

PURSUING HONORS IN HISTORY

Students seeking admission to the honors program in history should first review the Charles Center's guidelines (<http://web.wm.edu/charlescenter>) as well as the departmental "Honors Program" guidelines (available in hard copy or on the History Department website at <http://web.wm.edu/history>). The Charles Center's dates and deadlines are listed in "Departmental Honors: A Guide for Students and Thesis Directors" (see "Honors" on the drop-down list under "Students"). Some important points to keep in mind include the following:

- The honors program is not for everyone. Before applying, read carefully the introductory section of the department's "Honors Program" guidelines, note the basic requirements, and consult with faculty members as well as students currently in or who have completed the program.
- Junior year (first semester). Identify and consult a prospective thesis director, plan to enroll in a history colloquium/seminar (e.g., Hist 490C, etc), and begin background reading and research aimed at preparing a written project description and formally applying for admission to the honors program.
- Junior year (second semester). At least two weeks prior to online-registration for first semester of your senior year, submit the following materials for consideration to your prospective thesis director:
 1. a one-page prospectus, double-spaced, of the intended honors project. The prospectus should outline the problems or questions the student will address, as well as methods the student will employ;
 2. a one-page, single-spaced, provisional bibliography, which should address the availability of primary and secondary sources on the topic; and
 3. a recent transcript or degree-audit report.

Admission to the honors program. If a faculty member agrees to serve as your thesis director after reviewing your materials, complete the "Application for Admission to Honors Study" available in the Charles Center (Tucker basement) and on the Charles Center website. The form must be signed by the faculty thesis director and either the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies or the Chair of the History Department. Please be certain you submit copies of your prospectus, preliminary bibliography, and transcript or CAPP report to the Department when you request the signature of the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies or the Chair of the History Department. Leave a copy of the signed application form with the department secretary and submit the original form to the Charles Center.

- The full application process should be completed before the end of your junior year in order to allow time during the summer for research. Only under unusual circumstances will students be admitted to the program as late as the Add/Drop period in the first semester of their senior year.
- Registering for honors. The Charles Center will process applications, check grade point averages, create individual sections of honors (History 495-496), and notify students of their formal admission to the honors program during the summer between junior and

senior years. You must register for your own section of History 495 no later than the last day of the add/drop period of the first semester in which the honors work will be conducted, normally fall semester of your senior year.

- Writing the Honors Thesis

Getting started. Because the honors thesis is an exercise in historical research and writing, you are expected to go beyond secondary literature and undertake research in primary sources whenever possible. Honors candidates should make substantial headway on their research in the summer before their senior year. Be aware that honors-related summer research grants are available through the Charles Center and the History Department. For more information, consult the appropriate websites (noted above), department members and/or the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies.

The first draft. You should plan a research and writing schedule that allows you to produce a complete first draft of your thesis by the first month (usually January) of your last semester of senior year in order to give sufficient attention to the various details that go into composing a cogent and elegant thesis. Do not underestimate the amount of time and work required in properly structuring thesis chapters and revising prose.

Role of the thesis director. Your thesis director will help in many ways, including identifying relevant secondary literature, primary source interpretation, nuances of argument, and the elements of style. You are expected to confer with your thesis director regularly—usually once a week—for progress reports and trouble-shooting on research and writing. As you prepare your thesis, it is important for the director to read every chapter as it is completed, rather than receiving the whole thesis at once.

- Completing the Honors Thesis: Important Dates and Deadlines (see the single-sheet “Completing the Honors Thesis” and/or the department’s “Honors Program” guidelines)