

Full Honors Thesis Guidelines

International Studies Department, Macalester College

September 25, 2013

Macalester's International Studies Department offers highly qualified and motivated students opportunities to do Honors work. Such work takes the form of an Honors Thesis in the senior year. Students interested in Honors work should first decide which of the College's many departments and programs is most appropriate for their work. All students should also read the Honors Thesis FAQ also available on the I.S. website.

International Studies work typically differs from more traditional disciplinary work in one or more of these ways: 1) it grapples comparatively with a single phenomenon across two or more regions or nations; 2) it attends to a single international phenomenon from multiple disciplinary perspectives; and/or 3) it addresses fully transnational phenomena, such as literary translation, tourism, remittances, globalization, or diasporic movement.

I. Prerequisites for participation in the I.S. Honors Program:

a declared major in International Studies

a minimum cumulative grade-point average at the end of the junior year of 3.50 across the curriculum, and 3.60 for courses in the student's I.S. major plan

one semester of study abroad by the end of the junior year. International students are considered to have completed this requirement after one semester at Macalester

agreement of a faculty member, who may be in any department, to supervise the student's International Studies Honors Thesis

An Honors Thesis does not normally substitute for completion of an I.S. senior seminar. Up to eight independent credits may be awarded for Thesis work; these credits may be applied, where appropriate, to other requirements in the student's I.S. major plan.

II. The Proposal:

Students are encouraged to begin thinking about International Studies Honors work, and discussing it with faculty, early in the junior year. Since most I.S. majors spend at least one junior semester abroad, it is especially important to begin early.

In conjunction with a supervisor who has agreed to supervise the Honors work, the student will develop a Proposal of approximately two thousand words which supplies the following:

brief statement of the problem to be addressed, and the main reasons why it is compelling
central questions, hypotheses, or arguments that will govern the development of the study
techniques, methods, and strategy to be adopted to gather necessary information
organization and structure of the thesis, typically in the form of a proposed chapter sequence

preliminary reading list and bibliography, including, as appropriate, scholarly books and articles, primary documents, data sets, interview transcriptions, and/or other materials

discussion of your personal preparation – curricular, co-curricular, experiential, international, linguistic and otherwise – for the proposed study

brief discussion of the faculty supervisor

III. Application Procedure and Deadlines:

N.B. should any of the dates listed in this document fall on a Saturday, Sunday, or other day when the College is not in session or the student or supervisor observes a religious holiday, the actual due date shall be interpreted as the first available day before the listed date.

Many of the Honors deadline dates are in fact College-established dates which shift slightly every year. Students should check the timeline distributed by Academic Programs each year, as these dates supersede any set by I.S.

A completed Proposal must be submitted to and approved by a proposal committee consisting of the faculty supervisor plus two core International Studies Department faculty. There are two submission deadlines:

For students on-campus during the spring of their junior year, the initial Proposal must be submitted no later than May 1st of that year.

For students studying away during the spring of their junior year, the Proposal must be submitted no later than the first Friday of fall semester of senior year. For such students, it is strongly recommended that they communicate extensively with potential faculty advisors during the spring that they are away

Shortly after the Proposal submission, the proposal committee by consensus judges whether the student may proceed. They may accept, reject, or require modifications in the proposal. By October 2nd (or other College-set date), the chair will notify the Dean of Academic Programs of their decision, the name of the supervisor, and the thesis title. Note that the most common weakness of initial Honors proposals is over-ambition: a desire to solve a more substantial problem than can be completed in the allotted time. Consider focus to be your friend.

IV. The Thesis Process:

Honors work in International Studies consists of a written Thesis which constitutes an original contribution to knowledge. While it is difficult to quantify what Honors work entails, experience indicates that theses with historical, documentary or review engagements typically exceed 25,000 words, while denser, theoretical projects commonly exceed 20,000 words. These numbers are exclusive of front matter, bibliography, and data or source-material appendices.

By November 1st of the Thesis year, the student will complete a literature review containing:

an annotated listing, classification, and discussion of the most pertinent scholarly literature

an identification of the part of the literature you find most agreeable, and why

a clear statement of how you intend your thesis to add to or go beyond that work.

