

HONORS THESIS/PROJECT GUIDELINES

Department of Theatre and Dance

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Prepared by
Jeannie M. Woods
2016

HONORS THESIS/PROJECT GUIDELINES

To graduate with Departmental Honors in Theatre at Western Illinois University, you must complete the required coursework (see Appendix A) and an Honors Thesis (a formal research project) or Honors Project (a creative project with a research component). The purpose of the thesis/project is to provide a capstone experience to your theatre and honors coursework and experience.

This document will guide you through the Honors Thesis/Project process. The faculty of the Department of Theatre and Dance has approved these guidelines with the understanding that the thesis/project requirements can be adapted to meet the student's personal situation. In Appendix A, we have included a copy of the theatre program's requirements for graduation with honors in theatre and in musical theatre. Appendix B is a timeline that indicates when each step should be completed. Appendix C provides models for the honors thesis and project.

HONORS THESIS/PROJECT PROCESS

Students wishing to write a senior honors thesis in the department must demonstrate excellence in critical writing and the desire to explore a topic in depth through extensive research. When appropriate, traditional research methods may be supplemented by creative work, as long as that work is understood to be an organic part of the written thesis, and vice versa.

Thesis/Project Advisor & Committee

Theatre is a broad discipline with many avenues of study. In your lower division courses you should begin to discover areas of particular interest to you, which may lead you to your project or topic of your honors thesis. As you identify your interests, you should contact a member of the faculty of the Theatre and Dance Department and ask them if he/she is willing to be your thesis/project advisor.

The responsibilities of the advisor include guidance and suggestions on your research or creative activity, the design of the thesis/project, and the writing or preparation of your thesis/project. The advisor will provide direction, feedback and support. The student is responsible for doing the work in a timely manner, fostering communication with the advisor and others involved, and meeting the expectations as established in the proposal.

The advisor will also chair the thesis/project committee. The committee will also include at least one or two readers (other faculty members from within the Department of Theatre and Dance.) In the case of an interdisciplinary thesis, one faculty member should come from the relevant department. The thesis/project proposal of study is subject to the approval of the committee.

Coursework Relevant to the Thesis or Project – Recommended

Depending upon the choice of thesis or project, the student should work with the advisor to identify courses that may support the final research or creative work. Listed below are some suggestions of recommended courses that a student might take as “in course” honors to prepare a foundation for the capstone experience of the honors thesis/project.

Honors Thesis/Project: THEA 401 (3 s.h.) – Required

The student enrolls in THEA 401 in his/her senior year. This course has the following pre-requisites: COFAC Seminar (General Honors 299); six semester hours of in-course honors in theatre; good standing in the Centennial Honors College; and senior standing as a theatre major.

Honors Thesis:

Under the direction of a thesis committee, students following the thesis option complete a traditional research project including:

- A comprehensive literature review related to the research topic
- Development of a plan for conducting the research
- Gathering and analysis of data/information
- Writing a preliminary draft
- Revising and writing a final draft
- Presentation and defense of the thesis before the thesis committee

Honors Project:

Under the direction of a thesis committee, students following the project option complete a creative project supported by appropriate research. This includes:

- A comprehensive literature review related to the research topic
- Development of a plan for conducting the research
- Gathering and analysis of data/information
- Writing a preliminary draft
- Revising and writing a final draft
- Rehearsing or participating in the rehearsal or design process
- Presentation of the project and/or project findings before the thesis committee

Oral Defense/Portfolio Review/Presentation

For a traditional honors thesis, the student will give a brief oral defense of the final research project. For projects where design or performance work (such as an audition package) are created, the students must give a final presentation to the committee. For a creative project connected to a WIU department production, such as an actor’s casebook developed in tangent with playing a major role, the honors student also gives an oral defense of the written research and paperwork.

Appendix A

Honors in Theatre

Students may complete an honors curriculum in University Honors, Departmental Honors, or General Honors. All Honors students must complete the one-hour honors colloquium (GH 299). General Honors includes General Honors coursework. Departmental Honors includes honors work in the major. University Honors combines Departmental and General Honors.

Honors students in Theatre must complete all requirements for a major in Theatre.

