FAQs about the thesis/creative project experience for honors students in linguistics

**Q: What constitutes a thesis/creative project in linguistics?**
A: An honors thesis/creative project in linguistics can take various forms. Most of this will be decided in direct consultation with the faculty member who will supervise the thesis/creative project. The first point to keep in mind, though, is that an honors thesis/creative project in linguistics must meet requirements outlined for theses in the English Department. The general requirements (outlined at http://english.clas.asu.edu/honorstheses) are as follows:

**Guidelines for honors theses/creative projects in the English department**
These guidelines are intended for both faculty and students, to facilitate the process of planning and completing honors theses/creative projects in the English department. They should be used in conjunction with the Honors College requirements for theses/creative projects; a student must meet both English requirements and Barrett Honors College requirements to successfully complete the thesis/creative project. (Note that students completing honors theses/creative projects in Creative Writing must meet additional requirements [see http://english.clas.asu.edu/honorstheses].) For further information on honors theses/creative projects in linguistics, please contact Professor Carrie Gillon.

1. Students wishing to write a thesis/creative project in the English department must be English majors or minors. The thesis/creative project must be in the area of concentration. For rare exceptions involving creative writing, see the guidelines specific to creative writing (http://english.clas.asu.edu/honorstheses).
2. 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).
3. It is the student’s responsibility to formulate the thesis/creative project 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.
4. An honors thesis/creative project 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/creative project, 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. Please note that before Barrett Students can register for 492 they must fulfill Barrett’s thesis prep workshop requirement.
5. In the case of a multidisciplinary thesis/creative project where English is one of the disciplines involved, these same guidelines will apply.
In terms of length, generally speaking, the finished product is often between 30 and 40 pages of expository text. In terms of topic, there are many possibilities. Theses/creative projects have dealt with, for example:

- the morphosyntax of text-oriented computer gaming discourse
- natural language processing in a computer gaming environment
- parallelism in original poetry
- semantic devices used for naming practices in a phonebook (modeled on Labov’s work)
- dialects in Arizona
- the language policies of the French in Indochina during the 19th-20th centuries
- the differences of male and female students’ contributions to classes comparing a social science class to a humanities class
- the development of a corpus of college slang at ASU (modeled on Munro’s work)
- the development of the development of a computer program to write Old Egyptian characters
- the development of a website outlining a partial dictionary and grammar of a made-up language

Q: What advantages are gained in career graduate/professional school opportunities? (i.e., why do a thesis/creative project?)
A: Doing an honors thesis/creative project has a range of benefits, such as the sense of personal accomplishment from completing a large-scale project. On the practical side, having completed an honors thesis/creative project can be an advantage for a student who is applying to graduate or professional school: The honors thesis/creative project has significantly greater depth than much undergraduate work, and in that way it is similar to the kind of work that students do in graduate and professional school. Graduate and professional school admissions committees recognize this. (For example, one of our linguistics honors students completed a thesis on a very technical topic in the area of syntax, and this work helped this student to get into an excellent Ph.D. program.)

Q: What preparation is necessary for working on a thesis/creative project (skills, coursework)?
A: The honors thesis/creative project is a learning experience in itself, so students will develop skills and knowledge in the process of carrying out this project. Nevertheless, when asked what preparation is necessary to work on a thesis/creative project, linguistics faculty members who have supervised these projects in the past have pointed out that:

- it can be beneficial if a student has already taken at least one of the three required ENG 414 Studies in Linguistics courses by the time s/he approaches a potential thesis/creative project supervisor
- students need to have strong research skills
- students need to be effective and efficient at finding a suitable topic (i.e., a topic for which there is a model that can reasonably be followed in the time available)
- students need to be prepared to do a lot of work!

Note too that the Barrett Honors College requires students to enroll in a thesis/creative project course HON493. Details about meeting this requirement can be found on the following webpage: http://barretthonors.asu.edu/academics/thesis-and-creative-project/

Q: Which faculty are interested in working with honors students on the thesis/creative project?
A: All of the linguistics faculty in the ASU Department of English are interested in working with honors students on the thesis/creative project. This includes the following faculty members:
Karen Adams (Sociolinguistics; pragmatics and discourse analysis; language and politics; language and gender; Southeast Asian languages)
Carrie Gillon (Native American languages; semantics; syntax)
Mark James (Curriculum, teaching, and learning in second language education)
Aya Matsuda (TESOL; English in the global context; multilingualism)
Matthew Prior (Applied linguistics; second language acquisition and use; discourse and interaction; language and emotion; language and identity; narrative)
Kathryn Pruitt (Phonology; phonetics)
Claire Renaud (Second language acquisition; syntax)
Bryan Smith (Applied linguistics; second language acquisition; computer-assisted language learning)
Elly van Gelderen (Historical and comparative syntax; historical linguistics; sociolinguistics; grammar; history of English; typology; Germanic [Dutch, German, Swedish, Yiddish, Afrikaans] linguistics; interest in Farsi/Urdu, and Native American languages)

Q: Who should honors students speak with when considering a thesis/creative project in linguistics?
A: If students have an idea about the topic they would like to focus on for their thesis/creative project, they can go directly to a faculty member whose area of expertise overlaps with that topic. If students are not yet at that stage, or have general questions about the thesis/creative project, they can contact Dr. Carrie Gillon (Carrie.Gillon@asu.edu), faculty honors advisor for linguistics.
**Linguistics Major:**
**Honors Program and Opportunities**

*Linguistics*: (noun, used with a singular verb) The study of the nature, structure, and variation of language, including phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics.

