

Honors Project in Geography

Guidelines

1. Students must maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.3 and have officially declared a major in Geography. Note: An Honors Project will not replace the senior capstone experience required of all graduates of Macalester College.

2. By the first week of their senior year at the latest, a student should submit a written proposal to their Advisor. In the early fall of each year the Geography Department faculty will meet to review proposals. Each student will be notified, in a timely fashion, whether or not his/her proposal has been approved, requires revisions before approval, or is denied.

Proposals must include the following:

- An explanation of the topic and nature of the project
- A research question
- The proposed methodology for examining the question
- Major sources to be examined
- A proposed thesis committee of three (with at least two Macalester geography faculty) as well as at least two alternate committee members

Criteria for Approval:

Factors to be considered include pertinence of the topic, the plan for research, methodology proposed to carry out the research, course preparation of the student, and the form of the research project. It must have the potential to demonstrate independent critical thought and original research. Above all, the project must reflect an original approach to a significant theme within the discipline of geography. The proposal should be 3-6 pages in length.

3. Independent Study Credits

The Department recommends that students undertaking Honors Projects register for an Independent course (Geog 614) of 4 credits each semester they are working on their projects (first and second semester senior year). In some instances it may be appropriate to use a geography senior seminar to work on part of an honors thesis (but only in cases where this has been approved by the instructor). We expect that the Honors project will account for 4 - 8 credits (only four of these credits can count towards an individual student's major in Geography). Part of the independent study will involve mandatory attendance at a bi-weekly colloquium for all honors students during the fall semester.

4. Final Thesis

A substantial written thesis demonstrates independent critical thought and original research. It differs from a senior research paper in its depth, breadth and substance. The maximum length for an honors thesis in geography is 25,000 words (including references and note). Examples of past honors theses in geography may be found on the digital commons at: http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/geography_honors/

5. Evaluation Process

A committee of three will evaluate each Honors project, at least two of whom will be Geography Department faculty. The committee will read the Honors Thesis and engage the student in an oral defense of her/his project. The committee will decide whether to recognize the student's work with "Honors". The individual project advisor will be responsible for assigning the student a final grade for her/his independent study.

Project Timeline and Due Dates

Junior Year

- Explore honors topics
- Discuss project with advisor
- Potentially apply for Keck summer research funds (deadline in mid-February)
- Submit a project proposal if you plan to undertake research over the summer
- Seek approval from the Social Science Institutional Review Board (SSIRB) if you plan to work with human subjects. Information on this process may be found at: <http://www.macalester.edu/committees/irb/ssirb/>
- Summer prior to senior year: Conduct research if approved by department

Senior Year

End of the first week of school: Final deadline to submit an Honors Project Proposal. At its first or second September department meeting, the Geography faculty will review submitted proposal(s) and decide which proposal(s) are approved to proceed.

September 15th: Seek approval from the Social Science Institutional Review Board (SSIRB) if you plan to work with human subjects. Information on this process may be found at: <http://www.macalester.edu/committees/irb/ssirb/>

September 29th: Thesis Outline Due to Advisor.

September 30th: List of students pursuing Honors Projects submitted to Dean of Academic Programs (include project title and name of primary advisor).

October 15th: Student finalizes the list of three faculty members to serve on their honors committee. (At least two of these members must be Geography Department Faculty.)

December 1st: Progress report, outline and draft chapters due to advisor (and progress reviewed by department).

January 31st: First Draft Due.

January (late)*: 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).

First Monday after spring break (March 23 in 2015, March 21 in 2016): Second Draft Due to advisor (and progress reviewed by department).

April (early)*: Final Abstract Due.

April (early)*: Outside examiner payment form due (if applicable).

April (early-mid)*: Oral defenses to be scheduled.

April 15th : Final Draft Due.

May (early)*: Final Draft of Honors Thesis Due.

***Note:** Dates are determined by Academic Programs. Check their website for specifics:
www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/honors.html

Final Draft Format:

1) Submit four (4) original final copies to the Academic Programs Administrative Assistant. (Copies are for: student, library, advisor, and department.) For assistance with copying, please see Laura Kigin.

2) All final copies must be appropriate for binding and placement in the Weyerhaeuser Library. Therefore, please adhere to a 1 ¼ inch left margin and a 1 inch right, top and bottom margin.

3) Supply the Academic Programs Administrative Assistant with the mailing address where you would like your final copy sent.

(Revised fall 2014)