

HONORS 491/INDEPENDENT STUDY

GUIDELINES

Students who plan to graduate “With University Honors” must complete an Honors Independent Study project (HNRS 491) as 3 of the 21 hours of Honors credit required. A grade below “B” does not count towards credit for the Honors degree, although it does carry elective credit towards regular degree requirements.

Students who successfully complete the Washington Semester Program may count 3 of the 15 Honors credits earned in place of 491.

Students must pre-register for HNRS 491 for the semester during which they intend to complete the project. Most students complete their 491 project in their major field, with a Study Director from that discipline, though doing so is not required.

The initial registration designates the Honors Director as the instructor; when the 491 proposal is approved by the Honors Committee and the University Provost, the faculty mentor (Study Director) becomes the instructor of record, responsible for assigning and submitting the final grade.

Students have the option of receiving 3 hours of Honors credit for 497 Special Studies, typically in their major discipline, rather than for HNRS 491.

Students who want additional guidance and support in preparing for 491 have the option of taking HNRS 391, the Honors Independent Study Workshop, the semester *before*. Hrs 391 is assessed as S [Satisfactory] or U [Unsatisfactory] and earns one hour of Honors credit. Students who choose to take 391 will be required to have chosen a topic and begun work with their Study Directors by midterm.

The deadline for 491 proposals to be submitted to the Honors Director is **three weeks before the last class meeting in the prior semester**. Late proposals cannot be considered, and a student who has pre-registered for 491 but has not submitted an acceptable proposal will be withdrawn from the course.

A student can complete a second 491 in a second discipline for honors credit.

In addition to the Study Director, 491 projects require designated second and third readers, one of whom must be from a different discipline. The Study Director determines and assigns the final grade, in consultation with the second and third readers. A hard copy of the completed project must be delivered to the Honors Director.

Although a 491 Honors thesis usually takes the form of an advanced research project or thesis, creative work in the arts is also possible.

If any special funding (for materials, mailings, travel, etc.) is necessary to complete the project, students can apply for such support with a separate form, available from the Honors Director.

Because 491 earns 3 hours of 400-level Honors credit, projects must represent substantive work beyond what would be expected of a term paper or project earning partial credit in a 400-level course. No standard length is required, given the differences between research methods and papers in various disciplines, but a straight research paper (a project that does not involve laboratory experimentation, a reliance on equations, survey instruments, performance or exhibition) should be about 50 pages.

Successful completion of 491 is an excellent indicator that the student has mastered the rigorous self-discipline required by graduate and professional programs and is typically what separates those who graduate “With University Honors” from those who do not. That’s why it’s valuable.

PROPOSALS

The formal proposal includes a completed Approval Form (forms are available from the Honors Director). The student is responsible for completing the form, including the names and signatures of the Study Director, the Second and Third Readers, and the Department Chairman or School Dean from the appropriate academic area.

The proposal includes a detailed description of the project, and a letter of support from the Study Director. The letter of support should indicate the Study Director’s willingness to undertake this responsibility, his/her familiarity with the proposed project, his/her knowledge of the student’s capabilities, his/her confidence that the project is do-able and worth doing, and that the student is up to the task.

The proposal should be written by the student, in consultation with the Study Director. Even if the student’s research is part of a larger team project (as might be true in the natural sciences), the Committee expects the student to be able to articulate his/her understanding of the work in his/her own words.

Because members of the Honors Committee come from various academic disciplines, the proposal must be detailed enough and clearly-enough written to be understood by an educated person from a different discipline. It may, therefore, be appropriate to define or explain specialized terminology.

The student should submit the proposal to the Honors Director both as an electronic file and a hard copy. Proposals must be completed and accepted three weeks before the last class of the semester *before* the thesis semester. For instance, students wishing to register for Honors 491 Independent Study in spring semester must have had their proposal approved in early November.

The proposal should be word-processed in 12 point font. At least a paragraph should be included under each of the following headings:

Statement of Intent

Describe the project you propose. It may be appropriate to consider this section as an abstract, or to articulate the hypothesis you hope to support. You should indicate the form in which you plan to present your work (research paper, lab reports, exhibition or performance, etc.)

Theory / Background / Introduction / History

If appropriate, articulate the relevant theory underlying the project. Briefly indicate what work may already have been done in this field by other scholars. explain why you have chosen this project; what in your background and previous work makes this an appropriate and interesting choice for you? You might indicate how your work on this project might relate to your future academic or professional plans.

Process / Method

Describe the experimental equipment and procedures, if applicable. Indicate what resources and methods you believe will be necessary to complete the project. Indicate whether you will need to request funding to support your work.

Preliminary Bibliography

List some of the sources that you plan to use (library or internet materials). These should be listed in the documentation format appropriate to the academic discipline area of the project.

Timetable

You and your Study Director should discuss the timeline you feel will be necessary to complete the project. The members of the Honors Committee understand that scientific, scholarly, and creative projects change and develop as the work progresses, and that the final product may be somewhat different from the initial proposal. Nevertheless, the Committee expects that the proposal will indicate that the student has put serious thought and planning into designing it before submission. The Committee may ask for clarifications, expansion, or other revisions before approving it.

Once the 491 proposal has been approved, the members of the Committee have no further formal role in facilitating or assessing the project. Grades are assigned by Study Director, in consultation with the thesis committee.