

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF **Geography**



GEOGRAPHY

**GLOBAL
ENVIRONMENTAL
STUDIES**



Guide to Undergraduate Honors

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Honors Program Overview

The honors thesis program in the Graduate School of Geography provides qualified students majoring in Geography and Global Environmental Studies with the opportunity to conduct a rigorous, independent research project and to graduate with the distinction of honors in the major.

Honors thesis students must successfully complete a two-semester independent honors thesis project conducted under the supervision of a faculty member who serves as the student's primary honors thesis advisor and one additional faculty member who serves as a second reader. Together these faculty members constitute the student's honors thesis committee.

Honors projects should make an original contribution to knowledge in the major field. In crafting the research project and honors thesis, the student will work closely with their primary honors thesis advisor and will also be able to draw upon the advice of their second reader.

In addition to performing the thesis research credits, and writing the thesis, the student also performs a thesis defense in which they present, and answer questions about, their work. The student is also expected to present their work in a broader public forum.

Program Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for honors in the major, a student must meet **all** of the following requirements:

- Student must be entering the two-semester program at the beginning of either the second semester of their junior year or the first semester of their senior year
- Student must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.25
- Student must have a minimum GPA of 3.50 from coursework taken in their honors field
- Student must have taken GEOG 141 Research Methods

Students can assess their cumulative and major GPAs through the online Degree Audit tool. Student GPAs are also accessible for the departmental Department Administrator who can verify both.

Application and Admission Process

To apply for admission to the honors thesis program, students should complete an Honors Thesis Application (attached herein) and deliver it by email to the Department Administrator. The application should include a brief description (title and ~100-word draft abstract) of their intended honors thesis work, as well as the name of the intended honors thesis advisor. The Department Administrator will look up the student's cumulative GPA as well as their Major GPA and include it on the application, and will also seek confirmation from the intended faculty honors advisor to ensure that they are willing and able to serve in that capacity.

Honors thesis applications are considered on a rolling basis up to the beginning of the semester in which the student will begin their first of two thesis credits, but it is preferred that applications be received before the end of the prior semester (end of the junior year if beginning the thesis in the senior year, or end of the 5th semester if beginning in the second semester of the junior year).

Decisions about acceptance to the program are made by the thesis advisor and the chair of the department's Undergraduate Studies Committee with input and consultation from the Department Administrator. Decisions should be released before registration for the following semester, except in the event of a late application, in which case admission may be awarded as late as the beginning of the first semester of the student's enrollment in their honors thesis coursework.

As a matter of practice, the Department Administrator will typically send a communication to all GEOG and GES majors during the first semester of their junior year introducing the program and forwarding the program guide with the application.

Registration and Enrollment in Honors Credits

Students pursuing honors register for two credits of Honors Directed Research (Honors) (GEOG 297 or GES 297), each worth 1.0 credit unit and enrolled sequentially over two semesters. The student would need to seek approval from Academic Advising if the honors thesis credits are to be taken as a fifth course. The thesis advisor needs to authorize the student's enrollment in the honors thesis course in each semester. If it is a faculty

member's first time establishing such a credit in their name, they will need to ask the Registrar's Office to establish the course offering, to be kept open as a standing course available by permission in any semester. The second semester of Honors Research credit (GEOG/GES 297) is typically eligible to fulfill the student's Capstone requirement within the Geography or Global Environmental Studies major. A course credit of honors thesis work performed under the Human-Environment Regional Observatory (HERO) program course code (currently IDND 299) can substitute for GEOG/GES 297 upon consultation with HERO faculty supervisors, however the student should still submit the honors program application and must follow all other guidelines, procedures and requirements of the honors thesis program.

Program Timeline and Progress Guidance

Participation Over Two Semesters

Students most commonly perform the honors thesis during two semesters of the senior year, but it is also possible to perform the thesis during the second semester of the junior year and first semester of the senior year (this is popular in the case of a student graduating one semester ahead of the typical 8 semesters, such as a December graduation). While not mandatory, completing a thesis sometimes involves research begun prior to the two semesters of thesis credit, for example during the summer before the senior year.

Honors Thesis Progress: Meetings, Guidance, and Presentations

During the semesters in which they are enrolled in the honors program, students should be meeting with their thesis advisor regularly (e.g., weekly or biweekly). The student and thesis advisor should secure a second reader within the first half of the first semester of the honors course credit. They should consult with their second reader once or twice per semester (or as suggested by the faculty supervisor). It is the responsibility of the student to seek out their honors advisor and second reader to initiate these meetings.

It is recommended that a clear plan of work for the research be established by the student and thesis advisor within the first or second week of the first honors thesis course enrollment, including benchmarks and a timeline for achievement. Before beginning data collection, analysis or writing phases for the thesis work, the student should consult with the thesis advisor and second reader to gather guidance and input. As part of this consultation, the student should provide a draft or a plan for the respective phase of work, such as a detailed plan for data collection and analysis, a substantive outline for their thesis document, or a draft set of results or sections of the thesis. The student should also provide a timeline for completion of each respective element of the thesis work. At least once per semester, the student should have a formal meeting with their committee to assess progress through the honors thesis program. Ideally, preliminary methods, findings or draft portions of the thesis will be the focus of these meetings, and will be provided in advance so that the committee members can provide substantive feedback and guidance.

