

Guidelines for Honors Theses in the English Department

<http://english.clas.asu.edu/honorstheses>

These guidelines are intended for both faculty and students, to facilitate the process of planning and completing honors theses in the English department. They should be used in conjunction with the Honors College requirements for theses; a student must meet both English requirements and Barrett Honors College requirements to successfully complete the thesis.

General departmental guidelines appear first; following these are guidelines specific to creative writing. For further information on honors theses in linguistics, please contact **Professor Mark James**; for theses in literature, contact **Professor Claudia Sadowski-Smith**.

Students wishing to write a thesis in the English department must be English majors or minors. The thesis must be in the area of concentration. For rare exceptions involving creative writing, see the guidelines specific to creative writing at the end of this document.

The minimum number of committee members will be two, a director and second committee member, and the director must be an ASU faculty member (tenure-line or lecturer). However, a director may insist on stricter requirements (e.g., having a third member, or that all members must be faculty).

It is the student's responsibility to formulate the thesis topic, to request faculty to serve on her or his committee, to submit the necessary forms, and to ascertain and inform the director of the committee of all honors college requirements and deadlines.

An honors thesis prospectus should be submitted to the director of undergraduate studies, Professor Mark James, by October 1 for a defense in the following spring semester, or by March 1 for a defense the following fall. The prospectus must also be submitted to Barrett, the Honors College, by their deadline, which may differ. Students are encouraged to submit the prospectus earlier than the due date. The prospectus should give contact information for the student, state the topic and working title for the thesis, list the committee chair and second reader, and indicate a tentative date (month is sufficient) for the defense. It should be signed by the student, the committee chair, and the second reader. This may be a copy of the prospectus which the student is required to submit to the honors college, as long as it meets the above requirements.

In the case of a multidisciplinary thesis where English is one of the disciplines involved, these same guidelines will apply.

Honors Theses in Creative Writing

There is no guarantee of approval for creative theses; they are not automatic for every honors student who has a concentration in creative writing. Creative writing professors will accept as thesis students only those they believe best qualify for thesis work.

Likely candidates for acceptance as thesis students will most often have passed Portfolio Review and taken at least one advanced (400-level) course in the thesis genre. On rare occasions, non-creative-writing-concentrators may be accepted as thesis students at the discretion of the instructor. Students with no academic experience in creative writing are unlikely to find acceptance.

The creative writing faculty will not chair a committee unless they have already worked with that student in a classroom situation.

Creative Writing Thesis Requirements

The proposal: The proposal is worked out and written early in the student's first thesis semester. Professors will likely require that the student read some texts in their genre of choice. The writing in either poetry or fiction will also begin during ENG 492, and will be completed during the second thesis semester, ENG 493.

Fiction: Professors will expect the student to write and revise between 30-50 pages of prose. The length of the project will be agreed upon between the student and the committee chair according to the individual context.

Poetry: Professors will expect the student to write and revise 14-21 pages of poetry. The length of the project will be agreed upon between the student and the committee chair according to the individual context.

Attendance: All students are expected to attend at least one poetry reading or one fiction reading.

The Defense: All students will present an excerpt of their work in a formal reading, approximately 6-8 poems or 5-10 pages of fiction. The presentation is followed by a discussion with the committee on specific aspects of the thesis concerning both conception and execution.

Honors Contract Requirements

The student will discuss with the instructor what special project will earn honors credit for the course. Honors contracts may be for 1-8 hours of instruction, as determined by the professor in consultation with the student. In poetry, the writing usually involves no more than three pages of new poems in response to outside readings and/or a short paper responding critically to a selection of poems decided upon by student and professor. In fiction, the writing usually involves a single short story and/or a short paper responding critically to a selection of fiction decided upon by student and professor.