Grade Requirements

3.4 overall GPA

3.4 GPA in Honors courses

General Honors Requirements

- Two General Honors seminars (6 semester hours)
- An honors section of the First Year Experience (3 semester hours) (a General Honors seminar may be substituted in some cases)
- GH 299 (one semester hour)

Departmental Honors Requirements

- GH 299 COFAC Honors Seminar (one semester hour)
- Complete 9 semester hours of “in course” honors in Theatre courses. Courses available are: THEA 345, THEA 355, THEA 365, THEA 373, THEA 390, THEA 391, THEA 392, THEA 400, THEA 419, THEA 446, THEA 451, THEA 465, THEA 477, THEA 481, THEA 482, THEA 498, DAN 310, DAN 313, DAN 316, DAN 382, DAN 385, DAN 413
- Complete THEA 401 (3 semester hours), Honors Thesis/Project. THEA 401 may be taken as an interdisciplinary thesis/project.

University Honors

- Two General Honors seminars (6 semester hours)
- An honors section of the First Year Experience (in some cases a General Honors seminar may be substituted)
- GH 299 COFAC Honors Seminar (one semester hour)
- 9 semester hours of departmental in course honors selected from list above
- THEA 401 (3 semester hours), Honors Thesis/Project. THEA 401 may be taken as an interdisciplinary thesis/project.

Department Honors Coordinator:

Dr. Jeannie Woods (JM-Woods@wiu.edu, 309.298.2995)

Honors in Musical Theatre

Students may complete an honors curriculum in University Honors, Departmental Honors, or General Honors. All Honors students must complete the one-hour honors colloquium (GH 299). General Honors includes General Honors coursework. Departmental Honors includes honors work in the major. University Honors combines Departmental and General Honors.

Honors students in Musical Theatre must complete all requirements for a major in Musical Theatre.

Grade Requirements

- 3.4 overall GPA
- 3.4 GPA in Honors courses

General Honors Requirements

- Two General Honors seminars (6 semester hours)
- An honors section of the First Year Experience (3 semester hours) (a General Honors seminar may be substituted in some cases),
- GH 299 (one semester hour)

Departmental Honors Requirements

- GH 299 COFAC Honors Seminar (one semester hour)
- Complete 9 semester hours of in-course honors selected from: THEA 390,392, 476,497; MUS 394; DAN 310,313,316,382, 385, 413
- THEA 401(3 semester hours). THEA 499 may be taken as an interdisciplinary project.

University Honors

- Two General Honors seminars (6 semester hours)
- An honors section of the First Year Experience (in some cases a General Honors seminar may be substituted)
- GH 299 COFAC Honors Seminar (one semester hour)
- 9 semester hours of departmental in-course honors selected from list above
- 3 semester hours of THEA 499 or THEA 401, depending on option selected above. THEA 499 and THEA 401 may be taken as an interdisciplinary thesis or project.

Department Honors Coordinator:

Dr. Jeannie Woods (JM-Woods@wiu.edu, 309.298.2995)

Appendix B

HONORS THESIS/PROJECT TIMELINE

One Year before Graduation:

1. **Find a topic of study.** Begin to consider topics of interest and faculty members who might be appropriate as your advisor. Students may work within their major or engage in an interdisciplinary thesis/project. In this case you must show proficiency in both fields and/or collaborate with another honors student on a related thesis/project; you must also find a faculty member who will direct your thesis as an interdisciplinary work. Review the model projects listed here in Appendix C.
2. **Research what has been done before.** Speak to other honors students about their current projects or contact graduates about their honors thesis or final projects.
3. **Consult with the faculty in the Department of Theatre and Dance.** Your faculty can give you guidance in honing in on a research topic or project. If your interests are outside their expertise, they can help you find an appropriate advisor. Feel free to explore and consider multiple options until you find something that excites you and has significance for you.
4. **Identify a course to take as “in-course honors” the semester prior to your thesis or project.** While it is not required, such an experience can help in the initial exploration and preparation of the final project. The student should register for that course and work out the proposal for the in-course honors at the beginning of the relevant semester.

First Semester, Senior Year (or one semester prior to enrolling in THEA 401:

1. **Finalize your research topic or project.**
2. **Ask a faculty member to direct your thesis.**
3. **Write a project proposal.** A typical proposal is 3-5 pages in length, and should include a brief bibliography of potential sources. The proposal should not be too broad or too narrow. It must be manageable in the time frame you have. Of course your topic will be refined as you conduct your research or study. If your project changes significantly from your original idea, you will need to update the proposal. The proposal is both a contract and a plan of action for your thesis/project.

If creative work is involved as a form of research, the proposal must include a clear explanation of the relationship between artistic practice and critical writing, the resources needed to complete the artistic work, and a schedule for doing so.

If additional research (or creative work) outside the College is required, this must also be detailed.

