense but the nature of the thesis may require another site such as a lab or a classroom.

The "oral defense" is an opportunity for you to present and comment on your thesis. The faculty will have the opportunity to ask questions. Each committee member will have read your thesis so a detailed presentation is not required, but an overview of your results is appreciated. The thesis defense should not be an obstacle. The thesis is reviewed by the thesis advisor as well as the faculty on the committee prior to the defense. Serious concerns about the thesis should be raised in the three weeks prior to the defense. Any concerns about the thesis should be brought to the attention of the scholar, the thesis advisor and the Director. The thesis defense allows you and faculty who have read your work, are interested in your topic and want to hear what you have to say about it, the opportunity to interact and discuss ideas. It is required that the Honors Council readers approve the thesis.

**Presentation at Student Academic and Creative Achievement Conference**

Each Honors Scholar is encouraged to present his/her thesis topic at the annual spring semester Student Academic and Creative Achievement Conference. The conference is typically held on a Wednesday in April. This on-campus conference affords Honors Scholars a valuable experience in presenting their thesis results in either a presentation or poster format. The thesis does not have to be completed prior to the conference. This is an excellent opportunity for each scholar to communicate knowledge and information to the university community.

**Thesis Grade**

It is anticipated that the thesis will take more than one semester to complete. The appropriate grade of a thesis that has not been completed is "IP" (in progress). In progress grades can be carried as long as you are registered for classes and for one year beyond the term of last registration. If the thesis is not complete by that time, the "IP" grade will change to an "F."

The decision as to an appropriate final letter grade is left to the thesis advisor, who is the instructor of record. Grading of the thesis should be based on the appropriate rubric (found at the end of this document). The grade is submitted after the successful completion of the oral defense and with the approval of the thesis committee.

**Thesis Copy to the Honors Office**

A good, final copy of your thesis is required for the Honors Program files. The copy is due in the office upon completion of the oral defense.

**Congratulations**

You have met the challenge and have completed your Honors thesis. Bask in the glow of your accomplishment. You may want to present your work at a conference in your academic area, reference your work when you apply for graduate school, and/or include your thesis in your vita when you apply for a position.
Honors Thesis Checklist  
(Student Version)

1. Submit your thesis proposal to the Honors Office for approval by the Honors Council.

2. Begin work on your thesis with your advisor’s guidance as soon as you submit your proposal. If your proposal needs revision, you will be able to adjust your work accordingly.

3. Upon thesis proposal approval by the Honors Council, complete an Arranged Course form for HOPR 4899 Honors Thesis (2 credits).

4. Return the Arranged Course form to the Honors Office.

5. Develop your thesis with the guidance of your advisor.

6. After as many re-writes and revisions as your advisor deems necessary, you and your advisor are satisfied with the quality of your thesis.

7. Choose at least one additional faculty member to a member of your oral committee. (Your thesis advisor and the Honors Director make up the other members) You contact the additional faculty and you are responsible to determine a time that is agreeable to all members of the committee. Plan 1½-2 hours for the oral.

8. Make copies and distribute a copy of your thesis to each member of your oral committee (3 weeks before the scheduled date of your defense).

9. We will use the Honors Office (Hagg-Sauer 357) for your oral, unless you choose another venue.

10. You are asked to give a presentation at the start of the oral. The committee has read the thesis so you may want to address the questions of how you came to the thesis topic, where you might have had difficulties, what surprised you and/or what extensions you could make.

11. The committee will then deal with questions, comments and conversation specific to your thesis.

12. Submit a good final copy of your thesis to the Honors Office.

13. Your grade is submitted to the Records Office.

14. Accept congratulations and acknowledge your accomplishments at the completion of your thesis.
Timeline for Thesis and Presentation

**Junior Year**
- Register for HOPR 3899 Pre-Thesis Seminar (1 cr)
- Discuss your potential thesis with a thesis advisor and obtain agreement from the advisor to work with you through the completion of the thesis.

**Senior Year**
- Register for HOPR 4899 Honors Thesis (2 cr)
- Complete the thesis to the satisfaction of your thesis advisor and yourself. This may take multiple re-writes.
- Schedule and present an Honors Thesis oral defense

**Expectations for Honors Thesis Advisors**

1. Advisors are expected to assist the student in the choice of a suitable topic and determining the type of thesis. The student should have topic ideas to discuss and should be encouraged to do preliminary investigation of viable topics. The Advisor should begin working with the student during the semester the student takes the Pre-thesis seminar.

2. Advisors are expected to assist each student in the development of the thesis and in the use of techniques customarily employed in their academic field of investigation.

3. Advisors are expected to carefully read drafts submitted to them and to provide appropriate feedback to the student for the purpose of improving upon the result.

4. Advisors are expected to make recommendations to the student regarding the readiness of the thesis for presentation to the Honors committee. A student should not schedule an oral defense until the advisor and the student agree that the thesis is complete and ready to be presented. The Honors committee has final authority for approval of the thesis. Approval and Grade for the thesis will be based on the Thesis Grading Rubric appropriate to the type of thesis.
HONORS THESIS PROPOSAL FORM

Date Submitted: 

Notify by: ________________ Actual Date Notified: 

Honors Scholar: 

E-mail address: 

Thesis Title: 

Thesis Advisor: 

Thesis Proposal: (Attach additional paper as needed)

Thesis Advisor: Please write a brief statement indicating your support of this thesis proposal or any concerns you may have about it.

Thesis Advisor Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
Please visit BSU’s Records Webpage for current form at: