

Georgetown University
Description of Honors in Human Science

Honors in Human Science recognizes those Human Science students who pursue a high level of independent research (i.e., laboratory, archival, community, epidemiological) during their undergraduate years culminating in a senior thesis concurrent with the pursuit of a Human Science major.

The purpose of this program is to permit students of high academic achievement to enjoy greater responsibility and initiative in their major work. The honors program in Human Science requires a significant mentored research experience in a topic of the student's choosing.

Eligibility for Human Science Honors: Full-time human science students with at least a 3.0 science GPA at the end of their first year may apply.

Application to Human Science Honors: Prior to completing an application, the student should identify a thesis mentor. If a student chooses to work with someone other than one of the Human Science faculty mentors, then the student must determine a Human Science faculty member who will serve as the co-mentor for the thesis. The application from the student to the Human Science Faculty will include:

- (1) a completed application page, indicating support by thesis mentor(s). If the primary mentor is outside of the department, a letter demonstrating support of the work is recommended.
- (2) a description of the idea and general methodology of the proposed thesis work
- (3) a proposed curriculum plan including Independent Research for at least one term (minimum of 3 credits, but not to exceed 9 credits) pertaining to their thesis project prior to their senior year and the final Honors Thesis class

The proposal should include an extensive literature review of the topic (introduction/background), hypothesis, a research plan to answer the hypothesis, a bibliography list inclusive of current literature (at least 10, more is preferred), and the time frame in which the project will be completed. Proposals should be submitted to the Chair of the Human Science department.

Note: An honors proposal being submitted by a rising senior for the first time is due no later than August 15th prior to his/her senior year. A rising senior who wishes to do a thesis must have completed substantial work before the department will consider the application. The proposal will be considered and voted upon during the first faculty meeting of the academic year. All other (non-rising senior) students may submit their honors proposal at any time during the year, which will be considered by the faculty at the next regularly scheduled faculty meeting.

Approval for Human Science Honors: The Chair will circulate the application to the Human Science Faculty, who will vote on the proposal.

Human Science Honors Curriculum: Human Science Honors students will meet all Human Science major curriculum requirements in addition to the research course sequence. A student working on an Honors project will enroll in a minimum of three (but no more than nine) credit hours of Independent Study research course pertaining to their thesis project prior to their senior year. Enrollment in Honors Thesis (HSCI-370) the final term of the project is also required.

Proposed activities:

2nd year: Student will initiate research with approval of the student's Honors mentor.

2nd or 3rd year: Student will build the idea for the thesis topic and formulate a question/hypothesis to study. Enrollment in Independent Study with Honors research mentor. A thorough review of the literature is suggested.

4th year: Complete research project and thesis.

Fall semester	Weekly updates/progress reports to mentor; establish committee members
December	Update meeting with committee members to include summary of results
December 20 th	Under special circumstances, oral defense of thesis may be scheduled for final exam week with input of mentor and committee. However, this decision must be communicated to Academic Affairs by this date.
January 1-February 28th February 28	Develop, expand and revise draft of thesis Initial thesis draft due to thesis mentor. Schedule oral defense with mentor and committee; Oral defense must take place on or before last day of classes.
March 31	A complete thesis draft due to thesis mentor and committee members
April-May	Public defense of thesis (Note: Students and mentors may agree to defend in the beginning of final exam week, but only if approved by Academic Affairs (see deadline above). Thesis must be distributed to Human Science faculty one week prior to oral defense
May	Completed thesis (i.e. after incorporation of changes suggested in public defense) due to Department the Friday before grades for graduating seniors are due.

Note: Students who fail to adhere to the deadlines indicated above may jeopardize their ability earn a “Pass” for their work.

Preparation of written thesis: The final thesis product will have a limit of 6,000 words not counting references, figures, figure legends, abbreviations page, or tables. The paper must be double-spaced, 12-point font and 1” margins. The final thesis product should be formatted according to the standards of a scientific thesis (outlined below). References and citation formatting should conform to guidelines of a journal of choice of the thesis mentor and punctuated consistently throughout the thesis document.

Title page: title, author, contact information, 3-6 key words, and word count

Abstract page: limit to 250 words

Abbreviations page (if applicable)

Introduction

Methods

Results

Discussion

Acknowledgements

References (at least 15, inclusive of current literature)

Tables: Embed table in appropriate location within text, or at the end of the document. Include table legends on top of table.

Figures: Embed figures in appropriate locations within text or at the end of the document. Include figure legends with figures.

Thesis Defense:

Committee: Prior to submission of a complete thesis draft, the student, in consultation with his/her faculty thesis mentor, should select a minimum of three (including the thesis mentor) members of the Human Science faculty to serve on the thesis committee. The committee's role will include, but is not limited to, providing guidance at the results/project update meeting at end of Fall semester, providing guidance on the overall scientific merit and written presentation of the thesis work, and attendance at the oral defense.

Preparing final draft: Each committee member should be given a rough draft of the thesis and each member will provide the student with feedback. The final draft of the thesis must be distributed to all Human Science faculty members at least **one week** before the oral presentation.

Oral Defense of thesis: The student will present the thesis orally at a public venue, open to all faculty and students who wish to attend. Generally, the student should prepare a 30-minute presentation and expect the total defense time to last approximately 1 hour. The student may be interrupted during the presentation to answer clarifying questions posed by the audience. The goal of the defense for the student is to generate a discussion of the topic and defend the strategy and results of the experiment(s).

