

# Environmental Studies Honors Thesis

## Introduction

The Honors Thesis of the Environmental Studies Program is awarded to ES majors who produce a written academic work that meets these three conditions: a) scholarly excellence through original research worthy of publication in a peer-reviewed journal; b) it has an environmental issue as main topic; and c) it is based on an interdisciplinary approach to that topic. Approaches that encompass two or more disciplines across different areas of knowledge, i.e., social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, are particularly encouraged. Students pursuing the Honors Thesis are expected to make a major commitment in terms of time and effort. This endeavor should be undertaken only by those with strong research interests and the ability to focus intellectually in scholarly production.

## Requirements

**Initial Consultation:** A student interested in undertaking an Honors Thesis should discuss his/her ideas with the ES Chair who, in turn, will ask one or more ES Macalester faculty to share the responsibility to supervise the student's progress. Once a verbal agreement on the topic and approach has been made, the students must submit a brief but explicit written proposal in which the research program to be conducted is outlined. This proposal must include the methodology to be followed and a time schedule of objectives to be fulfilled. This step should be taken during the second semester of the student's junior or early in the first semester of senior year.

**Minimum GPA:** Cumulative (all College courses) GPA of 3.40 and a GPA of at least 3.50 in the courses required to complete the ES major.

**Course Work and Schedule:** For most students undertaking an Honors Thesis, it is best if they have completed a significant portion of the basic research by the start of their Senior year. During their senior year, honors students are expected to commit the equivalent of at least one course to working on the thesis. This commitment involves registering for an independent project during one semester. Before their eighth semester, honors students are required to submit a detailed outline or review of the literature for review by the ES Department members for approval. Only those students whose initial work is approved by the ES Faculty will be permitted to proceed with their Honors Thesis.

## Format

Written work: Given the interdisciplinary work of the proposed thesis, different formats are acceptable as long as they conform with the standards of scholarly work of any field of knowledge. Students must demonstrate mastery of the literature of the field they are working in, originality of ideas, insight, and the ability to communicate those ideas and insights effectively.

## **Oral Presentation**

Honors Thesis students are required to give a 30-60 minute presentation before a wide audience of faculty and students during a regular EnviroThursday or in a specially called ES Program Seminar. Additional presentations before a professional meeting are also encouraged. Presentations must be given very professionally. Structure, delivery, and quality of audiovisual materials must be impeccable.

## **Evaluation**

The Honors Thesis will be read by a committee of faculty members, usually three and often including faculty or other experts from outside Macalester. This committee then meets with the student for about an hour shortly after the oral presentation during which time they ask the student various questions about the thesis and about the student's research experience. Following the hour discussion with the student, the committee decides as a group whether the paper merits an Honors designation.

# **Environmental Studies**

## **Honors Thesis Timeline and Due Dates**

### **Junior Year**

- Explore honors topics.
- Project proposals will be accepted first and second semester junior year.
- Summer prior to senior year, continue research.

### **Senior Year**

September 15	Final deadline to submit an Honors Thesis proposal. At a September department meeting, the Environmental Studies faculty will review submitted proposals and decide which proposals are approved to proceed.
September 30	List of students pursuing Honors Thesis submitted to Dean of Academic Programs (include project title and name of primary advisor).
October 15	Student identifies three faculty members to serve on their honors committee (at least two of these members must be Environmental Studies Department faculty).
First Day of Classes – Spring semester	Detailed Thesis outline or review of literature due to advisor.
Early February – before the add/drop period	ES Department reviews outline/review of literature and approves continuation of the Honors Thesis. A revised list of students who have been approved to continue their work is submitted to Dean of Academic Programs (include project title and name of primary advisor).
March 15	First draft of thesis due.
Early April*	Final abstract due.
Early April*	Outside examiner payment form due (if applicable).
Early-Mid April*	Oral defenses to be scheduled.
April 15	Final draft due.
Late April*	Honors Thesis due.

\*Note: Dates are determined by Academic Programs. Check their website for specifics:  
[www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/honorsprogram](http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/honorsprogram)

# **Environmental Studies Honors Thesis Application**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Potential three member thesis committee (one outside member):

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Attach the following documents to this application:

1. One page thesis summary including a preliminary title, your guiding research question, methodology, and relevant coursework and experience.
2. A timeline indicating work done and to be done.
3. Short bibliography.
4. Official college transcript.
5. Letter from your department advisor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date