

Department of Near Eastern Studies

Proposal for Honors Research: Cover Sheet

Name (Last Name, First Name): _____

Email: _____

Date of expected graduation: _____

Proposed Title of Thesis: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Please complete the following tasks by **April 15** of your junior year and submit **four copies** of the documentation to Jason Sion Mokhtarian (Director of Undergraduate Studies). These copies will be distributed to your committee members and one copy will be kept for office files.

- A formal research proposal containing seven components (not to exceed ten pages):
- A description of the topic or project, including discussion of research methodology
- A description of preparatory coursework or experience
- A statement of the importance of your project within its field
- Timetable of relevant research
- Outline of project
- Working bibliography and list of materials with indication of the availability of primary and secondary sources
- Identification of notation style for the project's final version
- Attach this cover sheet to your proposal.
- Names and signatures of the thesis advisor and at least one committee member:

Thesis Advisor's Name (print or type name): _____

Committee member: (print or type name): _____

Optional Committee member: (print or type name): _____

Honors in Near Eastern Studies

Overview

Each fall, a small number of highly qualified seniors enter the Near Eastern Studies Honors Program. The Honors Program is open to NES majors who have done superior work and who wish to devote a substantial part of their senior year to advanced, specialized, independent research and writing of a thesis.

Successfully completing an honors thesis will require sustained interest, exceptional ability, diligence, and enthusiasm. Students must also take two honors courses NES 4998 in fall and NES 4999 in spring, in addition to the regular major requirements. While admission to the Honors Program and completion of a thesis do not guarantee that students will be awarded honors in Near Eastern Studies, most students find the experience as intellectually rewarding as it is rigorous.

Eligibility

In order to be considered for the Honors Program, candidates must fulfill all of the following requirements:

- Minimum grade point average of 3.5 in the Near Eastern Studies major
- Superior performance overall at Cornell (minimum 3.3 GPA)
- Completion of at least 4 semesters or equivalent in a relevant Near Eastern language
- Satisfactory completion of an NES research paper (marked as NES-RS in Courses of Study)
- Completion of at least one course in the subfield relevant to the proposed thesis (e.g., early Islamic history, Modern Hebrew literature, etc.)
- Prospective honors students are strongly encouraged to take NES 4560 (NES Proseminar) in their junior year.

Application Process

Students should submit an honors application by April 15 of their junior year. The application process consists of the following:

1. Identify a Topic: By the beginning of the spring semester of their junior year, students should have identified a topic or research question of abiding intellectual interest. Students should bear in mind that an honors thesis is far more than a research paper, and therefore should propose a topic based on original research using primary sources. Students should make sure that they have the appropriate language skills for their proposed thesis.
2. Select a Thesis Supervisor: Once students have a thesis topic in mind, they should approach a faculty member to supervise their work on the honors thesis. The student's major advisor or Director of Undergraduate Studies can help identify a thesis advisor appropriate to the topic. The student and the thesis advisor will then review the student's transcript to make sure that s/he is eligible for admission to the Honors Program (see admission requirements above). The thesis advisor should also ensure that the student has appropriate and sufficient language skills for the proposed topic.
3. Select a Thesis Committee: The student and the thesis advisor will together identify one or two

additional faculty members to serve on the thesis committee. It is the student's responsibility to contact these faculty members to request their participation on the committee before they submit their honors application.

4. **Submit a Thesis Proposal:** After consulting with the prospective thesis advisor, the student must prepare a formal, well-thought out proposal for honors research. The proposal must include a statement of the research question, discussion of the relevant methodology, and a preliminary bibliography of primary and secondary sources. Additional components of the proposal are outlined on the honors application cover sheet. The proposal and this cover sheet should be submitted to the thesis advisor, committee member(s), and the Director of Undergraduate Studies by April 15.

Note to Study Abroad Students:

Students who are not in residence during their junior year (e.g., because of participation in a Cornell Abroad Program) should correspond with the Director of Undergraduate Studies early in the spring semester regarding application to the Honors Program. Keeping in mind that being off campus prolongs the application process, students who are abroad should plan ahead and make sure they begin in a timely manner in order to meet the April 15 deadline.

Admission to Candidacy

At the end of the spring semester, the Director of Undergraduate Studies will notify students whether or not they have been admitted as candidates in the Honors Program.

Honors Program Requirements

Fall Semester

- Regular meetings with the honors thesis advisor and committee member(s) throughout the year.
- Participation in NES honors workshops organized by the Director of Undergraduate Studies. The date of these workshops will be announced at the beginning of each semester.
- Enrollment in NES 4998 in the fall semester. NES 4998 (part I) allows students to conduct research and begin writing the honors thesis.
- At the end of fall semester, submission to the supervisor for evaluation 15-20 pages of the thesis along with an outline of the whole project.=

Mid-Year Evaluation

The thesis advisor and committee member(s) evaluate the progress of each honors candidate in December/January and makes recommendations about continuation; students will be apprised of the outcome of their evaluation by the beginning of the spring semester.

- Students whose work is not progressing satisfactorily will be granted independent study units and a grade for their work in the fall semester, but will no longer continue in the honors program.
- Students who are progressing satisfactorily will register in NES 4999 in the spring semester.

Spring Semester

- The thesis, between 60-100 pages in length, is due on the Friday closest to April 7. Unbound copies should be prepared for the thesis advisor, committee member(s), and the DUS.

Final Thesis Evaluation:

- Students must successfully complete the NES major and must continue to maintain a minimum 3.5 GPA in the major and a minimum GPA of 3.3 overall.
- After submitting the thesis draft, students will receive feedback from their advisors and other committee members about required revisions; students will generally have two weeks to submit a final draft of the thesis.
- In early to mid-May, a 'thesis defense' will be held with all committee members. The defense is a conversation between the honors candidate and her/his full committee, providing the candidate with the opportunity formally to present her/his research in oral form and to address the substantive concerns of the committee.
- Final evaluation of the thesis will be determined by the committee after the thesis defense, in consultation with the departmental honors committee.
- Students will be given a grade for NES 4999 based on their effort.
- Students may be awarded Latin honors based on the committee's evaluation of the scholarly achievement represented in the thesis.

Determination of Latin Honors:

In evaluating a thesis, faculty members take into consideration intellectual creativity, methodological innovation, scholarly rigor, and overall quality of presentation. Students should therefore ensure that the thesis is also well-written, impeccably edited, and abides by the footnote format conventional for their discipline of choice (e.g., Chicago, MLA).

- A student whose thesis is meritorious, well-argued, and relies on a methodologically sound use of primary sources may be awarded cum laude;
- A student whose project shows considerable originality and scope, methodological sophistication, and uncommon quality may be awarded magna cum laude;
- A student whose project is of truly exceptional quality, makes a real contribution to the field, and is deemed publishable may be awarded summa cum laude.

In deciding on the specific level of Latin honors, the committee may consider a candidate's **complete** academic record, not merely the thesis.