Grading the thesis: Immediately following the oral defense of the thesis all non-faculty members in the attendance will be excused and the faculty remaining will determine if the thesis receives a "Pass" or "No Pass". All faculty members who have read the thesis and attended the oral defense are eligible to grade the thesis. No letter or other grade will be applied to the thesis. If the thesis project is deemed acceptable, then a notation will be placed on the transcript.

Thesis revision: The committee (or all voting members present at the thesis defense) may request specific revisions to be made before a transcript notation will be issued. The student will revise the written product of the thesis between the date of the defense and the due date. The last version of the thesis is due to the committee on the Friday before grades are due for graduating seniors. A final reading will take place and the final transcript notation will be issued.

Graduating with Honors in Human Science requires completion of the Human Science curriculum with the addition of a senior thesis. Students who complete an acceptable Honors Thesis and all other requirements for the Human Science major will graduate with a B.S in Human Science with Honors.

Approved by the Human Science Faculty
Clarifications approved by Human Science Faculty
Modifications approved by Human Science Faculty

Date: May 10, 2006
Date: May 2, 2007; May 13, 2010
Date: April 5, 2013; October 10, 2014; May 16, 2016; August 29, 2016; March 26, 2021

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

HSCI-370 - Honors Thesis

Spring of Senior year only

During their last semester of the senior year, students in the honors program bring their research projects to conclusion, complete the written thesis for the faculty committee and make an oral presentation of the results to a seminar group of faculty and students. The student will be encouraged to submit the thesis for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Credits: 0; Prerequisites: A minimum of one (1) Independent Study Research of at least three credits.

Final Evaluation of Thesis by Faculty

Student name: _____ Date: _____

Thesis title: _____

To be completed by all faculty members who read the thesis and/or attended the oral presentation (see total points calculation below).

Questions will be scored as:

1. Limited (1 point)
2. Adequate (2 points)
3. Proficient (3 points)
4. Excellent (4 points) – this score is only available for questions 5, 7, and 10.

Questions (slightly modified from Julie A. Reynolds' rubrics, Duke University, source: BioTAP):

Q1. Is the writing appropriate for the target audience/journal?

1. Too much jargon or lacking in definitions/explanations.
2. Includes some useful definitions/explanations, but some key concepts are still lacking.
3. The thesis has sufficient definitions/explanations

Q2. Is the thesis free of writing/grammatical errors?

1. Thesis contains excessive errors or is unprofessional.
2. Thesis contains some errors.
3. Thesis is virtually free of obvious errors.

Q3. Does the thesis make a compelling argument for the significance of the student's research within the context of the current literature?

1. Does not present adequate review of the literature OR does not make significant connection.
2. Thesis presents literature review, but either does not present the student's research within the context of the scientific research, or does not specifically present argument for significance
3. Reviews literature, demonstrates how the research fills in a gap, and presents compelling argument for broader significance of research.

Q4. Does the thesis clearly articulate the student's research goals?

1. Explicitly stated
2. Question/goals articulated, but not always clear.
3. Clear and articulate

Q5. Did the student convey an understanding of how his or her portion contributed to the larger effort for which it was a component?

1. Did not convey sufficient knowledge of the greater project or it was unclear what the student contributed and/or what specific methods the student utilized.
2. Was able to speak in general terms about the greater project but did not have the fluency to understand how the presented work added value.
3. Conveyed an understanding of how his or her labor was an essential and specific contribution to this project, and demonstrated the methods utilized were appropriate.
4. As in 3. plus student was able to clearly articulate future directions for the project and their potential impact on the field.

Q6. Are the tables, figures and graphs clear, effective and informative?

1. Many of the tables/figures are misleading, incorrect, unclear or inappropriate or the captions are unclear.
2. In general, clear and appropriate.
3. Exceptionally well constructed, and the captions clearly describe visual elements.

Q7. Is the data analysis appropriate, accurate and unbiased?

1. Analysis was inappropriate, inaccurate, or biased.
2. In general, analysis was appropriate, but there are some biases, inaccuracies and/or errors.
3. Analysis was appropriate, accurate and unbiased.
4. Analysis was not only appropriate, accurate and unbiased, but the approach was also particularly insightful or proposed creative new approaches for future research.

Q8. Does the thesis skillfully present and interpret the results?

1. Little to no attempt to interpret/explain results.
2. Provides reasonable interpretation of results and mentions, but does not delve into alternative explanations.
3. Interpretation is insightful and explains implications/inconsistencies.

Q9. Is the literature review accurate and complete?

1. Inconsistent citation formatting, missing citations, or unprofessional presentation.
2. Some minor errors or inconsistencies.
3. Consistent and appropriate.

Q10. Was oral presentation well organized, clear and cohesive?

1. Presentation was confusing
2. In general clear, but with some problems in organization, clarity and/or cohesiveness.
3. Presentation was well organized, clear and cohesive. Student was able to address some appropriate questions with insight and intelligence.
4. Presentation was well organized, clear and cohesive and student was able to address all appropriate questions with insight and intelligence.

Total number of points will be calculated as follows:

i) Faculty members serving as thesis mentors, thesis readers (i.e. members of the thesis committee), and faculty who have thoroughly read the thesis will grade questions 1-9, and the total score will be divided by the number of faculty submitting a scoring sheet. This will provide an average score for questions 1-9.

ii) All faculty members attending the oral defense of the thesis will grade question number 10, and the total score will be divided by the number of faculty submitting a scoring sheet. This will provide an average score for question 10.

Grades (out of 33 points):

< 20 points	(< 60%)	NO PASS
20 – 33 points	(61-91%)	PASS