

## Senior Honors Thesis Timeline

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The following timeline for Senior Honors Thesis assignments will give students an overview of the process of writing a senior thesis.<sup>1</sup>

1. Admission: Students first declare their interest in joining the Honors Program in Political Science. This typically occurs in a student's junior year. An electronic application form is sent to all Political Science students to apply for declaration during the first week of March. Interested students must meet [the admission requirements](#). Students typically apply by the third week of March and are notified of the results by the second week of April. Students who meet the admissions requirements may also apply prior to their junior year.
2. Meet-and-greet: Students accepted into the program will meet with the Honors Program director in late April or May. Typically, this meeting introduces the cohort of students to each other, and introduces students to the Honors program's specific requirements and expectations. This is also the time for students to begin the long process of thinking about how to transform their subfield interests into a thesis project.
3. Courses: The core Honors requirements include a three-course sequence of required Honors courses. Honors students take POLS 4000 and 4104 in the Fall semester of their senior year and POLS 4099 in the Spring semester. Students will spend time in POLS 4104 discussing how to formulate a literature review, and their thesis adviser (see below) will offer guidance on the specific literature to help them generate your literature review. Students begin to add weekly to an annotated bibliography that will provide them the scholarly background for their Honors thesis.
4. Workshopping the thesis statement: A preliminary statement of students' thesis question and research methods (1–2 paragraphs pre-circulated to the POLS 4000 instructor and fellow section members in the third week of classes) will be presented orally and workshopped. As students complete this first assignment, they should remember that their question should speak directly to existing scholarship within political science. Even if they are not yet sure where and how their research fits within the field, now is the time to begin thinking about the broader impact and relevance of their work.
5. Choosing an adviser (recommended: no later than the midterm): Students will choose a member of the POLS faculty as their primary thesis adviser. The primary adviser will be an expert in the student's area of study or subfield and will advise and direct the student on all the content-oriented aspects of the thesis. Students will discuss their project with the potential adviser and check for issues of fit and availability. If the fit is good, students will present an advising contract (circulated in POLS 4000) for the adviser to sign and date. This contract lays out the basics of the advising relation, including the number of meetings between the student and adviser, which should be specified on the advising contract sheet. Choosing an adviser is a crucial step in the thesis writing process and care should be taken to assess the fit, degree of willingness, and availability of the faculty member.

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<sup>1</sup> The timeline and discursive explanation of assignments is adapted from the GOV 99 timeline used at Harvard College. Please see: [https://undergrad.harvard.edu/files/undergradgov/files/2018-2019\\_thesis\\_guide.pdf](https://undergrad.harvard.edu/files/undergradgov/files/2018-2019_thesis_guide.pdf)

6. Workshopping the theoretical framework: Students will orally present their thesis's theoretical framework (outline) and provide critical comments on each others' work in Week Seven of POLS 4000. Remember: Students are writing for a disciplinary community of political scientists who may not be specialists in the student's subfield! The thesis prospectus should be intelligible and engaging across subfields, and avoid jargon and exclusionary language.

7. Submitting the theoretical framework: Students will rework their prospectus for submission in Week Eight of POLS 4000, incorporating advice and comments given by their peers and instructor. The formal prospectus will be approximately 1,200 words. It should be submitted to the POLS 4000 instructor, the student's primary adviser, and all members of POLS 4000. This is an outline of your research design—a road map for answering the question you have posed. Every student in the Honors Program should by now be familiar with the projects of the other students.

8. One-on-one advising with the honors program director: After the midterm, students meet with the POLS 4000 instructor to discuss their project and its expected shape. Questions to be addressed in this session include: communication with the student's faculty adviser; the number of chapters and their length; and an analytical outline of the thesis).

9. Theory chapter (20-25 pages) completed by the end of the semester in POLS 4000 (the last week of classes in the Fall semester). This chapter introduces your topic question; the significance of the question; and the theoretical framework for your argument. The aim of this chapter is to establish a foundation for your subsequent chapters and to incorporate feedback in an iterative process.

10. Body chapters (POLS 4099): Students should plan to complete the body chapters and conclusion of their thesis according to the following template, which they will refine with the instructor of POLS 4099 in that class.<sup>2</sup> Chapters should be submitted to the POLS 4099 instructor and to the student's primary adviser.

Week 4: Submission of Chapter Two (e.g., February 24)

Week 8: Submission of Chapter Three (e.g., March 24)

Week 12: Submission of Chapter Four and revisions of earlier chapters (April 24, 2021)

11. Poster Presentation: During Week 13, students may choose to present their thesis in a online Zoom session to interested faculty and political science students. The poster session intends to help students to explain their overall project to a non-specialist audience as they continue to revise their introduction and body chapters.

12. Submission: The completed thesis must be submitted to the Political Science office in hardcopy on the last day of classes at the latest. (In 2021, this is **May 20**.) All drafting/editing/revision that is done under the direction of a student's primary adviser must be completed prior to this date. Early submission is encouraged. The thesis **MUST** be uploaded to turnitin.com online by the time the Political Science office closes. No late submissions will be accepted under any circumstances, including last-minute illness, travel for school events, family difficulties, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Students' theses will vary as to the number of chapters, the relative importance of the historical/background chapter, and the inclusion of a standalone chapter on theory/methodology. Granting that these variations exist, every student who writes a thesis must have and adhere to a writing timeline.

Instructions for formatting the final thesis will be discussed in POLS 4099. Students are a) permitted to choose between MLA, APA, or Chicago citation format as they see fit, and b) expected to apply formatting rules in a consistent and accurate fashion.

13. Graduation and the Political Science Honors Award Ceremony: Students whose Honors thesis is deemed satisfactory, and who satisfy all other Honors course requirements, will graduate with Honors. Successful students' Honors status will be confirmed in a ceremony, which will be held prior to the end of the exam period in May.