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Last Modified 9/22/20
This document is a guide for students undertaking an Honors thesis.

**When to take the Honors Thesis Classes (HON 391, HON 498 and HON 499)**

Here are five common examples of thesis class schedules for May graduates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>3rd Year</th>
<th>4th Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Common</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan 1</td>
<td><em>HON 391</em></td>
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<td>Plan 2</td>
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<td><em>HON 391</em></td>
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<td>Plan 3</td>
<td><em>HON 391</em></td>
<td><em>HON 498</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Plan 4</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>HON 391</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative Plan</td>
<td>Plan 5</td>
<td><em>HON 391</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your academic plan would conflict with these sample timelines, or you intend on graduating in August or December, see the Honors staff to create a plan that will fit your schedule.

**Thesis Classes Meeting Times:**

HON 391 - Once a week for 1 hours with the Honors Dean and Honors Associates
HON 498 - NO REGULAR CLASS MEETINGS. YOU arrange to meet with your thesis advisor.
HON 499 - NO REGULAR CLASS MEETINGS. YOU arrange to meet with your thesis advisor.

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**Thesis Forms**

All thesis forms can be submitted online via Google Forms, available on our website here: [https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#forms](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#forms).

Please note that some forms must be submitted by the thesis advisor, while others must be submitted by the student.

Thesis Form 1 - Due week 13 of the semester *prior* to taking HON 498
  - Thesis proposal submission: Identifies thesis advisor and describes project

Thesis Form 2 - Due in week 8 of the HON 498 semester.
  - Committee meeting: review of detailed thesis proposal; approval of thesis project by committee

Thesis Form 3 - Due in week 4 of the HON 499 semester
  - Reading List submitted to Honors Associates
Thesis Form 4 - Due in week 8 of the HON 499 Semester.
Defense date scheduling
Thesis Form 5 - Due the day of your defense.
Level of honors
Thesis Form 6 - Due by May 31st for May grads, Aug. 31st for August grads, and Jan. 7th for December grads. This form is required for certification for graduation from the Honors College. Final acceptance of the thesis accompanied by a properly formatted copy in Word and a pdf version.

HON 391
HON 391 is a 1-credit introduction to the Honors thesis process, taught by the Dean and Honors Associates. It gives you a full semester to understand the thesis process and to develop a thesis topic. At the end of HON 391 students submit a thesis prospectus which is the basis for thesis form 1 (which includes both a thesis description and a confirmed thesis advisor) as the final assignment. This course is graded Pass/Low Pass/Fail.

Finding a Thesis Advisor
Finding an advisor is one of the most important steps in the thesis process. For students working on a project in a lab, it is common to ask the professor in charge to be your advisor. Students with an independently-developed thesis idea should research UMaine department faculty and their respective academic interests/specialties to identify potential advisors. Start by exploring your college/department websites:
https://umaine.edu/colleges/

Please note that some departments require the student to have an advisor from that department. Check with your academic advisor or your college’s associate dean if this is true of your department before seeking out potential thesis advisors.

Having trouble locating contact info for a specific faculty member? Use the faculty directory search to find office locations, email, and office phone numbers:
https://peoplesearch.maine.edu/

If you would like to work with an advisor that is not a UMaine faculty member, please see the Honors Dean for approval.

**Asking Someone to be my Advisor:** The sample email in Appendix A may give you some ideas on how to approach a possible thesis advisor, especially if you have not met before, or have not had a class with this person recently. Whether or not you use the sample email, be sure to provide the following link on Honors advisor resources. The documents will provide more
detailed information about the commitment of becoming a thesis advisor:  
https://honors.umaine.edu/faculty-resources/

The email does not explicitly ask the faculty member to be the advisor, as it would be most effective for both parties to discuss the project first. Finding a match for your interests AND your work style are critical in successfully completing the Honors thesis, so meeting with a potential advisor (via Zoom) allows for you to ask more questions and determine if they are willing and/or able to take on the project.

