



University Honors Program Senior Thesis Information Packet

Senior year is right around the corner!

By the end of your experience in the University Honors Program, students will complete a Senior Thesis and take an Honors Capstone course.

A **Senior Thesis** is broadly defined as a substantial work of independent scholarship that culminates in a written product, presentation or performance. There are three ways to complete the Honors Senior Thesis which will be outlined in this packet.

The **Honors Capstone** is separate from the Honors Senior Thesis as it is a 1-credit, pass/no pass course. The capstone invites students to re-engage with core questions and issues related to the Honors Program curriculum, reflecting on their learning in relation to enduring questions and challenges of our world. Each capstone option has a different theme and students can learn more about their options on the Honors Program website under 'Course Descriptions'.

Both the Senior Thesis and Honors Capstone can be taken in either semester in your final year and do not need to be taken in the same semester.

Finally, there are several ways to earn other forms of honors merit through GPA-based or departmental distinctions at GW. They are also outlined in this packet.

If you have questions about any of this information, please speak with an Honors Program Manager.

Best wishes for a successful senior year!

Option #1: Thesis Through the University Honors Program

The Honors Senior Thesis allows you to complete an independent senior thesis (independent means “not associated with a seminar”). First, you must find a faculty advisor who is willing to advise you in preparing a senior thesis. Your faculty advisor can be any full-time professor at GWU. Your senior thesis requirement cannot be fulfilled with a part-time faculty member as your primary advisor. If you’re not sure if a faculty member can oversee your thesis, please check with a Program Manager. This faculty advisor will be responsible for grading your final product. Some students choose to organize a senior thesis committee, but this is not required, as only one faculty member will have the authority to assign your thesis final grade.

In selecting this option, students will be enrolled in **HONR 4198** (Honors Senior Thesis course). This course can be taken for 3 or 4 credits as a letter grade for either one or two semesters. During this time, you might complete, for example, a library-based research paper, a primary research-based paper, or a creative project (this option is generally for Fine Arts and Creative Writing majors). You are responsible for developing your thesis topic, form, scope, and grading criteria in consultation with your faculty advisor.

To be enrolled in HONR 4198, students must fill out an **Honors Contract**. The Honors Contract can be found on the Honors Program website under ‘Forms and Documents’ and needs to be turned in by the deadline set for the semester of enrollment. As part of the Honors Contract, students will submit a proposal outlining the nature of your project, your meeting schedule with your advisor, any deadlines throughout the semester, a breakdown of how your final grade will be calculated, and a grading rubric. The Honors newsletter and Honors website will announce the due date for the Contract forms.

After you have submitted the Honors Contract, the University Honors Program will confirm the agreement with your faculty advisor. Toward the end of the semester, the University Honors Program will also request your final thesis grade from that professor. Please consult an Honors Program Manager for more information about this process or option.

Option #2: Through Major or School

In lieu of HONR 4198 (Honors Senior Thesis course), Honors students can satisfy Honors Senior Thesis requirement by enrolling in a qualifying 3-4 credit departmental course. A qualifying departmental course is one that requires students to engage independently in a substantial work of scholarship (as opposed to completing a standard term paper or project on an instructor-assigned topic).

Please note that if your major/department does not offer a research or independent study course, if you are not eligible for the major/department course, or if you choose not to pursue one of the options below, then you must complete a thesis through the University Honors Program (HONR 4198, Option #1). All requirements apply to students in special 5-year and 7-year programs as well.

To verify enrollment in any Senior Thesis course as an alternative to HONR 4198, you must submit a **Senior Thesis Verification Form**. This form can be found on the Honors Program website under 'Forms and Documents' and needs to be turned in by the deadline set for the semester of enrollment. Please note that a minimum grade of C- is required to fulfill the Honors Senior Thesis requirement. If a grade of C- or above has not been earned at the end of the semester, the course will not count as fulfilling the Honors Thesis requirement. After the deadline, a petition will be submitted to ensure that the alternative thesis course is applied in Degree Map.

Below is a list of qualifying courses by school (or more information about what type of courses might qualify). Pursuing any of these options requires the submission of a Senior Thesis Verification Form.

GWSB -- BADM 4001 Section 12: "Undergraduate Research"

- *Please note: For students who entered in Fall 2018 -- BADM 4801: "Strategy Formulation and Implementation" will count.*

SEAS -- For Engineering students, the final semester of the senior design project. Including: EMSE 4191 "Senior Project in Systems Engineering II"; BME 4925W "Biomedical Engineering Capstone Project Lab III"; CE 4342 "Senior Design Project II"; ECE 4925W "Electrical and Computer Engineering Capstone Project Lab III"; CSCI 4244 "Capstone Design Project II"; MAE 4152W "Capstone Design Project II"

Milken (Public Health majors only): PUBH 3995 Undergraduate Research or PUBH 4199 or some topics in PUBH 4140W or PUBH 4141. Please contact a Program Manager for more information.

