

Honors Guidelines for Thesis Writers

Meeting with your adviser

Ordinarily, you'll meet with your thesis adviser once a week for about an hour, starting in the first or second week of the fall semester. You and your adviser will work out a schedule of reading and writing, though you'll be expected to shape and guide much of your work independently. By the end of November, you'll be asked to submit a significant piece of work—normally about 20-25 pages for critical projects, and varying lengths for creative work. Pending successful completion of this work, your adviser will approve your continuation in Honors for the spring term. (If you and/or your adviser feel it is not advisable for you to continue, ENGL 6600.01 is converted to a Readings and Research course for the fall, and you can add an elective for the spring.)

Evaluation of Your Thesis

Critical Theses are roughly 50 pages, often divided into two 20-25 page chapters. Think of the length and depth of a peer-reviewed article in a journal such as *Representations* or *PMLA* as your model for each chapter. Criteria for evaluation include: originality, scope, significance, strength, and clarity of thesis and argument, organization, use of primary evidence, use of secondary sources, prose style, and care in presentation (spelling, proofreading, etc.).

Creative Theses range in length in consultation with your adviser, resulting in a short novel (70-125 pages, e.g.), a sustained work of creative nonfiction, a series of short stories, or a collection of poetry (typically around 30 poems). Criteria for evaluation include: originality, imaginative strength, clarity of vision, awareness of craft, and care in presentation (spelling, presentation, sentence construction, etc.).

Both semesters of ENGL 6600.01 are graded. Some advisers give letter grades in the Fall Semester, while other advisers give a J or placeholder grade, which is replaced by the final grade for the thesis in the spring. A thesis needs to receive two readers' grades of A or A- to qualify for departmental Honors. Your first reader is your thesis advisor; your second reader is chosen by the Honors Director from among the full time faculty. If one reader gives you a grade lower than an A-, a third reader is enlisted. Your spring grade, which takes the place also of any placeholder grades in the fall, is by tradition the higher of the two grades you receive from your first and second readers.

Submitting Your Thesis

Theses are submitted in 2 (bound) copies: one to your adviser, and one to the Honors Director. By tradition, the adviser keeps one copy, and the second copy, after it has been evaluated, is archived in the Department Conference Room.