If the potential advisor takes you on as an advisee, work together to create a more detailed thesis proposal. You will then submit this description as part of your submission of thesis form 1 online. Then, your advisor will email honors@maine.edu to approve it and confirm their position as your thesis advisor. If your thesis is replacing your major capstone, you will also have your home program’s chair, director, or Associate Dean email honors@maine.edu to approve and confirm that the thesis project will satisfy the capstone requirement. Lastly, the Honors Dean will review form 1 and approve the project if everything is in order.

**IRB (Institutional Review Board) Application:** If your thesis involves human or animal subjects research (surveys, interviews, testing, etc.), you must complete the IRB application BEFORE any research, surveys, interviews, tests, etc. take place. Work with your advisor to complete an IRB application and the required trainings before or very early in the HON 498 semester. Review of applications can take up to a month, so it is critical to complete this step as early as possible. Information and faculty contacts for the IRB can be found online at https://umaine.edu/research-compliance/human-subjects/, and if you have any questions, please see the Honors Dean.

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**HON 498**

When registering for HON 498 in MaineStreet, there will be roughly 100 different sections. Select the next available open section, as each thesis student is in their own section. Once you have submitted thesis form 1, which is due at the end of the semester before you enroll in HON 498, your advisor will be assigned to your section as the instructor for purposes of grading. As there are no regular meeting times for this “independent study,” arranging to meet with your thesis advisor weekly is your responsibility.

**Goals for HON 498:** This is typically considered the “research” semester of the thesis process. Use this semester to review background literature, conduct experiments, gather data, or to begin the creative process. Writing can also begin now. Review the thesis rubrics from the Honors College with your advisor. Thesis Rubrics can be found here: https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#rubrics
**Goals for the Honors Reading List:** Create a list of possible texts to review with the Honors member of your committee. Draft the reading list for review and editing.

**Obligations for HON 498:**
- Submitted thesis form 1 by week 13 of the semester prior to taking HON 498
- Form a thesis committee
- Hold a committee meeting and submit thesis form 2 by the 8th week of the semester (see deadlines for each form in thesis calendar, available at [https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#calendar](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#calendar))

**Grading for HON 498:** Your thesis advisor grades HON 498 based on your progress in the course. Guidelines for grading are shared with advisors and available on the HC website. Read more about Thesis Course Grading here: [https://honors.umaine.edu/resource/thesis-course-grading-guidelines/](https://honors.umaine.edu/resource/thesis-course-grading-guidelines/)

**Forming a Thesis Committee:** Begin by discussing with your thesis advisor faculty who may be helpful in serving on the committee. DO NOT ask potential members to serve without consulting your advisor. The sample email in Appendix A may give you some ideas on how to approach a possible committee member.

Your thesis committee is composed of **5 faculty members**: your advisor (or co-advisors), who chair(s) the committee, and four (three, if using co-advisors) additional members, including one member outside of your discipline and one member in Honors). For a list of current or recent Honors faculty, see: [honors.umaine.edu/home/people/honors-preceptors/](https://honors.umaine.edu/home/people/honors-preceptors/). Individuals may fill more than one of these roles (the Honors representative is often outside the thesis field, and therefore can act as Honors representative AND outside representative).

These members suggest research sources, provide guidance, may help with specific research or analytical tasks, offer different perspectives, or serve as additional readers for your thesis. Clarify roles and expectations of your committee members at your first committee meeting. The committee determines the level of honors you will receive at the defense.

**Holding a Committee Meeting:** A committee meeting is **required by week 8** in your HON 498 semester. Allot one hour for this meeting and keep in mind the following objectives:

- Bring committee members up to speed on project goals and developments by giving a short presentation on **your thesis proposal** (see Honors Thesis Proposal for Committee Meeting guidelines – pg. 15)
- **BE PREPARED!** This is your committee’s first impression of your project and you as a thesis scholar.
- Collect feedback on your project from the committee as a whole and debrief with your advisor.
• Set expectations for yourself and your committee members. Some committee members bring specific skills to the project and you will want to discuss how best to work with them, while other members will only want to read the finished product before the defense.
• Discuss a timeline for the project, including anticipated date of defense.
• Confirm that all committee members agree to serving on the committee, and have the thesis advisor submit Thesis Form 2. Please note: the thesis advisor’s submission of Form 2 informs the Honors College of the thesis committee’s collective decision, and obviates the need to gather individual committee member signatures.