By the first day of the spring semester of the Thesis year, the student will submit the totality of their work to that point to their supervisor. It is expected that, at this point, the thesis will be a minimum of fifty percent done: subject to the supervisor's requirements, this could mean either half of the chapters of the final document, or a full first draft of the entire text. In addition to fall-semester activity, it is expected that the student will spend most of the time between semesters (i.e. January) devoted to the thesis, preferably in St. Paul.

By January 31, the supervisor will make a preliminary assessment of the student's work to date, and will send to the Dean of Academic Programs a fresh indication that the student is approved to continue his or her work. This step is considered preliminary to the following larger checkup:

Having received the work to date, the advisor then judges the following:

whether the document has made substantial progress in the statement, development, and elaboration of the initially proposed study

whether appropriate adjustments have been made in the thesis plan, based on discoveries made during the writing of the study's first portion

whether a clear plan and timetable exists for the completion of the text.

Based on these criteria, the supervisor will file by February 11th with the Dean or Chair of International Studies a one-page assessment of the progress to date, concluding with either a.) approval for the student to continue, or b.) removal of the student from the I.S. Honors program.

By the Monday immediately following the College's Spring Mid-Term Break, the student submits to his or her supervisor a draft of the entire Thesis, including all portions listed in the "Format" section, below. This draft is expected to be not only virtually complete with respect to the arguments advanced, but also at an advanced state of editorial polish.

On that same day, the student and supervisor together will submit a list of the thesis examining committee. This committee will consist of the supervisor and two additional faculty. It is strongly recommended that one of these additional examiners be from outside of Macalester; a modest honorarium will be available for such participants.

One week later (i.e. the next Monday), the supervisor will return to the student a marked up version of the near-final draft, including a one-page report of the final revisions to be made.

One week beyond this (another Monday), the student will submit to the supervisor three copies of the final version, on which the student will be examined. The supervisor will then distribute this to the examiners.

No later than the last Monday in April (or whatever date is announced by Academic Programs each year), at a time mutually agreeable to supervisor and examiners, an oral examination will be held, as described below.

V. Final Evaluation:

Final evaluation of an Honors thesis will take the form of an Oral Examination lasting 1.5 to two hours and open to the public. First, the examining committee will meet privately to discuss the sequence of the questions to be asked in the examination's second portion. Then, the student will offer a twenty-minute public presentation of the thesis, its main points and key claims.

At that point, the student will entertain questions posed by the examining committee, ranging across the thesis' depth and breadth. Then members of the general audience will be invited to ask questions. Shortly before the end of the exam, the student and guests will be excused and the committee will decide by consensus – or if no consensus is available will decide by simple majority vote – pass or fail. The examiners may, if they wish, pass the Thesis on condition of last (though not major) revisions before the final document is submitted to International Studies. The student will then be invited to return to hear the result.

By April 30 or other College-specified date, International Studies will notify Academic Programs of exam results, including exact thesis titles and examiner names. By May 8, successful theses shall be submitted to International Studies, which sends them to Academic Programs for binding. The College Honors Program will pay for two copies, and International Studies for two more: one each for the College Library, the student, the Thesis supervisor, and the International Studies Department.

VI. Format:

An International Studies Honors Thesis will consist of the following parts, in this order:

Half-title page, listing the Thesis's main title only

Title page, listing the title, subtitle, name of author, and note "An Honors Thesis Submitted to the International Studies Department at Macalester College, Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA," and noting the month and year of completion.

A signature page, to be used in the event of a successful examination

A table of contents page

A page containing an abstract of no more than 100 words, which summarizes the thesis, its main arguments, and conclusions

An epigraph page, if desired

One page of acknowledgments

Preface or Introduction

The chapters of the Thesis

Conclusion

Bibliography

Font for body text and footnotes should be twelve point throughout. Margins should be set at one inch on top, right, and bottom, and 1.5 inches on the left, to allow for binding. Footnotes should be preferred over endnotes. Sample copies of the above format will be available in the International Studies Department office.

In conjunction with the faculty supervisor, the student should select a style – such as MLA, Chicago, Turabian, or other professional approach – appropriate to the discipline concerned. The purchase of the relevant style guide is strongly recommended for these purposes.