UAB English Honors Program
Honors Thesis Guidelines

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The following document presents guidelines for students and faculty involved in Honors Thesis Committees through the UAB English Honors Program. These guidelines are meant to provide direction to students and faculty concerning the writing of the honors thesis and its presentation in final draft form.

The English Honors Thesis is the final project for an English major enrolled in the departmental English Honors Program. Students may write a creative thesis or a critical thesis in the areas of literature, professional writing, or linguistics. The Honors Thesis should present a student’s original research and writing. It should demonstrate a student’s ability to think critically and write clearly and originally about the thesis subject, and, for critical theses, should demonstrate the student’s familiarity with published research in the thesis subject area.

The Honors Thesis receives final approval by a thesis committee consisting of the Faculty Mentor, a Second Reader (drawn from the English faculty), and the Director of English Honors. Approval of the document by all members of the committee is required for the student to graduate with Honors in English at UAB commencement. All completed Honors Theses are kept on file in the English Department.

Deadlines

Hand in Application Form and Senior Thesis Committee Form to Honors Director prior to 494 semester

Hand in Thesis Proposal to committee 494 semester: Nov. 29 (fall), Apr. 11 (spring), or July 26 (summer)

Hand in Thesis to committee 495 semester: Nov. 23 (fall), Apr. 5 (spring), or July 20 (summer)

Have Thesis Defense 495 semester: last week of classes or exam week

Send electronic copy of thesis to Undergraduate Director before Defense
Hand in official **print copy** of thesis at Defense (including signatory page)

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**Meetings**

The faculty mentor and the student should decide how often to meet. Usually a meeting every week or two is sufficient. Faculty mentors and students should keep in touch frequently in order to make sure that students are making good progress on their projects.

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**Forms and Documents**

There are three central documents that students must submit to the Director of English Honors before completing the English Honors Program. These documents are:

1) the Application Form and Senior Thesis Committee Form, which must be handed in before the student is accepted to the program;

2) the Thesis Proposal, which must be completed during EH 494 and approved by all members of the thesis committee; and

3) the Thesis, written during EH 495: Honors Thesis, and approved by all members of the thesis committee.

*Application Form and Senior Thesis Committee Form*

The Application Form and the Senior Thesis Committee Form are available on the English Department website. Students should complete the forms and hand them in to the Honors Director at least two weeks before they plan to register for their first term of thesis work. One semester is needed for the writing of the thesis proposal (EH 494); another term (EH 495) is needed for the writing of the honors thesis.

*Thesis Proposal*

In their first semester of honors work, students should write a thesis proposal under the direction of their Faculty Mentor.

The proposal of a critical thesis should run from five to eight pages; should clearly state the thesis claim and argument of the proposed study (the “what”) and the significance of the study in relation to existing research (the “why”); should include a short synopsis of proposed chapters or content of the thesis; and should include a bibliography of sources to be consulted, usually at least fifteen.

For a creative thesis, the proposal should include substantial work in progress, along with a concise (1-3 paragraph) explanation of the project. The explanation should describe the work’s genre, prospective length, subject, voice, style, and/or other significant characteristics.

The completed proposal is due to the committee on Nov. 29 (fall), Apr. 11 (spring), or July 26 (summer). Before handing in the proposal, the student should already have revised and polished
it in consultation with his or her Faculty Mentor. After receiving the completed proposal, the committee may approve it as is, or they may request further revisions.

**Honors Thesis**

At the end of the capstone semester (EH 495), the student will turn in a completed thesis. Literature, professional writing, and linguistics students will turn in a critical thesis (at least thirty pages) with an extensive list of works cited (fifteen or more sources). Creative writers will turn in a substantial creative project—short stories, a section of a novel, essays, a body of poetry, or a play—along with a one- or two-page reflection on their writing experience.

A complete, error-free, paginated manuscript should be turned in to the committee on Nov. 23 (fall), Apr. 5 (spring), or July 20 (summer). Before handing in the thesis, the student should already have revised and polished it in consultation with his or her Faculty Mentor. After receiving the thesis, the committee may approve it as is, or they may request further revisions.

As soon as students have handed in their manuscripts, they should work on assembling the “preliminary pages” (see below). The student should bring a final, bound version of the thesis, complete with preliminary pages, to the Defense.

**Thesis Defense**

In consultation with the Mentor, Second Reader, and Director, the student should schedule a Thesis Defense in the last week of classes or during finals week.

Before the Defense, an electronic copy of the thesis should be submitted to the Undergraduate Director.

At the successful conclusion of the Thesis Defense, all members of the thesis committee should sign the signatory page, and this page should be included as page 2, after the title page, in the approved copy of the thesis (see Appendix: Signatory Page). A copy of this signed thesis should be given to the Honors Director.

**Grading**

The student must earn an A or B in EH 494 in order to proceed to EH 495. To receive departmental Honors, the student must earn an A in EH 495. The presumption is that all students who successfully complete and defend a thesis will receive an A and earn Honors.

If the student does not satisfactorily complete and defend a thesis, but if the advisor still believes the student deserves credit for the course, the advisor may assign a grade other than A. By earning a C or above in EH 495, the student receives capstone credit.