You are responsible for arranging the committee meeting and the meeting space (in person or virtual).

Given the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, we encourage all students to hold remote committee meetings until further notice in order to ensure the safety of all students, thesis advisors, and committee members.

Arranging a time for five committee members to meet can be a challenge. We recommend using an online meeting scheduler such as Doodle to determine everyone’s availability. All 5 members need to be present at this meeting. If you have trouble finding a time, let us know and we can help.

In Appendix B, you will find a sample agenda for a committee meeting.

Your committee members will give feedback on your project, but it is up to you and your advisor to use those considerations in adapting the thesis. While the Honors thesis only requires one committee meeting, a second meeting in the HON 499 semester is recommended to discuss your progress. Semi-regular emails to the committee with information about the project progress can also be useful. However, commitments of the committee will vary greatly with each project, so it is important for the student to work this out with the committee.

HON 499
Thesis Form 2 should be submitted prior to enrolling in HON 499. You must also have a C or better in HON 498. When registering for HON 499 in MaineStreet, there will be roughly 100 different sections. Select the next available open section, as each thesis student enrolls in an individual section. As there are no regular meeting times for this “independent study,” arranging to meet with your thesis advisor weekly is your responsibility.

Goals for the Honors Thesis: This is typically considered the “writing” semester of the thesis process. Use this semester to finalize data analysis, write the thesis, and defend. You should
expect to turn in **multiple** thesis drafts and revise them based on your advisor’s comments. It is helpful to save each draft iteration as a separate document (Example: Last Name, First Name, thesis DRAFT #1).

For those pursuing a creative thesis: all creative theses include a written piece accompanying the creative work, known as the *disquisition*. The disquisition contextualizes one’s creative work, discusses related research, and describes its scholarly content. Further details may be found here: [https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#disquisition](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#disquisition)

**Formatting the Thesis:** Thesis documents are typically done in Microsoft Word. ALL UMAINE STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO DOWNLOAD MICROSOFT OFFICE FOR FREE at [https://umaine.edu/it/software/office/](https://umaine.edu/it/software/office/)

**Manuscripts that do not fully comply with the guidelines will NOT be accepted.**

Although many students will write in Google Docs, there are required formatting elements that ARE NOT supported in Google Docs, and we cannot accept a Google Doc as a final version. Use this opportunity to learn Microsoft Word if you are unfamiliar with the application, and please follow the **formatting table in Appendix C**. Videos outlining formatting and a full formatting guide is available on our website - see Appendix C for links.

Work with your advisor to make sure all of your sources are properly cited. Remember figures/graphs/tables/photos need their own citations/captions. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense: if sources are not present or improperly cited, disciplinary action may ensue.

**Goals for the Honors Reading List:** Working with your advisor and/or the Honors member of your thesis committee, write the annotated or narrative version of the reading list. You will also write multiple drafts for revision. Thesis Form 3 (Reading List) must be submitted by the fourth week of the HON499 semester for approval by the Honors Dean. Advisors will submit the online Thesis Form 3, and students will submit their final Reading List document to the Honors College via email.

**Obligations for HON 499:** You must submit thesis forms 3, 4, 5, and 6 in the HON 499 semester (see deadlines in thesis calendar for each form, here [https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#calendar](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#calendar)). This includes turning in a final draft of your reading list (form 3), scheduling your thesis defense date, time, and format (whether it's happening remotely via Zoom, or the room you booked) (form 4), participating in the defense (form 5), and the final, correctly formatted submission of the post-defense edited thesis (form 6). The most significant obligation for HON 499 is to complete and successfully defend your thesis.