4. **Find a second reader within the field.** Your thesis/project director should be able to help you identify a second reader.
5. **Create a plan for the various stages of the project, including deadlines.** Your faculty director will help you devise a timetable and determine reasonable expectations for your work. It is essential that you adhere to the timeline that you create for completion. This will keep you on track and ensure you complete the project in time.
6. **Submit the Honors Thesis/Project Approval Form by November 1st.**¹ Submit the proposal and timeline to your thesis director and second reader for their signatures, and then to the Honors Coordinator in Theatre and Dance. The Honors Coordinator will forward the proposal to the Department Chair. The department will meet to discuss the proposals. If any revisions to the proposal are suggested, the student should submit them to the chair as soon as possible.
7. **Final decisions will be announced by April 1st** and are based on the student's demonstrated abilities, the feasibility of the particular topic, and the availability of faculty resources.
8. **Register for THEA 401 for your final semester.**

Second Semester, Senior Year:

1. **Conduct research and writing and, as appropriate, related creative work.**
2. **Finalize your first draft of your thesis or creative paperwork and submit to your advisor.**
3. **Schedule an oral defense, portfolio review, or presentation of creative work.** Find a time convenient for your readers and others who may

¹ If student is planning to complete the thesis/project in the fall semester, the deadlines for the Honors Thesis/Project Approval Form would be April 1st and the final decision will be made by May 1st in the semester prior to the actual thesis/project.

attend. This is your opportunity to get feedback on your project. Arrange space and equipment as needed.

One to Two Weeks before the Defense/Review/Presentation:

- 1. Provide your readers with the final draft of your thesis or project paperwork.**

At the Defense/Review/Presentation:

1. Depending upon the nature of the thesis or project you will give a presentation or narrative about your project and then respond to questions from each of the three readers. Should your committee members approve it, you may invite your peers, mentors, and guests to attend.
2. When you successfully pass the defense, your thesis director will notify the Department Chair and the Centennial Honors College and submit your grade for THEA 401.

Appendix C

MODELS FOR HONORS THESES/PROJECTS

The thesis or project research may be done in any aspect of theatre. Students are encouraged to use one or more of their required “in-course honors” classes to help prepare for the final thesis/project. Students must demonstrate excellence in critical writing and the desire to explore a topic in depth through extensive research. Traditional research methods may be supplemented by creative work, as long as that work is understood to be an organic part of the written thesis, and vice versa. The faculty of the Department of Theatre and Dance has approved these guidelines with the understanding that the thesis/project requirements can be adapted to meet the student’s personal situation.

The following models are intended to provoke imagination and excitement about the possibilities of the Honors Thesis/Project. However, this is by no means a comprehensive list. As noted in these guidelines, any proposal must be supported by the thesis/project committee and by the department.

Traditional Research Study

Under the direction of a thesis committee, students following the thesis option complete a traditional research project including:

- A comprehensive literature review related to the research topic
- Development of a plan for conducting the research
- Gathering and analysis of data/information
- Writing a preliminary draft
- Revising and writing a final draft
- Presentation and defense of the thesis before the thesis committee

The thesis is a traditional research paper examining a topic pertaining to theatre history, theory, literature, or performance. The final thesis is usually 25-30 pages.

The thesis may be associated with a creative project. Here are some examples.

1. A dramaturge might conduct traditional research on a mainstage theatre production. This research could include:
 - History of the play, playwright, and period and genre
 - Social, political, and cultural issues relevant to the play
 - Production history
 - Linguistic elements of the text

Dramaturges write up their research in a formal thesis or alternately they might develop educational materials or other substantive written format.

2. An actor might conduct an in-depth character analysis and research into a role, including such elements as:
 - Production history of the play and the role
 - Biographical information on the playwright (and character if based on a real person)
 - Overview of the playwright's other work
 - Detailed given circumstances of the character
 - Detailed description of the character, including information stated and inferred by the character and other characters in the play
 - Analysis the relationship to all other major characters in the play
 - Analysis of objectives, superobjective, obstacles
 - Analysis of imagery and language/vocabulary in the play

The actor compiles the research into a formal written paper that is presented to the thesis committee. If the actor is also performing the role, his or her realization of the role onstage may be included as part of the honors thesis.

