Timeline for Completing an Honors Thesis in the Department of Political Science

Spring Semester Junior Year

By the end of the Spring semester of the junior year, students must identify a faculty member in the Department of Political Science who is willing to serve as the chair of their Honors Thesis Committee and develop a thesis topic. The chair should be a faculty member with particular interest and expertise in the student’s chosen research area. Normally, the chair is someone the student knows (e.g., from past courses) and with whom the student has already developed a rapport.

Students who are abroad during the Spring semester of their junior year have until the second week of the following Fall semester to develop a topic and secure an Honor Thesis Committee chair. They are expected to return to the University with a well-developed topic, placing them even with their colleagues.

In consultation with their chair, students select a second faculty member to serve on their Honors Thesis Committee. This second member may be a faculty member from either inside or outside the Department of Political Science. The Honors Program coordinator appoints a third member of each student’s Honors Thesis Committee during the Spring semester of the senior year. This third member reads the thesis and is a full participant at the oral defense.

Fall Semester Senior Year

During the Fall semester of the senior year, a student working on an honors thesis enrolls in six (6) credits of PLSC 498 (Honors Independent Research Project), devoted to the design and execution of an analytic research project under the supervision of the student’s Honors Thesis Committee chair. Students are strongly encouraged to simultaneously complete a graduate seminar related to the thesis topic in an appropriate sub-field of the discipline during the Fall semester, unless they have already done so in an earlier semester.

Spring Semester Senior Year

Students who earn a grade of B+ or better in PLSC 498 may, with the approval of their Honors Thesis Committee chair, continue their honors work by enrolling in six (6) credits of PLSC 499 (Honors Thesis) during the Spring semester of the senior year. PLSC 499 is devoted to the preparation and defense of the honors thesis, an extension of the research project undertaken in PLSC 498.

Note: While PLSC 498 and PLSC 499 each count as a Political Science course toward the 10 courses in Political Science required for the major, neither counts as a seminar for the purposes of meeting the requirement that majors take at least two seminars in Political Science.

A copy of the completed honors thesis is presented in final form to each member of the Honors Thesis Committee on or before the second week in April of the senior year. The final honors thesis must be free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors and professional in appearance. Students should consult the GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A THESIS and must adhere to those guidelines regarding the format of the
Each student is responsible for arranging for an oral defense with his or her Honors Thesis Committee, to be scheduled no later than the last day of classes in the Spring semester. On the basis of the written thesis and its oral defense, students may be awarded honors, high honors, or highest honors, as determined by the judgment of the Committee.

Upon successful completion of the oral defense, students must obtain the signature of each Honors Thesis Committee member on a signature page and submit an original plus one (1) copy to the Bartle Library for binding. (See the GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING A THESIS for additional information.) After binding, the original is retained by the Library and the copy is retained by the Department of Political Science.