**Grading for HON 499:** Your thesis advisor grades HON 499 based on your progress in the course. You can be given an A through F for your work in HON 499. There is also an optional
“TH” grade that can be assigned which means that your advisor will retroactively give you a grade in HON 499 once the thesis process is complete, used in scenarios in which students extend their thesis work beyond the HON499 semester. However, **YOU CANNOT GRADUATE WITH A “TH” OR A BLANK GRADE ON YOUR TRANSCRIPT**; therefore, your advisor will need to submit a grade for HON 499 before you are certified to graduate. Read more about Thesis Course Grading here:  

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**Thesis Defense**

For this part of the process, your most important task is to work with your advisor and provide a final, thoroughly edited version of your thesis (along with your reading list) to each member of your committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense. Please note that this final version of your thesis must include all required sections including the title page, author’s biography, etc. Review the formatting guidelines for more information (Appendix C).

Do not share a copy of your **final** document with your committee without prior knowledge/approval of your thesis advisor. **If your thesis is submitted without proper editing or less than two weeks prior to the scheduled defense, you will need to reschedule your defense.**

The Honors College recommends that you defend your thesis and reading list in the month prior to your graduation if not earlier. Defending several weeks before graduation typically means that committee members have more time in their schedules, and if you need to push the defense date back in the case of a scheduling conflict or an emergency, there will still be time before the end of the semester. We also recommend that you determine your defense date as early as possible.

**Scheduling the Defense Date:** Your advisor must submit form 4--which confirms the date of your defense--to the online google form no later than week 8 of the 499 semester. It is recommended that you determine the defense date at your committee meeting, or as soon as possible thereafter, using tools like [Doodle](https://doodle.com). Send out a reminder of the time and place to your committee a couple of days before your thesis defense.

**Location of the Defense:** **You are responsible for arranging your defense.** Given the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, we encourage all students to hold remote Honors thesis defenses until further notice in order to ensure the safety of all students, thesis advisors, and committee members.

The Honors Associates may also be available to assist you if you have reasonable technology requests such as: dongles, chargers, spare laptops. But resources are limited, and you’ll want to email the Associates well in advance of your defense.
Defending the Thesis and Reading List: Thesis defenses last 2.5 hours, and must follow the three-part defense structure. Refer to the sample thesis Defense Agenda in Appendix B. The first hour is devoted to your thesis work. Usually you will be asked to present a summary of your thesis for about 20 to 30 minutes, after which the committee will engage you in a question and answer session. During this discussion, as well as after the defense, suggestions for revisions may be made. The specific format of this first hour is something you should talk over with your advisor.

A short break is optional between defense of the thesis and defense of the reading list. In the second hour, you will defend your reading list, where you discuss how these texts were significant in your intellectual development and undergraduate education. Since members of your committee may not be familiar with some of the texts included, you should be able to convey a sense of the importance of these works. Be prepared for this discussion to go far afield of the actual texts; your committee members will want to know how you make connections and how you push the envelope of your education. Bear in mind that all reading list defenses are different. It’s important for you to engage in this discussion of your reading list in a way that demonstrates a deep engagement with the texts.

The last half hour is for the committee to determine a level of honors based on your written thesis, reading list and oral defense. You will be asked to leave the room (or the Zoom call) while the discussion happens, and typically your advisor will invite you back to be notified of the committee’s decision, and any edits that need to be made before final submission.

Following the defense, the thesis advisor will submit the online Thesis Form 5. Please note: the thesis advisor’s submission of Form 5 informs the Honors College of the thesis committee’s collective decision on the level of Honors and obviates the need to gather individual committee member signatures.

Evaluation of the Thesis, Reading List and Defense
To receive any level of honors for the thesis, the committee should agree that the thesis, which is the major body of work here, deserves at least honors. The committee can award the following levels of honors based on the quality of your thesis:

- No Honors
- Honors
- High Honors
- Highest Honors

Further definitions of criteria for level of honors can be found in the rubrics on our website here: https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#rubrics
In addition to the written thesis, your presentation of the thesis/project, your discussion with the committee of the thesis/project, your reading list, and your discussion with the committee of the reading list will all play a part in the committee’s determination of the level of honors.