**Format for Honors Theses**
The English Honors thesis is a document that is longer than an average undergraduate term paper but not as long or involved as a Masters thesis. Generally, honors theses are about 30 pages long, excluding notes and bibliography. A critical thesis generally falls into three main parts: preliminary pages, text, and reference materials. A creative writing thesis may contain the first two or all three parts.

**Preliminary Pages**

The preliminary pages of the honors thesis include the title page, the signatory page, the acknowledgments, and any lists of tables, figures, or abbreviations used in the text. According to MLA format, preliminary pages are generally numbered with Roman numerals if they are numbered, while text pages are numbered with Arabic numbering.

- **Title Page:** The title page is required. It should include a thesis title that concisely states the topic of the thesis and indicates the texts studied and critical approaches used. It should also include the author’s name, the date the thesis was approved, and the name of the department to which it was submitted. See Appendix: Title Page for an example.
- **Signatory Page:** The signatory page is required and should appear as page ii of the thesis. See Appendix: Signatory Page for format and text.
- **Acknowledgments:** The acknowledgments page is optional. Here the student may thank committee or family members or acknowledge other positive contributions to his/her academic experience.
- **Lists of tables, figures, or abbreviations:** These are all optional and are included only if the thesis includes these forms.

**Text**

The text of the thesis should present original creative or scholarly work. Neither parroting of existing research nor paraphrase of commonplace ideas in the subject area is acceptable. The thesis committee should work closely with the student to help him or her to research and consider the topic thoroughly but also to investigate a creative or scholarly approach that is uniquely the student’s own.

For the text, the main body of the document, a consistent style must be followed. Students should consult the *MLA Handbook* in its latest edition to determine the style for documentation and citation as well as general formatting of a critical essay. In critical theses, the text will include an introduction, a body discussion, and a conclusion or summary.

**Works Cited and Reference Materials**

*Critical Thesis:* One of the goals of the critical thesis project is to teach undergraduate majors how to research a topic thoroughly and to document their critical investigation accurately. The faculty mentor and other thesis committee members should help the student compile a complete and accurate bibliography for the thesis. Partial or incomplete research is not acceptable, and the “Works Cited” section should show ample evidence that the student has
consulted and taken into account the major available research on the subject, in all major forms of refereed references (websites, books, articles, interviews, etc). A “Works Cited” section (Bibliography) is required for all critical theses and should follow the MLA Handbook format for documentation and works cited. Students should list only works cited in this section. The reference materials may also include a “works consulted” secondary bibliography or a specialized bibliography citing related works if the student so wishes.

**Creative Writing Thesis:** “Works Cited” sections for creative writing theses are optional. For the creative thesis, background research may be necessary for the integrity of the project but is not required; however, students should expect to do considerable revision in consultation with faculty mentors on their way to a final draft of the thesis.

**Ethics**

Plagiarism is using the words or thoughts of another person without proper citation. Specifically, it is submitting as one’s own work a portion of a book, magazine, journal, handout, original creation, speech, lecture, oral communication, website, paper or examination written by someone else. Plagiarism is a serious offense and in student documents could result in dismissal from the university and revocation of the degree. All members of the educational community must carefully avoid plagiarism by fully acknowledging the source of all statements, studies, projects and ideas that have been produced by another person. Students must be careful to provide complete documentation in their theses of all ideas originating in their primary and secondary research.

**Style, Format, Binding**

The thesis should be typed in one primary font, preferably 12-point Times New Roman. Typeface should be black. Underlining and italics should not exist together within the document; students should choose one (italics is recommended) and stick with it throughout the text. The left margin should be 1.5 inches; right, top, and bottom margins should be 1 inch.

The text should be printed on one side of the page only. Standard double spacing should be used throughout the text. Headings and subheadings may be used but are not required; if used, they should be consistent in format throughout the text and followed by at least two lines of text at the ends of pages.

Text should be left justified, with standard 0.5” paragraph indentation. Pages should be numbered in the top right corner.

The candidate must submit to the English Department on typed, computer generated, or photocopied copy of the thesis on white, 25% cotton, acid-free paper. This copy should be clean and of high quality.

The thesis should be bound inexpensively by a printer, and it should have a colorless, transparent plastic top and back cover. The Title Page of the thesis should show through the plastic top cover. As a courtesy and as a “thank you” for work on the student’s thesis, all members of the student’s honors thesis committee should also receive bound copies of the final, approved draft of the thesis.
Appendix: Title Page

THE TITLE OF THE THESIS SHOULD BE IN CAPITAL LETTERS, BE SINGLE SPACED, AND START TWO INCHES FROM THE TOP OF THE PAGE

by

YOUR NAME HERE

An Honors Thesis
submitted to the English Department at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the departmental undergraduate honors program in English

Birmingham, Alabama
[date approved by thesis committee]
Appendix: Signatory Page

[On page 2 of the thesis, following the title page, there should be included a signatory page that shows that the thesis has been approved by all members of the student’s Thesis Committee. The information below should be centered without a title on this signatory page.]

We, the undersigned members of the Thesis Committee of

____________ [name of student] ______________________, approve and accept the following document as his/her thesis for completion of the departmental honors program in English.

_____________________________________________________________________________

[Type title and full name], Faculty Mentor Date

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[Type title and full name], Faculty Reader Date

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[Type title and full name], Director of English Honors Date