

Writing an Honors Thesis in Religion: Guidelines

'Honors' in the major is available only to students who write an Honors Thesis. This is normally done in the senior year-by enrolling in Religion 86 and 87 for two consecutive terms - Fall and Winter, or Winter and Spring. In some unusual cases, students enroll for REL 86 in the Fall and REL 87 in the Spring. Together, REL 86 and 87 fulfill the culminating experience requirement in the major/ and they count for two of the major's nine required courses. The procedure for writing an Honors Thesis is described below.

1. Preparation (Junior Year - Fall/Winter Term)

Plans for writing a thesis must be made during the junior year - the earlier the better. Begin by meeting with that faculty member, or faculty members, in the department with whom you expect to work. If you have already selected a topic, discuss plans for approach, do preliminary readings, and compile a tentative bibliography. If you do not have a topic, but know the general area in which you want to work, faculty will help you narrow your focus and propose possibilities for you to consider. Your main thesis advisor should be a faculty member in this department; where relevant, second readers or advisors in other departments or programs can be involved. Not all faculty are available every year to supervise work. That is why it is urgent that you consult with relevant faculty as early as possible.

2. Proposal (Junior Year - Winter/Spring Term)

To be accepted for thesis work, you must make a formal "proposal" to the department. Your proposal should be 2-4 pages in length. In your proposal you should:

- a) explain what it is you want to examine and why;
- b) note your preparation for this investigation (i.e., relevant course work);
- c) explain your approach - what methods do you plan to use?; and
- d) where possible, note and discuss anticipated results.

The proposal should be accompanied by a tentative bibliography. (A sample proposal is attached.)

Your proposal will be read and discussed by the entire faculty at a department meeting and **must be approved before the end of the Spring term of your junior year.**

3. Research and Writing (Senior Year - Fall or Winter of Spring Term)

Your course of research will be set by you and your advisor. You should have a clear plan of attack and manage your time wisely, with an exact schedule for completion of each part of the thesis that is agreed upon by you and your advisor. You should allow 2-3 weeks at the end of your work for revisions. Learning how to revise your work

based on your advisor's criticisms and suggestions is an integral part of the thesis process. "First drafts" will not be accepted as final work.

4. Presentation and Defense

When your thesis is finished, you are required to present and defend your results to the faculty of the department. In most cases, all theses are read by all members of the department. This is not done to determine your grade; that is decided by your thesis advisor. Rather, this is done to give you experience in publicly explaining your views and to give the faculty a chance to ask questions. Thesis presentations are scheduled during the first two weeks of Spring term for those majors who complete their work in the Winter, and during the last two weeks of Spring term, for those majors who write in the Spring.

DEADLINES:

1. For Proposals - Proposals must be submitted to the Chair of the department by the end of Spring Term of your Junior Year.

2. For Completing Your Thesis - Your Thesis must be finished and ready to duplicate by the end of Winter Term of your Senior Year (for those presenting at the start of Spring Term) and by the middle of May of your Senior year (for those presenting at the end of Spring Term).