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**Submitting the Final Thesis**

It is the **requirement** of the Honors College that your final thesis is submitted as both a Word document AND a pdf. Additionally, please note that the editing of your final thesis submission is up to you. **The Honors Associates do not edit theses directly, help with writing issues, or fix formatting.**

In scenarios where the submitted thesis must be created in different software to edit (LaTeX or others), the Honors College staff will **not be able to do any editing**. If the submitted thesis contains formatting errors, those errors will be identified and it will be sent back to you for corrections. Only after corrections are made will Thesis Form #6 be approved, and certification for graduation initiated. **Please utilize the formatting resources linked in Appendix C before emailing your documents to the Associates.**

**Graduating with Honors**: All thesis forms and the digital thesis (properly formatted) must be submitted by May 31st for May grads, by Aug. 31st for August grads, and by January 7th for December grads. These documents are required before the Honors College will certify you as an Honors College graduate (even if you have successfully defended your thesis)! It is your responsibility to be sure all of the documents are submitted by the deadline.

**Thesis Dissemination**: Theses will be uploaded to the Digital Commons for global digital access at [https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/honors/](https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/honors/), as long as the formatting adheres to standards found in Appendix C and at [https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#guide](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#guide).

Any thesis that does not conform to this format will not be uploaded to the Digital Commons.
Appendix A - Template Emails

Email to Potential Advisor

Hello Professor ________.

My name is _________, and I am currently a third year ______ major in the Honors College. I am looking to undertake the Honors thesis and would like to discuss my thesis idea with you at your earliest convenience. I am interested in ____ (thesis topic description)____, and feel that your specialty/research in ______ would help in refining my topic/research question. I am available (days and times) to meet. Attached, you will find a more detailed description of my thesis idea for your review.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you, _________

https://honors.umaine.edu/faculty-resources/

Email to Potential Committee Member

Hello Professor ________.

My name is _________, and I am currently a fourth year ______ major in the Honors College. I am beginning my Honors thesis this year, and would like to discuss my thesis idea with you at your earliest convenience. I am working with my advisor, ______________ on ____ (thesis topic description), and feel that your specialty/research in _____ would help in refining my topic/research question. I am most available (days and times), and would like to meet with you if possible!

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you, _________
Appendix B - Sample Agendas

Sample Thesis Committee Meeting Agenda

Date:
Time:
Location:

AGENDA

I. Thesis & Research (15 minutes)
   A. Current state of research
   B. Review prospectus
      1. Topics
      2. Expectations
      3. Sources
   C. Comments/Questions/Suggestions

II. Discuss Defense Structure (15 minutes)
   A. thesis
      1. Presentation
      2. Discussion/questions
   B. Reading list discussion
   C. Decision on level of honors

III. Proposed Timetable (15 minutes)
   A. Copies of thesis to committee date
   B. Tentative defense date/time

IV. Other Business

Sample Thesis Defense Agenda

Date:
Time:
Location:

AGENDA

I. Honors thesis & Research (~1 Hour)
   A. Presentation (~20 min)
   B. Committee Questions (~40 min)

II. Honors Reading List (~1 Hour)
   A. Presentation/Reading List Description (~3 min)
   B. Reading List Discussion (~55 min)

III. Committee Deliberation (~30 min)
   A. Level of honors discussion
   B. Suggestions for edits/revision
### Appendix C - Formatting

#### Thesis Document Pages and Page Numbering Overview

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</tr>
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<td>Lower-Case Roman Numeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures, Tables (If Any)</td>
<td>Lower-Case Roman Numeral</td>
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Visit our website for the full Thesis Formatting Guide, videos, and the Final Thesis Formatting Checklist:
[https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#guide](https://honors.umaine.edu/current-students/academics/thesis/forms/#guide)

Please note: improperly formatted theses will not be accepted.
Guidelines for Honors Thesis Committee Meeting Student Proposal

Honors students must hold a thesis committee meeting attended by their advisor and the other four members of their committee by the 8th week of their HON 498 semester. The central feature of the meeting is the presentation and discussion of their thesis proposal. A written proposal is recommended by the College, as outlined below. A PowerPoint or other presentation manager may be used to present the ideas to the committee. The committee members shall sign Form 2 at the end of the meeting.

