

ENGLISH HONORS PROGRAM
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
GUIDELINES FOR SENIOR HONORS THESIS IN ENGLISH

The Senior Honor's Thesis represents an in-depth, capstone experience designed to provide honors students with opportunities to develop a deeper knowledge of English, a closer intellectual interaction with faculty, and more complete preparation for their career goals. The Senior Honor's Thesis must use primary materials in the field of study as well as secondary sources, such as biography and criticism. The thesis should represent a student's most sustained research as an undergraduate. It must be academically honest and in full compliance with ethical guidelines. **An approved Senior Honors Thesis that has been orally presented in public is required for graduation as an English Honors student from East Tennessee State University.**

ENROLLMENT

Typically, the Senior Honors Thesis is a yearlong project for which the student enrolls for three hours credit during the last semester of the senior year. Initial preparation for the thesis should begin the previous semester, however, and should follow the approved timetable. A typical schedule requires that the student complete the majority of all library work plus initial analyses by the end of fall semester, so that the spring semester allows ample time for the actual writing of the thesis. A student should plan on working a minimum of six to nine hours per week on the thesis project. Throughout the project, each student should engage in careful planning, thorough research, thoughtful analysis, good writing, and enthusiastic work.

THESIS COMMITTEE

A senior honors student should choose a thesis committee in conjunction with the English Honors Director. The committee must consist of a thesis professor and a second reader, both from the English Department, and a third reader who must come from outside the department. The thesis professor is responsible for directing the thesis and seeing that the student meets all deadlines and fulfills the expectations of the prospectus. A thesis director will receive one hour of DIS, up to a maximum of three hours per semester for three theses.

THESIS FORMAT

The thesis should be considered a manuscript that may be submitted for publication in a scholarly journal. It must follow guidelines of the Modern Language Association. The final copy must be permanently bound, but it may have a soft cover and/or spiral binding if the student chooses. Most students have binding done at a photocopying business and have four copies made: a required copy to be submitted to the English Honors Director, a required copy to be submitted to the University Honors Program, a copy to keep, and a copy to be given to the thesis professor as a courtesy.

The thesis should involve the student in intensive research of a topic in literature, rhetoric, or language. It should be twenty to thirty pages in length, the emphasis being on quality rather than quantity. Works of fiction, drama, poetry, or personal essay may not be submitted as a senior thesis.

PROSPECTUS

The senior honors student should write a 2-5 page prospectus clearly describing the objective of the thesis, its scope and limitations, and a preliminary bibliography of 7-12 sources to indicate that sufficient secondary material exists to support the thesis project. The prospectus should be signed by both the student and the thesis professor and should be shown to all faculty members who are asked to serve as readers.

In writing the prospectus, keep in mind that it is good to be up front with what you will cover and what you will omit. See the following excerpts:

This study considers only those poems by Dickey that relate to World War II.

Being able to review the poet's personal papers at the Barrett Library—which I am unable to do at this time—could influence, and therefore make tentative, my conclusions.

RECOMMENDED TIMETABLE

The following timetable establishes deadlines based on spring thesis registration. In the event of an alternative registration, deadlines should be adjusted accordingly.

1. September 15 Choose a thesis professor in consultation with the English Honors Director.
2. October 1 Meet with the thesis professor and discuss a prospectus.
3. November 1 Sign the prospectus and present it to the thesis professor for his or her signature. Choose second and third readers in consultation with the English Honors Director. Give copies of the signed prospectus to the English Honors Director and the readers.
4. February 15 Present the first draft of the thesis to the thesis professor for review.
5. March 15 Present the second draft of the thesis to the thesis professor and readers.
6. April 1 In conjunction with the English Honors Director, set a date for a thesis presentation to be completed before April 20. Make arrangements for publicity.
7. April 15 Submit two bound copies of the completed thesis, signed by the thesis professor, to the English Honors Director—one for the department and one for Honors. You also may want to give a copy to the thesis professor.