

Guidelines for Preparation of the Senior Honors Thesis

- The Senior Honors Thesis is an original work of scholarship based on substantial research and critical analysis, approximately 30-35 pages in length (this length applies to the main body, and does not include figures, tables, title page, etc.). The thesis is a year-long project and students must have the approval of the department honors advisor to embark on the project. No thesis may exceed 50 pages unless the permission of the advisor is obtained in advance.
- The thesis must be printed in black-letter type upon plain white paper. Use only one side of the paper.
- The text must be double-spaced, with paragraphs clearly indented and with reasonable margins. Although there are no set requirements, 1.5” margins on the left (to allow for binding) and 1” on the right, top, and bottom should be adequate.
- Figures and tables generally follow the main body of the thesis, but interspersing them with the text is acceptable. (See below for additional details on the format of figures and tables.)
- Pages must be numbered (except for the figure and table pages, if they appear at the end of the thesis).
- The thesis components usually appear in the following order: title page, affirmation of independent work, table of contents, preface, and/or acknowledgements, main body of thesis (often organized into chapters), bibliography, list of tables, tables, list of figures, figures, and appendices. Some of these components are optional; the required components are: title page, affirmation of independent work, table of contents, main body of thesis, and bibliography.
 - *Title Page.* This should contain the title, the author's name, and the following statement: “A Senior Honors Thesis Submitted to the Department of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Madison, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Honors in the Major.” Below should appear “Madison, Wisconsin” and, under that, the date. (See the sample at the end of these guidelines.)
 - *Affirmation of Independent Work.* On a separate page following the title page you should state: “This thesis represents my own work in accordance with University regulations” and sign your name. Below that a paragraph should read: “I authorize the University of Wisconsin to reproduce this thesis by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.” Again, sign your name.
 - *Table of Contents.* List the title and page number of each chapter and subdivision, as well as the page numbers for the tables, list of figures, figures, and appendices (if any).
 - *Preface and acknowledgments.* If you wish you may next add a page to acknowledge any special help you have received (e.g. access to the archives of a museum, access to laboratory facilities or training, help with proofreading, etc.).
- Be sure to read and correct your thesis carefully before submitting it to the department.

- THREE BOUND COPIES AND ONE ELECTRONIC COPY of the thesis must be submitted by the due date set by your mentor.
 - One bound copy will be kept by the department and stored in the Geography Library. One copy will be kept by your mentor. The third copy will be returned to you after a final grade has been submitted. Note that the binding requirements for undergraduate honors theses are not as rigorous as for graduate theses; e.g. velo binding with a clear plastic cover is sufficient.
 - The electronic copy must be given to the Geography Library. This will be archived in MINDS@UW, a digital archive managed by the UW Digital Collections Center. Ideally, the electronic copy consists of a single PDF file, but talk to the Geography Librarians about other acceptable electronic formats. MINDS is intended to be an open-access archive, meaning that your thesis may be accessed and downloaded from the internet. You can set more restrictive access rules if desired, but in keeping with the academic principle of information sharing, we recommend granting full access permissions to MINDS and its users.
 - As you begin planning your thesis, you may find it helpful to glance at past theses stored in the Geography Library. Keep in mind, however, that the guidelines you are reading are new; past thesis writers did not have them.

RESEARCH AND WRITING

For assistance with writing, visit the Writing Center at 6171 Helen C. White Hall (or online at <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/index.html>). In addition to offering short, non-credit classes throughout the semester (some exclusively on the topic of the senior thesis), individual instructors are available to help you refine your writing skills one-on-one.

THE HONORS ADVISOR

The role of the honors advisor is twofold: he/she provides guidance at the early planning stages and helps you ensure that all requirements are met. If you're interested in pursuing Honors in Geography, you should contact the honors advisor early in your junior year; the honors advisor can then help you plan your coursework and identify possible faculty mentors.

THE HONORS MENTOR

Your thesis mentor is not necessarily your academic advisor. Typically your thesis mentor is a specialist in your chosen area of concentration. You should aim to begin formulating a research topic in the fall of your junior year and made arrangements with a faculty mentor by the middle of your junior year. In consultation with your mentor and during the course of Geography 766 (usually taken in the spring of your junior year), you will develop a plan of research and schedule for the submission of a prospectus, outline, and thesis drafts. Your mentor's primary responsibility is to help you frame your project, define the scope of your study, plan your research, and develop your argument. The mentor will be the final reader and evaluator of your work. However, keep in mind that the thesis is primarily an independent and original research project.

You are expected to follow the guidelines, edit and revise your own work, and, when necessary, seek assistance from other sources such as the Writing Center. You are expected to make substantial progress on your research and writing in the fall semester. Also, you are expected to submit work in both the fall and spring semesters and meet regularly with your faculty mentor, that is, at least 3-4 times during each semester of the thesis.

