

AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM SENIOR HONORS THESIS GUIDELINES

Eligibility. Any American Studies major with a 3.5 average in the major at the end of the junior year is eligible to apply for permission to write an honors thesis. Successful completion of the honors thesis requires students to:

- work independently
- conduct sustained research, including breadth across multiple disciplines and depth in at least one
- write intensively and extensively, meeting several deadlines along the way to completing the final product

The honors thesis may count as one course toward fulfilling major requirements.

Description. The honors thesis will be a substantial study of a carefully defined topic in American Studies. It will argue an original thesis supported by both primary and critical sources. It should be interdisciplinary in method and sources. It will conform to either the latest edition of the *MLA Style Manual* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Proposal. Students will declare their intent to write a senior thesis in spring of the junior year by choosing a topic, speaking with a faculty member who agrees to be the thesis advisor, and enrolling in AM483 (an independent honors course, to be taken the following fall). Over the summer between junior and senior years, the student will develop a proposal. The student will submit the proposal and cover sheet to the Director of the American Studies Program by September 5th of the senior year, explaining in detail the topic of the thesis and stating the name of a faculty member who has agreed to serve as the director of the thesis. Proposals should reflect significant initial research and thought, and should contain the following:

- An introduction that presents the research question.
- A brief discussion of the student's qualifications—How will courses taken or other experiences assist in pursuing the answer to the research question?
- An overview of the scholarship on this topic—Who else has written about it, how have they approached the topic, and what does the project add to the scholarly conversation?
- A discussion of how the topic will be approached—What theoretical or methodological models will be drawn upon, and how will they help answer the research question?
- A discussion of primary sources—What sources are available and how do they help answer the research question?
- An assessment of the possible challenges anticipated over the course of the research.

Like the final project, the proposal will conform to either the *MLA Style Manual* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*. **Proposals must be accompanied by a completed cover sheet** (see attached).

The proposal will be reviewed by the Program's Thesis Committee, whose members will either accept it, reject it, or request that it be revised and resubmitted. In years when the number of students working on thesis projects is especially high, the Thesis Committee reserves the right to reassign projects to directors other than those chosen by the students.

Individual Thesis Committee. If the proposal is accepted by the Program's Thesis Committee, the student and thesis director will form a thesis committee with one additional faculty member (second reader). In most but not all cases, the second reader will be a faculty member in the American Studies Program. The thesis director will consult with the second reader at the end of January to discuss the student's progress on the project and again in April and May to assign a final grade.

Calendar. In spring of the junior year, the student will seek an advisor, decide on a topic, and register for AM483. Over the summer, the student will research and write the thesis proposal. During the fall semester, under the supervision of the thesis director, the student will establish a schedule that includes ongoing research and writing goals. The student will submit a draft of a substantial portion of the thesis to the thesis director by the end of the fall term. The January and spring terms will be devoted to completing and revising the thesis. At the end of January, the student should provide a draft of what he/she has written to that point to the thesis director and to the second reader for comments and suggestions. Regular progress meetings with the director throughout the year are strongly encouraged.

A completed draft and a one-page abstract will be due by April 5th. The student's thesis committee may ask the student to make revisions before a final grade is assigned.

Grade. The thesis must receive a grade of A- or higher in order to qualify for Honors. The grade will be computed by averaging the grades given by the director and the second reader.

Credits. The student will register for American Studies 483/484 (Senior Thesis) for a total of up to eight credits (four in the fall and spring terms, or three in fall and spring plus two in January). If the student is making satisfactory progress, non-graded credit (CR) will be posted for the fall and January terms. Once the thesis is completed and assigned a grade at the end of the spring semester, this grade will then replace the CR posted for the fall and January terms. If a student's thesis does not receive the required minimum grade of A-, the grade assigned will replace the CR for the previous terms, but the registrar will change the registration to 491/492 (Independent Study) for all three terms. If for any reason the student does not bring the thesis to satisfactory completion after having received non-graded credit in the fall and/or January terms, the grade of CR will remain on the student's transcript for those terms, and the registrar will change the registration to 491/492 (Independent Study). If the members of the individual thesis committee consider that the student is not making satisfactory progress toward the completion of the thesis, they may, at any time, ask the student to withdraw from the honors program.

Public Presentation. Upon completion of the thesis, and before the end of spring classes, the student will make a public presentation of the results of his/her research. The presentation will be open to the members of the American Studies Program and invited guests. Under most circumstances, students will fulfill this obligation by participating in the Colby Liberal Arts Symposium (CLAS).

**AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM
SENIOR HONORS THESIS
COVER SHEET**

NAME:

DATE:

TITLE OF PROJECT:

FACULTY MEMBER WHO HAS AGREED TO DIRECT THE PROJECT:

**PLEASE LIST *ALL* COURSES TAKEN THAT COUNT TOWARD THE
AMERICAN STUDIES MAJOR, ALONG WITH THE GRADE YOU RECEIVED
IN EACH COURSE:**

**WHAT IS YOUR GPA IN THE MAJOR? (Calculate by adding all of the grades
you received as listed above, and then dividing by the number of courses listed
above.)**

**COURSES TAKEN (AMERICAN STUDIES OR NOT) THAT PROVIDE
RELEVANT BACKGROUND (METHODOLOGICAL, THEORETICAL, OR
RELATED CONTENT) FOR THIS PROJECT:**