Linguistics at Arizona State University is housed in the multidisciplinary Department of English, which recognizes that no single disciplinary perspective adequately accounts for the complexities of how people use language, participate in communication, and create and understand texts. Our very strength as a Department of English thus rests with our aggregate of different disciplines that explore multiple aspects of human communications. Multidisciplinary perspectives of creative writing, English education, linguistics, literature, and rhetoric and composition create contrasting and complementary theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding and teaching how people engage language, and create, consume and circulate texts in diverse media.

The English Department at Arizona State University is robust and unique precisely because we bring together every part of English Studies in one space. Our interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary scholarship and teaching allow us to make valuable contributions to multidisciplinary initiatives in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. This Department’s expressed mission is to study, create, and teach spoken, written, visual and digital communication practices and texts ranging from the imaginative to the functional in civic, social, personal, academic and professional communities—and to mentor others to do likewise.

With areas of strong national reputation and a professionally productive, multidisciplinarily engaged, and teaching-committed faculty, faculty embrace what we call “teacher-scholar” and “scholar-citizen” models, and look as well to our diverse communities for greater discourse.
Program structure
Within the Department of English, linguistics honors students create an individualized program of study, grounded in shared core requirements, and carry out an independent research project. We challenge each student to achieve her/his best performance and provide support through advising and faculty mentoring.

The following courses are required for linguistics majors, and are available for honors credit (as Honors Enrichment Contracts):
- ENG 200 Critical reading and writing about literature
- ENG 213 Introduction to the study of language
- ENG 221 Survey of English literature to 1798 or ENG 222 Survey of English literature since 1798 or ENG 241 Literatures of the U.S. to 1860 or ENG242 Literatures of the U.S., 1860 to present
- ENG 312 English in its social setting
- ENG 313 Phonology and morphology
- ENG 314 Modern grammar
- ENG 413 History of the English language
- ENG 414 Studies in linguistics (to be repeated for a total of 9 credits)

Funding opportunities
As a linguistics major in the Department of English, honors students are eligible for a variety of scholarships, including the following:

- **Friends of the Department of English Scholarship.** This award is for undergraduate English majors in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) and English Education majors in the College of Education. The $500 scholarship is awarded each fall and spring semester. (http://www.asu.edu/clas/english/advising/scholarships_friends.html)

- **English Department Faculty Scholarship.** This award is for undergraduate English majors in CLAS and English Education majors in the College of Education. The $500-$1000 scholarship is awarded each spring semester. It is awarded on the basis of need as well as grades and recommendations. (http://www.asu.edu/clas/english/advising/scholarships_faculty.html)

- **CLAS Dean’s Circle Scholarship.** This award is open to undergraduate students in the CLAS at any level. The award is $1,000. Each department in CLAS administers the application process and selects one student as a winner. (http://www.asu.edu/clas/english/scholarships/deanscircle.html)

- **Sun Angel Foundation Undergraduate Research Award in the Humanities.** This award of $1000 is for independent student research in the Humanities. Any advanced ASU undergraduate with at least 60 hours completed at Arizona State University may apply for this independent research award. Student must be in good academic standing, and majoring in a humanities department or program. (http://www.asu.edu/clas/religious_studies/sunangelaward.html)
The linguistics faculty and areas of expertise
The following ASU linguistics faculty are interested in and available for supervising honors theses in linguistics:

• Karen Adams (Sociolinguistics; pragmatics and discourse analysis; language and politics; language and gender; Southeast Asian languages)

• Carrie Gillon (Native American languages; semantics; syntax)

• Mark James (Curriculum, teaching, and learning in second language education)

• Aya Matsuda (TESOL; English in the global context; multilingualism)

• Matthew Prior (Applied linguistics; second language acquisition and use; discourse and interaction; language and emotion; language and identity; narrative)

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For more information, visit the English Department (Language and Literature Building, Room 542, or www.asu.edu/clas/english). You can also contact Dr. Carrie Gillon (Carrie.Gillon@asu.edu), faculty honors advisor for linguistics, or Dr. Linda Sullivan (Linda.Sullivan@asu.edu), assistant director of academic services (for information about courses, events, scholarships, internships, jobs and other opportunities).