

## DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY --

### Honors Thesis Guidelines

"The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you were going to say at the end, do you think you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for love relationships, is also true for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we do not know what will be the end." Michel Foucault

1. Selection of a Topic: Selection of the topic should be done in conjunction with the thesis adviser. The student should take initiative to contact the faculty member with whom she wishes to work as an adviser. Selection should be made with awareness that the goal of the thesis is to learn something new that the student did not know before she began the project. As the thesis topic evolves it should be in written form so that there is a common understanding between the student and the adviser.

2. Development of a Bibliography: No more than 15 percent on-line sources should be used without securing approval of the thesis adviser in advance.

The bibliography should ordinarily include no less than 30 academic entries, (that is books published by an academic or university press as well as articles in peer-reviewed journals.) A citation format (e.g. MLA or Chicago Manual) should be determined in conjunction with the adviser.

In keeping with the view that religious studies is an approach to life as a whole, the student should be encouraged to consider an interdisciplinary approach.

3. Criteria for grading/Researching to Learn: The process of writing a thesis should be more than amassing materials. The process should involve research -- reflective sifting of materials and sorting of ideas. Emphasis should be on generating new ideas or new synthesis of ideas which will become a learning experience -- a learning experience which will lead the student to become "someone else that you were not at the beginning".

The dimensions of the research process which will be considered in grading are:

- ⊙ Quality and comprehensiveness of sources
- ⊙ Quality of engagement with the sources
- ⊙ Quality of thinking with which one formulates the thesis and draws conclusions.

The grade for the thesis will be determined 100% by the final paper.

4. Length: The length of the thesis should be 25-30 pages. Special projects may dictate other criteria for length.

5. Oral Presentation: An oral presentation of the thesis or a summary of its scope and conclusions will ordinarily be scheduled early enough to incorporate feedback in the final draft. This presentation will be in the context of the department. In addition, the student will be encouraged to present the conclusions of her research at the Meredith Undergraduate Research Conference.

6. Copies of the Thesis: In addition to the copies required by other offices (e.g. Honors Program and Teaching Fellows), the student should provide copies for herself, the thesis adviser and the Department. These three copies will be bound at the expense of the Department.

7. Expectations of Quality Work: The Department assumes that only exceptional students will elect to do a Senior Thesis. Consequently a high level of academic work is expected in all theses. A grade of less than "C" will not be accepted by the Department as fulfilling the thesis requirement.

8. Schedule for Project. Work toward defining a thesis topic should ordinarily begin during the semester prior to registration for the thesis. During the thesis semester, a timeline of the thesis should be developed by the adviser and the student. This timeline should include completion deadline and a schedule for review points along the way. To achieve her goals, it is likely that the student will need at least two revisions of the final draft.