Honors Project

Under the direction of a thesis committee, students following the project option complete a creative project supported by appropriate research. This includes:

- A comprehensive literature review related to the research topic
- Development of a plan for conducting the research
- Gathering and analysis of data/information
- Writing a preliminary draft
- Revising and writing a final draft
- Rehearsing or participating in the rehearsal or design process
- Presentation of the project and/or project findings before the thesis committee

The honors project incorporates the research and analysis of the topic. However, the product may be a shorter written analysis that is complemented by a creative activity. Some examples are:

1. An actor might do research focused on career planning, including
 - In-depth research into theatre companies within a given market
 - Research on relocation and settling in a new city within that market
 - Development of headshot and resumes (general resume, survival job resume, specialty resume, etc.)
 - A 3-year and 5-year plan
 - Personal statement/credo
 - Preparation of a repertoire of monologues and songs (beyond what has already been developed in classwork)

- Presentation of performance and formal interview with the thesis committee and invited guests.
2. A director might be assigned as an assistant director to a mainstage WIU show and complete a research project that includes:
- Dramaturgical research such as history of the play, playwright, and period and genre, production history, and social, political, and cultural issues relevant to the play
 - Collect administrative information (contact lists, rehearsal reports, etc.)
 - Attend production meetings, all rehearsals, performances, post mortems, etc.
 - Provide expertise and support to the production as needed
 - Keep a daily journal of observations of the rehearsal process

The director would create a production book with the administrative information, dramaturgical research, and script. In the defense, the book would be presented, along with a reflective paper on the A.D. experience.

3. A designer might be assigned to design a WIU production and complete research that includes:
- Research into the period, genre, and performance style of the play
 - Development of design, including drawings, model, renderings, and technical drawings (if appropriate to expertise and assignment)
 - Documentation of the various stages of the design project
 - Development of a portfolio including photographs of final work

At the defense, the designer would present the portfolio and discuss the design process for the committee.

General Note:

The scope of the Honors Thesis or Honors Project must be both significant enough to warrant three semester hours of credit and also limited to what can be achieved within a semester of work. The department cannot support individual performances or productions beyond what is offered in the mainstage and studio seasons. So creative projects must be developed as part of the season or in tandem with a theatre off campus. Students are encouraged to consider interdisciplinary projects in which their research and creative work is integrated with another honor's student's thesis/project.

Honors Thesis/Project Proposal Approval Form
Department of Theatre and Dance
Western Illinois University

Instructions for the Student:

1. Attach a **proposal**, which outlines your project and briefly explains its relevance to the field. The prospectus should be 3-5 double-spaced pages in length and also include a bibliography.
2. Attach a proposed **time line** for the project.
3. Submit this form and the attachments to your thesis director for approval.
4. After securing the approval of your thesis director, get the form signed by each of your readers.
5. Submit the form and attachment to the Honors Coordinator.

Today's Date: _____ Expected Graduation: _____

Student Name: _____
last first

Current Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Major/Option: _____ Minor: _____

Thesis Title or Topic: _____

Thesis Director: *I hereby approve the attached Senior Honors Thesis proposal.*

Name _____ / _____
(please print) Signature Date
 Email _____ Phone _____

Second Reader: *I hereby approve the attached Senior Honors Thesis proposal.*

Name _____ / _____
(please print) Signature Date
 Email _____ Phone _____

Third Reader (optional): *I hereby approve the attached Senior Honors Thesis proposal.*

Name _____ / _____
(please print) Signature Date
 Email _____ Phone _____

Honors Coordinator: *I hereby approve the attached Senior Honors Thesis proposal.*

Name _____ / _____
(please print) Signature Date
 Email _____ Phone _____

Chair, Department of Theatre & Dance: *I have presented this proposal to the department and it has been approved.*

Name _____ / _____
(please print) Signature Date
 Email _____ Phone _____

Attached:

- Proposal
- Time Line

HONORS THESIS/PROJECT
Department of Theatre and Dance
Western Illinois University

Thesis/Project Evaluation

Date of Defense/Review/Presentation: _____

Student's Name: _____

Thesis/Project Title: _____

Committee Decision (check one):

- Pass
- Revision or additional work required
- Student will not complete the Honors Thesis/Project

If the decision is Pass are substantive revisions required? (Grammatical corrections and stylistic improvements are not generally considered to be substantive.)

If revisions are required, will it be necessary for the committee to review them before the signature page is signed?

Thesis Director:

Name (please print)

Signature

Second Reader:

Name (please print)

Signature

Third Reader:

Name (please print)

Signature

The thesis director should submit the final grade for THEA 401 and notify the Honors College of the results of the evaluation. This form should be deposited in the student's permanent file.