

**Completing an Honors Thesis in the
Hugh Downs School of Human Communication
(updated, August 2016)**

Overview.

Completing an Honors thesis in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication (HDSHC) allows for a broad range of possible topics and methodologies. Previous Honors Thesis projects have covered research that: compares body image among adolescents and older women, examined nonverbal behavior in the courtroom, explored how social media can be used to avert public relations disasters, analyzes social movements like PETA, questioned the role of identity in intercultural communication, explores spirituality and religion and identity, and studied the culture of Arizona wildfire fighters. These are just a few of the topics—as an emphasis on human communication allows for one’s interests to be studied from a wide range of topical perspectives and in varying contexts.

Additionally, Honors theses can employ a range of methodologies, including online or paper survey questionnaires, ethnographic fieldwork and autoethnography, a range of interview types, creative performances, participant observation, and rhetorical analyses. Having your methodology clear is one of the reasons that you should work with a thesis director as early as possible, to plan your thesis progress.

TO WHOM IS THIS DOCUMENT ADDRESSED?

- If you intend to graduate with HONORS from the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, and COM is your ONLY major, you must follow the guidelines for a thesis in the Hugh Downs School.
- If you are a double major with a COM major, but also another major, you may select which major you wish to oversee your thesis. Please contact the Faculty Honors Advisor (FHA) in the appropriate major (see below).
- If you are a major in another field, but wish to have a COM professor oversee your thesis, you should check with the FHA in your major field to determine whether they have guidelines you need to follow. If they permit you to work with an FHA outside of your major, you may be able to work with these guidelines.
- NOTE: You are free to have a thesis director in any field, but if your degree will be in COM, you must follow the basic guidelines for the thesis required in the HDSHC.

Once you know that you are going to use the guidelines for a thesis in the Hugh Downs School, this is the process you should follow:

FIRST STEP: Get to know your Faculty Honors Advisor in the Hugh Downs School.

The Faculty Honors Advisors in the HDSHC is Dr. Amira de la Garza (Delagarza@asu.edu). Her office is located in Stauffer Hall in Room A341. Office hours are posted on the Barrett Honors in

Communication Blackboard site. (If you are not enrolled in this Blackboard site, please contact Dr. de la Garza!) You may also visit the HDSHC website faculty page to find out her current office hours, as they change each semester:

<http://humancommunication.clas.asu.edu/people/faculty>

The Faculty Honors Advisor will help you make sure that you are staying on track, assist you in selecting a thesis director, answer questions about who is eligible, research protocols, etc. The FHA also works with the folks in Barrett to make sure that your records are up to date and on target for your graduation.

IMPORTANT: Your thesis director in COM is a separate role from FHA. Thesis Directors are selected from the list of qualified faculty for a thesis in the Hugh Downs School (or other academic department).

SECOND STEP(ONGOING): Thinking About Your Honors Thesis EARLY.

1. Students are encouraged to select a research topic in an area that is particularly interesting to them. One place to start is to consider which communication courses are of particular interest. Of course, Communication faculty members are available to discuss students' potential thesis topics and methods.
2. Students should also consider their research methods preference/expertise when choosing a research topic. This is of extreme importance to completing many projects! If you aren't sure about the methodology, you should talk with your FHA, or your professors who have mentored you in the areas you are interested in for your honors thesis.
3. Communication faculty members are available to discuss students' potential thesis topics and methods. You should schedule a time to talk with one of the Faculty Honors Advisors if you'd like to determine the possibilities and 'fit' of particular faculty members in the HDSHC who may serve as the members of your committee.

THIRD STEP: Get Familiar with Your Academic Requirements as an Honors Student in the Hugh Downs School.

- The maximum number of honors thesis credit allowed by for a thesis/creative project in our School is 6 credits. In order to get this credit, you must register for COM 492 and COM 493.
 - There are special forms you must complete to register for COM492 and COM493—these are available on the Blackboard site for HDSHC Honors Students.
 - ***These forms must be signed by Dr. de la Garza, the FHA in the HDSHC.***
- Before enrolling in COM 492 or 493, **Barrett requires all students to complete a thesis/creative project information session.** You can meet this requirement by completing *one* of the following:

- HON 498 “Thesis Prep Course,” a one-credit course offered on the downtown campus
- One of the Thesis Workshop Sessions periodically offered by Barrett
- The on-line workshop offered through Barrett via ASU Blackboard.