During the final semester of the honors thesis work, the student will be presenting their work at the thesis defense and in a public form such as ClarkFest, or a professional conference such as the American Association of Geographers or other appropriate venue decided upon with the thesis advisor. The student should discuss the format, content, layout, and design of the presentation with their thesis advisor well in advance of presentation, and coordinate all details through them.

Completing the Honors Thesis

The final draft of the thesis should be finished well before the end of the students' second semester in the honors thesis program. This draft is to be considered a "working draft", and is the document that will be defended before the committee. Formatting guidelines are provided below.

The final draft of the thesis is due to the committee **two weeks before the date for the student's defense of the thesis**. Defense should take place **at least one week before the last day of classes** within the semester for the student's second honors credit (GEOG/GES 297), but it is strongly recommended that the defense occur at least two weeks prior to ensure time for any edits and revisions that may be required. After the defense of the thesis, the student will have until the last day of classes to revise the document and submit a final version of the thesis meets with the thesis advisor's approval. Thus, the final draft thesis is due to the committee no later than three weeks before the last day of classes of the semester in which the student is completing the thesis. After the student completes their defense, the student will have until the last day of classes to make revisions and have the final draft approved. Additional guidelines on thesis defense and completion are provided below.

Thesis Formatting

Thesis formatting should follow the guidance from the Graduate School at Clark University as reported on the [Graduate School's website](#). Students should settle on the format for references, headings, and style early in the research and writing process with their thesis advisor. The simplest format guide is to choose one of the major North American geographical journals, such as the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* or *The Geographical Review*, and follow their directions on thesis structure. When in doubt about issues of editorial minutia, consult [The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers](#).

Thesis Defense and Outcome

As the student moves towards completion of the thesis, the student should coordinate a date and time for their thesis defense with their committee. The defense must take place on campus (the student can contact the Department Administrator to reserve a room and media equipment for the defense). The thesis defense should be between 30 and 60 minutes in duration, inclusive of committee deliberation and feedback.

During the defense, the student will present their thesis work to the committee and respond to questions asked by the committee to determine the overall success of the project. After the thesis is defended, the student's thesis advisor and second reader confer to reach a decision of awarding honors or no honors, with pass as is, pass with revisions, or no pass. While the university recognizes three levels of honors (Honors, High Honors, and Highest Honors), Geography and Global Environmental Studies programs tend to default to the distinction of High Honors. The honors thesis advisor should report this designation to the Department Administrator once a decision is made. After the student completes their defense, the student will have until the last day of classes to make revisions and have the final draft approved.

The Department (Geography) will support submission of the final thesis via the Clark University Digital Commons hosted by the Goddard Library, using this platform as the standard default publishing venue for undergraduate honors theses, providing a publicly-available and free repository.

Deadlines to Remember

- **Applications** should be submitted to the Department Administrator **two weeks before course registration for the following semester**.
- **Honors credit (GEOG/GES 297) enrollments** should take place during either the second semester of the junior year and first semester of the senior year, or the first and second semesters of the senior year.
- **Draft thesis must be delivered to committee at least 4 weeks before the last day of classes** in the semester of thesis completion.
- **Thesis defense must take place at least 2 weeks before the last day of classes** of the semester.
- **Final copy** of thesis (after revisions) should be submitted to the Department Administrator by **the last day of classes of the semester** for publication.
- Honors designations should be submitted by the thesis advisor to the Department Administrator by the last day of classes of the semester in the semester of thesis completion.

Undergraduate Honors Program Application

Graduate School of Geography | Clark University

Please submit completed forms to the Department Administrator (YPoku@clarku.edu)

Section I: *This section must be filled out by the student applying for the Honors program*

Name: _____ **Student ID #:** _____

Major (x to indicate): Geography ____ Global Environmental Studies ____ Other (please list): _____

Name of Intended Honors Thesis Supervisor (must be GEOG faculty): _____

Title and brief description of intended thesis work:

Do you plan to use Honors credits to fulfill the Capstone requirement in GEOG or GES? (y/n, list which): _____

Do you plan to complete the Honors program as a pre-requisite for a Clark University Accelerated Degree

Program (5th year)? If so, please list which program (e.g., MS-GIS): _____

Please list the semesters in which you will enroll in Honors research credits (e.g., Fall 2019 Spring 2020):

Semester 1: _____

Semester 2: _____

Please list your current Cumulative GPA: _____ **Major GPA:** _____ **GEOG 141 Taken?** ____

Today's Date: _____

Section II: *This section must be filled out by the intended Faculty Honors Supervisor*

Name: _____

Please sign below to confirm the following statement:

I agree to serve in the capacity of Honors Supervisor for the above student during the above-mentioned semesters, per approval of this application and acceptance into this Honors program.

Signature of Honors Supervisor: _____ **Date:** _____

Section III: *This section to be filled out by the Geography Department*

- Application Accepted**
- Application Declined**
- Defer to Next Semester**

Signature of Undergraduate Studies Chair: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of Department Administrator: _____ **Date:** _____

Approved applicants will be notified via email to confirm program acceptance.



Clark University
Graduate School of Geography

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For questions about the Honors program, contact:
Yaa Poku, Department Administrator
email: ypoku@clarku.edu | phone: 508.793.7282