

**Mount Holyoke College**  
**Gender Studies Department**  
**Thesis Guidelines**

**(effective April 2015; updated December 2024)**

We encourage students to engage in culminating projects during their senior year. These projects can take varying forms, such as Independent Study with a faculty member, for one or two semesters, without the outcome being a projected honors thesis. Those students who are specifically interested in doing honors work (i.e. a senior thesis) should plan well ahead of time, usually in their junior year, what their general topic will be, and approach the faculty member(s) with whom they would like to work. By setting up at least an informal working relationship with their projected main thesis advisor, the student can then utilize the summer between their junior and senior years to do preliminary research, either in the form of readings or field work. A thesis workshop will be held every Spring semester for students in their junior year who are interested in learning more about honors' thesis.

**GNDST 395**

Under current college legislation and departmental policy, students in the Spring semester of their senior year are only required to take 4 credits of Independent Study i.e. GNDST 395 because part of Senior Seminar (GNDST 392) in the Fall semester is explicitly dedicated to working on individual projects such as honors thesis, senior projects, research projects, activist projects and so on. **However, it is strongly recommended** that students seriously pursuing an honors thesis also enroll in 4 credits of GNDST 395 in the Fall of their senior year with the faculty member who will be directing the thesis. This will be concomitant with Senior Seminar.

**Thesis timeline**

The following is a timeline of required steps toward an honors thesis (all dates refer to the student's senior year for Spring graduates). At each stage, the advisor, in consultation with the department, will decide whether or not the project can continue as an honors thesis.

<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Components (What is required?)</b>
<b>September 15 – October 1</b>	<b>Statement of intent/one-page abstract</b> Provide primary thesis advisor with 1-2 paragraphs describing the general parameters of the project, some key conceptual terms, and the primary methodology
<b>October 15</b>	<b>Preliminary Research Review with annotations*</b> 20-25 sources, with 3-4 sentence annotations that directly address the readings value for the project

<p><b>Thanksgiving Break</b></p>	<p><b>Literature Review ** and Outline</b> 3-5 page literature review and rough outline of the entire thesis (breakdown in chapters as planned)</p>
<p><b>End of Fall Semester</b></p>	<p><b>Writing Sample and Abstract ***</b> 12-18 page writing sample, projected to be a future chapter</p>
<p><b>January</b></p>	<p><b>Continued Writing</b> Drawing on the outline established during Senior Seminar, students should plan on drafting as much of the bulk of their thesis as possible</p> <p>The second reader on the committee should be determined by the end of January/ early February.</p>
<p><b>Spring Semester GNDST 395</b></p>	<p><b>Continued writing</b> During the early part of the Spring Semester, students should draft the entire projected thesis in collaboration with their main thesis advisor. A complete thesis committee should be established.</p> <p>The outside or third reader on the committee should be confirmed in March.</p>
<p><b>End of Spring Break</b></p>	<p><b>Complete first draft to advisor</b> By the end of Spring Break, a first draft of the thesis should be completed. This draft will receive feedback from the main advisor, with the option of additional committee members offering feedback.</p> <p>At this point, the thesis advisor, in consultation with the rest of the department, will make a final decision as to whether the student should continue with the project as a thesis.</p>
<p><b>End of Spring semester</b></p>	<p><b>Defense date set</b> The defense will usually take place the week after classes end. The defense date cannot be set during the reading days.</p>

	<p>The final draft should be circulated to the entire committee two weeks before the defense date.</p> <p>If the thesis passes, minor revisions for grammar and typographical errors can be done up until the filing deadline with LITS which is July 1st for Spring graduates and February 1st for December graduates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <a href="#">Please see thesis honor work submission policies from MHC Here.</a></li><li>● <a href="#">Graduation Honors Guide here</a></li><li>● <a href="#">For definitions of honors work, high honors, magna cum laude and summa see faculty legislation (p.45-46)</a></li></ul>
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\* For help with how to write annotations, see: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/>

\*\* For help with how to write a lit review, see: <http://guides.library.ucsc.edu/write-a-literature-review>

\*\*\* For help with how to write an abstract, see: <https://urc.ucdavis.edu/how-write-abstract>

Some guidelines on thesis writing:

1. [Resources for Thesis writers- MHC](#)
2. [How to write an undergraduate honors thesis \(Medium\)](#)