For general Information about Barrett College thesis/creative project guidelines (including information about thesis prep workshops, visit <http://barretthonors.asu.edu/academics/thesis-and-creative-project/>)

If there are any problems with this, please contact your advisor in Barrett ASAP to clarify procedures and requirements. This is your responsibility and separate from what is required in the HDSHC.

FOURTH STEP: Become Very Familiar With the Thesis Guidelines and Deadlines—and Follow Them!

When you meet with the FHA, you will be given a *Thesis Planning Checklist*. This will become your best friend in making sure you have done what you need to do as you prepare for your thesis. This checklist should be signed and dated by a FHA as you progress with your thesis process in anticipation of the Barrett requirements for filing a prospectus, submitting a draft, and scheduling your ultimate defense.

1. **METHODS.** Ideally, you should have been meeting with the FHA at least a year before you propose your thesis to determine the methods you might need to accomplish your desired thesis project. This may require enrollment in a methods course or an independent study in methods with an approved faculty member. *If you have let time lapse and have not yet done this, please schedule this meeting as soon as possible—or send an e-mail to Dr. de la Garza to start the conversation.*
2. **THESIS DIRECTOR.** Your Thesis Director will actually work the closest with you on your thesis research or creative activity. The Thesis Director must be approved by the FHA, and **must be from the list of faculty provided at the end of this document.** If you have particular reason for requesting someone else, please schedule a meeting with Dr. de la Garza to determine the appropriate avenue to pursue. There are numerous instructors and lecturers in the Hugh Downs School who are strong scholars and offer particular strengths that may be desirable to you, depending on your research interests. In some instances, a faculty member from another school or program may be more suitable to your thesis interests, and you should discuss this with the FHA. It is advised that your Thesis Director have a Ph.D., but this, also, is negotiable, depending on the professor’s research program or record of creative activity and the nature of their role at ASU, as well as your ability to demonstrate that the scholar is being selected **on the basis of particular expertise** that will benefit your specific thesis plans. Please do not begin working with your thesis advisor if there are unanswered questions about their eligibility—it might set you back significantly. **A graduate student instructor may NOT direct your thesis (but may serve as a third reader) for a HDSHC COM major.** This is not negotiable.

3. **COMMITTEE COMPOSITION.** In addition to your Thesis Director (who is your first reader), you *must* have a second reader **with a Ph.D.**, from the faculty of Arizona State University at large, including the faculty of the HDSHC. Your committee may have a third reader, who may be an expert of your choice with expertise related to the thesis project. This person need not have a Ph.D., and may also be someone external to Arizona State University, but must indicate a willingness to serve.

It is the responsibility of the Honors Student to file the names of the Thesis Director and Reader(s) with Barrett: The Honors College, as required by Barrett.

HONORS FACULTY IN THE HUGH DOWNS SCHOOL OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION

The following faculty are automatically eligible to serve as an Honors Thesis Director in the HDSHC. Please be aware that the interests indicated below are general interest areas, and that each professor may have specific and specialized areas of interest that are not listed. This is why a conversation with the FHA can be especially helpful in selecting your Thesis Director when you are uncertain. Please check the with the FHAs to find out about others who are possible choices as a Director or Readers:

[Bradley Adame](#), Assistant Professor

Research interests: social influence, crisis communication, message design

[Elissa Adame](#), Research Professor

Research interests: organizational communication

[Jess K Alberts](#), President's Professor

Research interests: conflict, relational communication and, work-life issues

[Benjamin Broome](#), Professor

Research interests: intercultural conflict, facilitation, dialogue and peace building

[Dan Brouwer](#), Associate Professor

Research interests: rhetoric, social sphere and social movements

[Pauline Hope Cheong](#), Associate Professor

Research interests: communication technologies and social media, culture, religion, transnational and international communication

[Steven R Corman](#), Professor

Research interests: organizational communication, networks, terrorism and technology

[Pauline Davies](#), Professor of practice

Research interests: Science communication & broadcasting; science in society; cancer & physical sciences communication