GENERAL NOTES ON STYLE

Preferred style varies a bit among Geography disciplines, so consult with your mentor to learn the standards appropriate for your subject area. Unless your mentor states otherwise, quotations, footnotes, in-text citations, and bibliographies must follow the format of the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

QUOTATIONS

Use quotations sparingly, keep them brief, and work them as much as possible into the flow of your own narrative. It is good practice to avoid long indented quotations.

FOOTNOTES AND IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Footnotes and in-text citations are used to indicate the sources of: 1) all quotations; 2) all facts not generally known to geographers; and 3) all opinions or interpretations that are not your own, whether quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. Whether to use footnotes or in-text citations varies by discipline; footnotes tend to be more commonly used in the humanities and in-text citations in the physical sciences. Consult your mentor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Normally a bibliography lists all the sources that you actually used in preparing the thesis. Some primary materials (e.g. maps, on-line resources) will present problems of citation best solved by consulting your mentor.

FIGURES

If your figures are interspersed with the text, a list of them (with full identifying information) should appear immediately following the table of contents page. If they are placed on a separate set of pages after the main body of the thesis, the figure list should immediately precede the first page of figures. Figures must be numbered, but they need not have detailed captions; it is sufficient to label them "Figure 1," "Figure 2," and so on. However, the list that precedes them should include full information about each figure, including the figure source if it is not your original work. A reader should be able to understand your figure by referring only to the figure and its description in the figure list.

TABLES

The rules for tables are the same as the rules for figures. However, table captions tend to be much shorter. If a table's data are from another's work, the source of the data must be cited in the caption.

ORAL PRESENTATION OF THE THESIS

At the end of the semester in which you complete your thesis, you must make an oral presentation of your work. Common venues include the spring Geography Student Symposium or the weekly lunchtime meetings held by various subdisciplinary groups in the department (e.g. HERD, PGIG, THUGS). The date and venue of your presentation is jointly determined by you and your mentor. The length of your presentation may vary between 15 to 30 minutes. This is a formal presentation. Thus, plan to either read from a prepared text or speak from a clear outline, and have well-designed slides to accompany your presentation. Practice your talk ahead of time and time it to make sure you can stay within your allotted time. Your presentation should include (although not necessarily in this order): your primary research question or problem, the motive or import of your study, your methodology or how you went about answering your question or developing a response to the problem, a summary of the main points of your argument and interpretation of evidence, and, if appropriate, the steps you would take next with your project given further time, access to other research materials, etc. You should be prepared to answer questions.

ENROLLMENT AND GRADING POLICIES

You will require instructor consent to enroll in both course components of the thesis, 681 and 682. Consent for 682 is NOT automatic. Permission should be requested in a timely fashion, and may be given either through a paper consent form, or an e-mail from your thesis mentor to the undergraduate administrator.

681, the first part of the course, is graded on a Progress/Unsatisfactory basis. A grade of "P" indicates that you have met with your advisor a sufficient number of times during the semester, and s/he is satisfied with the quality and progress of your work. A grade of "U" indicates that communication between you and your advisor

has been very poor and no (if any) progress has been demonstrated; you should meet with your advisor immediately. If the grade cannot be improved, you may not be allowed to continue on to 682.

682, the second part of the course, is graded on the standard A-F system. After a final grade for 682 has been posted, whatever grade you received for 681 will be automatically converted to that letter grade. Please note that this is a separate process, and may occur several days after the current semester's grades are posted. The oral presentation to the department will be factored into the final grade.

SENIOR HONORS THESIS RESEARCH SUPPORT

One of the many reasons to begin developing your thesis topic in your junior year is the possibility of receiving financial support for your research. Five different grants providing support for Senior Honors Thesis research are offered by the L&S Honors Program each year. Thesis grants range from the Trewartha Undergraduate Honors Research Grant, which provides modest funds (ca. \$700) to cover costs of supplies and other expenses to the Mark Mensink Honors Research Grant, the most prestigious Senior Honors Thesis Research Grant awarded by L&S, which offers two semesters in-state tuition to the student recipient and one semester's tuition to the student's thesis mentor. year, these awards provide funding for Senior Honors Thesis research to over 35 Honors Students. These grants are competitive and provide award winners with the opportunity to undertake more demanding and extensive senior thesis research projects during the academic year or summer than might otherwise be possible. For more information, eligibility requirements, selection criteria, and application procedures consult the website for the L&S Honors program at <http://www.honors.ls.wisc.edu/SiteContent.aspx?prev=1&id=46>. Deadlines are usually in October (February/March for summer grants) but vary yearly, so contact the L&S Honors program for current deadlines. Another possibility is to apply for a Hilldale or Holstrom undergraduate research award. These are administered via a campus wide competition. <http://www.provost.wisc.edu/uaa/awards/hilldale.html>. Consult your mentor and honors advisor for other funding possibilities.

[Sample Title Page]

Title
[centered, approximately 3 inches from page top]

Author's name
[centered, about 3 inches from the title]

A Senior Honors Thesis Submitted to the Department of Geography,
University of Wisconsin-Madison, in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Honors in the Major

Madison, Wisconsin

Date