

Policies and Guidelines for Completing an Honors Thesis at UF with Dr. Alarian

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The purpose of this document is to provide potential advisees with my expectations and policies for advising a senior Honor's thesis at UF. Where applicable, I will outline the process of completing your Honor's Thesis at UF. In addition, I recommend students review the [departmental website](#) to ensure you meet requirements – including registering for the appropriate classes – to graduate with Undergraduate Honors.

What is an Honor's Thesis?

For students seeking to graduate with high and highest honors must complete an Honor's Thesis. To complete an Honor's thesis, students will create, conduct, analyze, and then present an original research project of their own design. **An Honor's thesis is not an undergraduate course paper.** Course papers focus on particular literature, outlining different theories, or demonstrating your ability to implement a particular approach. In other words, a course paper generally has the goal of summarizing extent knowledge in the field.

In contrast, an Honor's thesis focuses on generating new knowledge. The thesis will ask a unique research question, generating the answer beyond a literature review by conducting a study of one's design. These designs may often require IRB approval, grant funding, the use of existing survey or observational data, linguistic skills, or archival access. All projects will require unique analysis – be that qualitative, quantitative, mixed, interpretive, etc. methodologies. Advisees should come to the project ready with the skills and resources to pursue this project as designed. Consequently, the Honor's thesis is far more substantial an undertaking, requiring at least a year-long focus. In the Political Science department, we evaluate Honors theses on the following categories:

1. The student's mastery of the relevant academic literature;
2. Originality of the student's research;
3. The contribution of the student's research to the field of political science.

Keep in mind that it is possible that students may complete the course work and a thesis and not obtain high or highest honors.

Who should write an Honor's thesis?

All Political Science majors who graduate with a 3.5 or better upper-division grade point average will graduate with "Honors" without writing an Honor's Thesis. If this is your goal, congratulations! You do not need to write an Honor's Thesis. Instead, only those wishing to graduate with High or Highest honors should consider writing an Honor's Thesis.

This thesis, as described above, is a substantial yet worthwhile undertaking for certain students. Those considering graduate school (i.e., M.A. or PhD programs) will certainly benefit from the completion of an Honor's thesis. Pragmatically, an Honor's thesis can demonstrate to admissions

committees your unique research interests and skills. You also can use your Honors thesis as your writing sample and to help you begin considering what questions, methods, and cases inspire you most. The thesis may also give you a sense of what graduate school work may be like before entering a program. Moreover, as one of my advisees, you will have opportunities to build your CV/resume with activities such as:

- 1) Present your work to undergraduate and graduate audiences;
- 2) Apply (and hopefully receive!) funding for your project;
- 3) Present your research at professional, political science conferences;
- 4) Learn about on-going research from other scholars in the field directly

You know your own career goals best and so I suggest deeply considering how your goals will or will not be benefitted from the completion of an Honor's thesis.

Who are your advisees?

My research interests are in political behavior, citizenship, immigration, and European politics. As an Honor's advisor, I work with students who have a substantial research question or interest that aligns with at least one of these broad topics. Students I advise should also have taken at least one course with me. This will give you an understanding of my expectations, advising style, approach to political science, as well as providing me with a sense of your interests and work.

Methodologically, I am best suited to advise quantitative theses, including but not limited to survey, experimental, or administrative data. Please note, I will expect that you have taken the requisite courses to obtain at minimum a basic understanding to implement your method of choice. It is too much to learn the foundations of your research method and quantitative methods while also doing the substantive research work. I want you to succeed in your endeavors as my advisee and for that reason, I require students to have completed at minimum one statistical or quantitative methods course with an A- or better.

What are your expectations for advisees?

I expect a lot out of my undergraduate advisees and I am thrilled to see you rise to the task. In return, I will strive to ensure you meet your individual career goals and are poised to succeed in the completion of your Honors thesis.

To do so, I will meet with you on a regular basis to provide feedback on the progress of your work. I expect you to make significant progress between each meeting, thoroughly incorporating and expanding on feedback provided. I also require my advisees to be members of my [Political Behavior lab](#), attending meetings and presenting at least once throughout the course of the year. Advisees will also complete quarterly Progress Reports, to ensure we are on track to meet our goals and deadlines.

Overall, I expect you to respond to and incorporate feedback in your work, maintain regular communication with me, and be motivated to take academic ownership of your work. The Honor's thesis is, as stated above, a difficult but very rewarding endeavor!

Finally, both advisee and advisor reserve the right to terminate the Honor's advising relationship at any point, should the expectations for either individual not be met.

What is your timeline for advising my thesis?

There are multiple timelines, depending on how early and which semester you plan on graduating. Regardless of when you will graduate, I suggest you speak to me about your proposed project before May, at least one year before your planned graduation. This means if you aim to graduate in Fall, you should speak to me at least three semesters prior. Regardless, please note I expect you to conduct research and attend meetings over the summer. The projects I advise involve a lot of time-consuming hurdles (e.g., IRB approval, translation, survey design, grant submission) and one academic year is not enough to finish a high-level project.

Below is an example two-semester timeline to assist you in the outline of your thesis. Generally speaking, those graduating in fall must submit final copies of their honor's thesis to both your faculty advisor and honors coordinator the first week of December. For those graduating in Spring, your Honor's thesis is due the first week of April. Please keep in mind, however, that each thesis is different and therefore some of your tasks may take more or less time than suggested below. Those intending to conduct international work, for example, likely cannot complete their intended design in less than three semesters. Again, please plan accordingly.

- April – apply for Honor's advising, including proposal of project
- Summer: Develop and revise proposal. Complete mandatory trainings and hone statistical skills as necessary. Begin searching and applying for funding. Complete Progress Report 1.
- August – September: Write abstract, draft introduction. Apply for necessary funding. Apply to undergraduate and professional conferences.
- September - October: Present research design in lab. Complete research design – submitting to IRB for approval if necessary. Complete Progress Report 2.
- November – December: Complete introduction, theory, and research design section of thesis. Complete and submit Pre-Analysis Plan and Progress Report 3.
- January: Implement study. Conduct analysis aligned with Pre-Analysis Plan. Complete Progress Report 4.
- February: Produce tables, figures, etc. Submit first full draft to advisor.
- March: Revise, revise, revise!
- April: Submit Honor's thesis for consideration of High or Highest honors.