[Olga I Davis](#), Professor

Research interests: health equity, identity and culture, critical health communication, diaspora performance

[Sarah "Amira" De la Garza](#), Associate Professor (Faculty Honors Advisor)

Research interests: culture, spirituality and identity, performance ethnography, creative writing and qualitative & postcolonial research methodologies

[Uttaran Dutta](#), Assistant Professor

Research Interests: intercultural communication, design and methodology

[Laura Guerrero](#), Professor

Research interests: relational and nonverbal communication and emotion

[Lee Gutkind](#), Professor

Research interests: creative nonfiction, writing

[Heewon Kim](#), Assistant Professor

Research interests: Communication technologies, Organizational communication

[Linda Lederman](#), Professor and Director

Research interests: health communication and instructional communication

[Eric Margolis](#), Associate Professor

Research interests: sociology of education, visual sociology, qualitative research methods

[Judith N Martin](#), Emeritus Professor

Research interests: intercultural communication, ethnicity and communication, and sojourner communication

[Robert D McPhee](#), Professor

Research interests: structuration theory, organizational constitution, communication theory

[Paul Mongeau](#), Professor

Research interests: interpersonal communication and social influence

[Jonathan Pettigrew](#), Assistant Professor

health communication, prevention science, implementation quality, family communication, interpersonal communication

[Anthony J Roberto](#), Associate Professor

Research interests: health communication campaigns, persuasion and interpersonal communication

[Youngju Shin](#), Assistant Professor

Research interests: family communication, health communication, intercultural communication

[Robert Shuter](#), Research Professor

Research Interests: intercultural communication, multinational organizational communication, diversity and communication, new media across cultures

[Sarah Tracy](#), Professor

Research interests: organizations, work-life wellness, emotion and workplace bullying

[Belle Edson](#), Associate Instructional Professional

Research interests: contemporary rhetorical studies, feminist theory, the rhetoric of social movements and performance studies

[Clark D Olson](#), Full Academic Professional

Research interests: rhetorical irony and political widow rhetoric

[Jennifer Linde](#), Senior Lecturer and Artistic Director of The Empty Space

Research Interests: performance studies, civil dialogue, gender studies

[Adam Symonds](#), Lecturer & Director of Forensics

Research Interests: critical rhetorical and cultural methods, specifically investigating representations of Whiteness in popular media

Additionally, faculty with a Ph.D. and an active research/creative inquiry program who are instructors with the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication may petition to be eligible to direct your Honors Thesis if you find that a particular such faculty member is ideal for mentoring your particular thesis project. This must be done through the FHA. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. de la Garza.

Samples of Past Honors Thesis Topics in the HDSHC:

(These are provided to simply demonstrate the array of possibilities, and are not meant to limit you in any way. If you are interested in something not listed here, by all means discuss it with your professors and Faculty Honors Advisor! We will help you accomplish your desired goals!)

Interpersonal Communication

Maintenance Strategies in Long Distance versus Proximal Close Relationships.
Comparisons of Body Image among Adolescents and Older Women

Organizational Communication

Sex Differences in Managerial Work Styles
Conflict Resolution Strategies in an Insurance Company
Job Satisfaction and Work Variables
Analysis of Organizational Structure of Barrett: The Honors College
Ethnographic Study of Arizona Wild Fire Fighters

Intercultural Communication

Cultural Analysis of the Arizona Tribal Gaming Initiative
Relationship between Intercultural Friendship Patterns and Attitudes toward Intercultural Dating
Nonverbal Communications in Various Settings in Western Samoa
Autoethnographic Grounded Theory Analysis of Identity and Intercultural Communication

Health Communication

Persuasion strategies related to Pharmacists and Patient Compliance
Causes of Unsafe Drinking on Campus
Using the EPPM Persuasion Model to Increase Sun Safety Among College Females

Rhetoric

Feminist Songwriters and Women's Bodies
Social Movement Analysis of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)
Contested American Values Demonstrated in the Welfare Reform Act of 1998

New Media

Use of Social Media to Avert Public Relations Disasters
Analysis of Online Content of Religious Blogs

Performance Studies

Forced Labor and Sex Trafficking among Filipino women
Performing Femininity
Exploring Discursive Identity Construction and "What it Means to be a Man"