The written proposal should include (typical length 3-5 pages, single-spaced):

1. Summary or abstract of the thesis project (like thesis prospectus)

2. A clear statement of thesis question or claim.

3. Review of the literature on the topic that has informed the student’s thinking to date.

4. Discussion of methodology, theoretical approach, or creative approach to the thesis project.

5. Working bibliography that includes works already read, ones the student plans on reading, and avenues for gathering further background materials.

6. Working timeline for the research, writing, and defense of the thesis, including a plan for the reading list.

Suggested Guidelines:

1. The proposal should be prepared in conjunction with the advisor.

2. The proposal should be sent to the committee one week prior to the established first committee meeting date.

3. The student should prepare to present and discuss the proposal at the first meeting.

4. Advisor and committee members will ask questions and help the student refine the proposal by suggesting additional bodies of literature, potential critical or theoretical approaches, and weighing in on the scope and scale of the project. In some cases, restricting the topic may be in order if it is too ambitious. The committee will also clarify the roles of different members with respect to the project.
The Honors Thesis Checklist

Thesis Form 1 (Advisor and Proposal)*………………Due the semester BEFORE you take HON 498**
☐ You complete the online Form 1
☐ Submit with a 250-word description of your thesis topic and question
☐ Have your advisor email Honors to show they agree to be your advisor
☐ Have the Unit or College Chair/Director/Associate Dean email Honors if the thesis is to satisfy your capstone experience

Thesis Form 2 (The Committee Meeting)……………..…....Due 8 Weeks into the HON 498 Semester
☐ Attain 5 committee members total (4 members plus your advisor)
  ☐ 1 must be from Honors
  ☐ 1 must be from outside your major (the Honors member can count for this spot, too)
☐ Hold a 1-hour meeting where you discuss your thesis with your committee.
  ☐ Your advisor submits Form 2 after the meeting to show all of the committee members and confirm that the meeting took place.

Thesis Form 3 (The Reading List)…………………………Due 4 Weeks into the HON 499*** Semester
☐ 12-15 “texts”**** that have shaped your thinking throughout your undergraduate career
☐ You email your final Reading List document to the Honors Associates.
☐ Your advisor submits Form 3 online to indicate their approval of your document.

Thesis Form 4 (Scheduling your Defense)……………….Due 8 Weeks into the HON 499 Semester
☐ Find a date and space (setting up a Zoom meeting or scheduling a room) that works with your advisor and committee to defend your thesis (2.5 hours).

Sending Out the Written Thesis and Reading List…………Due Two Weeks Before the Defense
☐ Have your thesis approved by your thesis advisor before it is circulated. The thesis must include all required sections (from title page through author’s biography) when it is shared.
☐ Send your thesis and reading list to your committee at least two weeks before the defense.

Thesis Form 5 (Level of Honors) ………………………………………Due post-thesis defense
☐ Your committee collectively determines your level of honors. After you have completed your defense, your advisor must submit Form 5 online to indicate the level the committee decided upon.

Thesis Form 6 (Final Thesis)
☐ Thesis Form 6 submitted online by your advisor.
☐ You turn in an electronic copy of your final, correctly formatted thesis in a Word doc and pdf to the Honors Associates
☐ You cannot graduate from the Honors College without submitting Thesis Form 6 before the last day of your graduation month.

Notes:
*All forms may be submitted online via the Honors College website. Please note that some forms must be completed by the student, and others by their advisor.
**HON 498 is typically taken two semesters before your expected graduation.
***HON 499 is typically taken the semester of your expected graduation.
****“Text” - mostly books, but, music, paintings, movies, podcasts, and experiences can be included on your reading list. Work with your advisor to make your list, though the Honors member of your committee can also be helpful.