

Guidelines and Best Practices for completing an Honors Thesis in the Department of Communication Arts & Sciences

The Department of Communication Arts & Sciences is proud to provide students who have demonstrated a commitment to excellent scholarly work with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of their particular area of interest. Through an honors thesis, scholars are encouraged to develop a mentor/mentee relationship with a CAS faculty member who will guide and help inform their work.

First and foremost, it is vital that scholars familiarize themselves with the Schreyer Honors College [website](#) where year-to-year [dates and deadlines](#) can be found in addition to fundamental expectations for thesis progress and completed manuscripts ([Thesis Project Guide](#)).

The CAS Thesis

Students majoring in Communication Arts & Sciences have great flexibility in subject focus and research style, based on the major's two distinct degree paths: Rhetoric (B.A.) and Communication Science (B.S.). In either case, the thesis is intended to be an opportunity to learn and practice research methods, critical thought, problem-solving, and scholarly writing. It is intended to be a challenge that, when completed, can stand as an example of a student's highest academic achievement and an indication of academic or professional promise.

Eligibility

To write an honors thesis, students must be:

- a CAS major

or

- a CAS minor

or

- must meet with the Honors Adviser with a plan and the pre-approval of a member of the CAS faculty who agrees in advance to supervise the entire thesis process.

In addition, students must have taken the major's core courses before or during the semester they take CAS 460H.

Process

Great care is taken in guiding CAS Scholars through the thesis process. Ideally, students in their fourth semester (typically spring semester of sophomore year) register for 3 credits of 460H. In this independent study, students explore research topics, define research questions, identify thesis supervisors, and complete their thesis proposals. Though Schreyer expects this process to be completed by the end of a student's junior year (one year before the intended graduation date), the

Department of Communication Arts and Sciences expects the independent study to be completed NO LATER than a student's fifth semester.

Following completion of CAS 460H, CAS Scholars may take up to 6 credits of CAS 494H (Thesis Writing) to make time for thesis research and writing. Typically, these credits are split between fall and spring semesters of students' junior year (fifth and sixth semesters), or across sixth and seventh semesters. It is likely that students will work outside of these credits, but in general, they are intended to both fulfill 400-level major requirements and give students space and time to work. This work will be directly supervised by the Thesis Supervisor. Grades for both CAS 460H and 494H are derived from the student's completion of the agreed upon tasks and the quality thereof.

****Highly Recommended for Social Science Scholars*

CAS 561 – Quantitative Research Methods; in preparation for a social science thesis, this course will provide an excellent methodological foundation.

Length

Length of theses will vary for many reasons, but is expected to meet a minimum page number of forty where there is limited usage of charts or illustrations. A thesis may extend well beyond this minimum. In the end, an expected page length should be suggested by a Scholar's Thesis Supervisor, ideally with a breakdown of the goals for each chapter.

(See Schreyer Honors College [formatting requirements](#).)

Proper Citation

Scholars should consult their Thesis Supervisor for guidance on best practices for citations.

Helpful sources for citation include: *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*; *The Chicago Manual of Style*; *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*; *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian.

The thesis should include a complete bibliography of all sources used for the thesis.

Submission

See the Schreyer Honors College website for [submission guidelines and deadlines](#).

A full draft of the thesis must be filed in mid-March with Schreyer Honors College as part of a mandatory format review. At this time, Scholars must also submit the full draft to their Thesis Supervisor, second reader (if applicable), and honors adviser.

The finished thesis must be submitted to the above noted parties for signature before final submission to Schreyer Honors College. Scholars should plan accordingly, giving all parties time to adequately review the final draft.

Honors theses are held to a standard of excellence. **Completion does not guarantee approval by those overseeing the thesis. A Scholar whose work does not meet expectations will be asked to either defer graduation to adequately complete the thesis requirements or to graduate without an honors**

distinction. With strong communication and attention to guidance provided by the Thesis Supervisor, such a scenario can likely be avoided.