- *Please note: For students who entered in Fall 2018 -- PUBH 4140W: "Senior Seminar" will count.*

Corcoran: CFA 4090: "Fine Art Thesis I" and CFA 4091 "Fine Art Thesis II". This course is limited to bachelor of fine arts students. Please see the Corcoran website for more details.

ESIA:

- IAFF 4191 / IAFF 4191W: "Research Seminar": Research Seminar courses provide an opportunity for students to write a substantial research paper on an issue related to the general subject of the seminar. Please see the Elliott School website for more details.
- IAFF 4199: "Senior Thesis" fulfills the Honors Senior Thesis requirement. Students must register for this thesis option through ESIA. Please see the Elliott School website for more details.
- Elliott Dean's Scholars Program, a two-year-long research opportunity offering students support and guidance as you conduct independent research on contemporary international affairs topics. Please see the Elliott School website for more details.

CCAS: Many CCAS students complete this thesis requirement by enrolling in an alternative research or independent study course (or courses) offered by the department in which they are majoring. These courses are 3000 or 4000 level, with titles such as "Undergraduate Research", "Senior Thesis", "Independent Study", or "Directed Project." This course will require you, with the help of a faculty guide or mentor, to produce a substantial work of independent scholarship, typically in the form of a written product, presentation or performance.

Note that in some departments, these types of courses are limited to students pursuing "special departmental honors," and each department has different criteria for allowing the pursuit of special honors, so consult with your departmental advisor to make sure that you are eligible for course enrollment. Even if you do not ultimately receive special departmental honors, the course will count toward your Honors Senior Thesis requirement so long as you have completed the course with a C- or higher.

For you have questions, please contact a Program Manager.

Option #3: Enosinian Scholars Program

Limited to students accepted into the Enosinian Scholars Program

The Enosinian Scholars Program aims to prepare gifted undergraduates for advanced work in their fields and provides both financial backing and mentoring during the student's senior year. These students represent the most lively and committed scholars in a variety of fields, who come together in this program to share their work with faculty and peers.

Students apply in the spring of their junior year to participate during their senior year. The application process is simple, designed to take very little time, especially for those who have already thought about a research project for their senior year. The program looks for students who have a high grade point average within their discipline (typically 3.5 or higher), a clear idea for their senior thesis, and the strong support of a faculty member. Successful candidates then are registered for HONR 4198 (Honors Senior Thesis) unless they are already registered for thesis credits within their departments.

Beginning in the fall semester of their senior year, participants meet regularly, as a group and individually, with the Enosinian advisor. They also submit work to the Enosinian advisor leading up to their theses, including a statement of purpose, an annotated bibliography, an outline, and a selected segment of the thesis. With feedback during each phase, the student can confidently move forward toward completing the thesis in the course of the second semester. The Enosinian advisor also meets with each student's departmental thesis director and reader so that there is clear communication about the progress of the thesis.

At the end of the spring semester, all participants give an oral presentation and "defense" of their work. The examining board consists of the student's director, reader, and one reviewer from outside the GW community. If the thesis and the defense meet the standards of the Enosinian Program, the student becomes an Enosinian Scholar, a designation that appears on his or her transcript. Students who do not achieve GW Enosinian Scholar status but receive a passing grade from their advisors will get full credit toward graduation.

To learn more about the Enosinian Scholars Program, please visit:

<https://honorsprogram.gwu.edu/enosinian-scholars>.

If you have questions about the [Enosinian Scholars Program](#), please contact Dr. Elizabeth Chacko (echacko@gwu.edu) or an Honors Program Manager.

Forms of Honors Merit at GW

The Honors Program encourages students to pursue other forms of merit in addition to the Honors Program requirements.

University Honors Program Graduate

By completing the University Honors Program requirements, you will be listed as a graduate of the University Honors Program. To earn this distinction, you must:

- Graduate with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Take at least 12 credit hours every semester
- Take the Honors Capstone course
- Complete a senior thesis which fulfills the Honors Senior Thesis requirement
- Fulfill all other Honors requirements and be in good standing with the program.

The “Honors Program Graduate” distinction will also appear on your transcript.

Latin Honors

Determined by cumulative GPA:

Cum Laude 3.40-3.59

Magna Cum Laude 3.60-3.79

Summa Cum Laude 3.80-4.0

This will appear on your diploma.

Special Honors in a Major or School

The requirements for special honors vary between departments and schools, so you should contact your major advisor for more information.

Research or independent study courses taken in the pursuit of special honors may fulfill your Honors Senior Thesis requirement. For more details, please consult with an Honors Program Manager.

This will appear on your transcript.