



## Guidelines for the Honors Thesis

### **Information and Guidelines for a Senior Honors Thesis or Creative Project** (as taken from the Meredith College Honors website)

As a student in the Honors Program approaches her senior year, she is ready - perhaps even eager - to undertake a rigorous, demanding research experience in a chosen field by investigating a significant topic and producing a written thesis which demonstrates the results and implications of this research. In areas such as creative writing, art, music, and some others, a student may wish to demonstrate her educational maturity with a creative project - by composing a group of short stories, mounting a special exhibition, producing a videotape, or planning a special recital and performing in it. Whatever a particular student undertakes, however, she needs to bear in mind that the senior honors thesis or creative project functions as the culmination of an honors education, representing final proof of worthiness to be a Meredith College Honors Scholar.

The idea of producing a senior honors thesis or creative project sounds formidable. While an honors thesis/creative project does require greater depth than a typical course-related research paper, this greater depth is the natural outcome of choosing a topic for which her former studies provide ample background. The project requires a commitment to spending an extended period of time on background reading, researching, and writing the paper or producing the project. This is why the student will ideally begin work on the thesis project during the semester prior to its submission. This is also why the Honors student is encouraged to be thinking about a thesis/project topic as soon as she has had sufficient exposure to her discipline to know what issues and ideas she finds most engaging. The student need not wait to begin working on her honors thesis/creative project until she feels she has attained intellectual brilliance and maturity. Rather, the greater depth required by the thesis will contribute to her intellectual maturity.

What constitutes "greater depth" varies from discipline to discipline. Generally speaking, however, greater depth requires a more thorough understanding of the literature and/or data pertaining to the topic - the body of knowledge that scholars working in this field use to converse with one another. Greater depth should also involve the student with primary sources; that is, the Honors student is less likely to simply rely on what others have said or done and is more likely to bring her own analysis to bear on texts or data. In fields where empirical research is called for, greater depth may mean hands-on involvement with data gathering.

## **Requirements of the Honors Program Theses**

The Honors Program imposes relatively few formal restrictions on the senior honors thesis/creative project. The program has delegated the most authority to the person with acknowledged expertise in the subject matter area - the thesis director. The Honors student may choose to do a thesis in her major (if double majoring, in either major), outside her major, as an interdisciplinary project, or in a creative mode. What happens when the student is working on her thesis is almost entirely a matter between the student and her thesis director.

The Honors Program, however, does have certain requirements regarding the format of the completed thesis or project:

1. A thesis should adhere consistently and correctly to a documentation style appropriate for the field of study -- following, for example, such style manuals as those of the MLA, APA, or the University of Chicago. Whatever documentation style a student uses, a bibliography or Works Cited page **MUST** be included.
2. An honors creative project must be in "greater depth" than the general departmental requirements. For example, a student may plan a recital, researching and writing program notes and arranging for publicity; or, a student may exhibit her own artwork, writing a statement describing her sources of artistic inspiration and designing a catalog to distribute to those attending the exhibit. Completion of a standard senior recital or art exhibition designed to meet graduation requirement does not constitute a creative project. Whatever the format of the creative project, a bibliography or a Works Cited page **MUST** be included.
3. There is no absolute requirement regarding length of an honors thesis; however, excellence in research and writing is expected. This should be the best project the student has submitted during her academic career and may well serve as an entree to graduate study. The thesis should require more effort than a typical term paper and less effort than a typical master's thesis.
4. A student **WILL NOT** be allowed to graduate as an Honors Scholar unless the completed thesis or written component has been submitted to the Honors Director by the last day of senior exams for permanent housing in Carlyle Campbell Library. It must be an unmarked original or an excellent copy that is printed on high quality paper. It must also be free of errors in grammar and spelling.
5. The title page must include: (1) student's name, (2) thesis title, (3) requirement that the thesis fulfills, (4) date of submission to Honors Director, and (5) signatures of the thesis director, the honors student, and Honors Director. Sample title pages are included in this document.

Students doing a creative project such as a recital, an art exhibit, or a videotape must submit an explanatory text or description of the project and a bibliography or Works Cited page. Ideally, the student should submit a videotape or photographs of the creative project to the Honors Director for housing in Carlyle Campbell Library. The library will bind the theses it receives; therefore, "instant immortality" is achieved for authors, whose names and works are listed in the library catalog. As Shakespeare said: "So long lives this, and this gives life to thee!"