

Department of Latina/Latino Studies

Senior Honors Thesis

The senior honors thesis is a substantial formal research paper reflecting independent work conducted under the supervision of an LLS faculty member. It is supposed to be the culmination of the Latina/Latino Studies experience. The thesis might resemble a long research paper in form, but it is different than a class paper. It tackles a problem that others have not yet addressed adequately, or it approaches the problem from a new angle. Research into what others have said and done is the essential first step. But your thesis should go beyond prior work to include your own insights and critical thinking. You should be acquainted with the relevant scholarship and display originality in the formulation of your arguments. Suitable topics include exploring aspects of US Latina/o history, literature, culture, music, economics, politics, or sociology, and any analysis in which a Latina/o subject matter is a significant item of comparison.

Eligibility

Students do not need to complete an honors thesis to graduate with an LLS major, and students may choose to enroll in LLS 490 even if they are eligible to write an honors thesis. To be eligible, LLS students must have at least a 3.25 overall GPA and at least a 3.5 GPA in the major. LLS students interested in completing an honors thesis must find an LLS faculty member to serve as his, her, or their advisor. If students cannot find an LLS faculty member to advise them, they will not be eligible to write an honors thesis and must take LLS 490 instead to graduate with an LLS major.

Thesis Advisor

The student is responsible for finding a professor in LLS who will act as his, her, or their honors thesis advisor. It is highly recommended that students approach LLS faculty members with whom they have taken a course. (For some LLS faculty, this is a prerequisite for their advisees.) The thesis advisor must be a faculty member or affiliate faculty member of the Department of Latina/Latino Studies. Information on each of the LLS faculty can be found on the LLS website (<https://lls.illinois.edu/directory/faculty>). LLS faculty affiliates can only serve as honors thesis advisors if they have been approved by the LLS Associate Chair and/or the LLS curriculum committee. LLS postdoctoral fellows, LLS visiting professors, and LLS lecturers cannot serve as honors thesis advisors. Students are encouraged to take their major courses with LLS faculty to meet as many LLS faculty members as possible throughout their college career.

The honors thesis advisor is essential. The advisor offers the student informed, constructive criticism at all stages from the formulation of a feasible topic to the completion of the actual paper. They provide advice and, if necessary, training in the necessary research skills. The thesis advisor will also read and evaluate the finished thesis, but will not do any of the actual research, writing, or revising. Honors thesis students are encouraged to begin working with potential advisors in their junior year and to take LLS 495 over two semesters in their senior year if possible.

It is important to establish a good working relationship with your thesis advisor at the outset, one in which you both understand the mutual responsibilities. You both must agree on the scope, length (generally 35-75 pages), format of the thesis, the frequency of advising sessions, and a timetable for completion.

Writing an honors thesis under the intensive mentoring of an LLS faculty member is a privilege reserved for high-achieving, dedicated students, who will take this opportunity seriously. Once a professor agrees to advise an honors thesis, the student and professor are committed to seeing the thesis requirements fulfilled. Students cannot change advisors once they have enrolled in LLS 495. The only time students may change advisors is if their honors thesis advisor can no longer serve as the advisor due to illness or other circumstances outside of his or her control. In all other cases, the student will need to enroll in LLS 490 if the student and advisor's working relationship becomes unproductive.

Thesis Format and Preparation

The standards of your major field of study will determine format of the thesis. In preparing the final version, however, please follow the guidelines below.

1. The thesis must contain both a Table of Contents and a Bibliography.
2. The thesis must be typed, preferably on a computer, and easily readable. Use good quality paper for copying the thesis.
3. Write the thesis in 12-point Times or Times Roman.
4. Use paper of standard size (8-1/2 x 11 inches) with one-inch margins, type only on one side of the paper with double-spaced text.
5. Should the document require figures or graphics on separate sheets of paper, reduce their size such that they fit on standard size paper with one-inch margins. Figures and graphics may also be embedded within the text.
6. Pages should be numbered at the center of the top or bottom of each page or at the upper right-hand at the beginning of the margin.
7. The Title Page should be arranged in accordance with the model shown on the final page of this document.
8. Follow the title page with a 250-word thesis abstract, headed simply "Abstract." An abstract is a concise summary of the purposes, organization, methodology, and conclusions of your thesis. It is meant to tell your readers at a glance what your thesis is about so that they can determine whether or not it is relevant to their research and reading interests. Normally, an abstract states the purpose and scope of the thesis, outlines its organization, describes the research methods used, and states its conclusions. At the end of the abstract, list 4 keywords that best capture the major themes of the paper (e.g., Keywords: immigration, illegality, neoliberalism, resistance)
9. All senior honors theses should contain the following components in the following order:
 1. title page
 2. table of contents
 3. abstract (with 4 keywords)
 4. body of the work
 5. endnotes (if endnotes are used instead of footnotes)
 6. bibliography
10. The length of the senior honors thesis should be between 35-75 pages, excluding footnotes, bibliography, cover page, and so forth.
11. The style of documentation will vary depending upon your discipline and should be worked out between you and your thesis advisor. Normally, the standards provided in *APA*, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, or *The Chicago Manual of Style* should be used for theses in the humanities and social sciences.

Students must document all material that is drawn from outside sources. Facts, quotations, paraphrases of scholars' views, and background historical information all must be properly documented. There are no exceptions to this rule!

Procedures and Timetables

Getting Started

As soon as you decide to major in LLS, you should take classes with different members of the LLS faculty to meet potential advisors as many LLS faculty require that advisees have taken at least one class with them. Take your classes seriously—you can use any paper written in any LLS or other relevant courses as the basis for your honors thesis. During your junior year, you should begin meeting with appropriate department faculty to discuss research interests and acquire reading suggestions. During the spring semester before your senior year, you should consult with the Latina/Latino Studies undergraduate advisor to discuss requirements and procedures. At this time you should also be developing a thesis topic and approaching potential LLS faculty members who might be interested in serving as your thesis advisor.

After you and your advisor have decided to work together, you both must decide if you will write the honors thesis over the course of one semester or two. If you and your advisor decide you will write the thesis over the course of two semesters, you will sign up for 2 units of LLS 495 during the Fall and Spring of your senior year. If you and your advisor decide you will write the thesis in one semester, you will sign up for 4 units of LLS 495 in either the Fall or Spring semester of your senior year. (The senior thesis can be an expanded version of a paper written as part of a class.)

Completing the Thesis

Your completed honors thesis must be turned into the thesis faculty advisor no later than the last day of instruction (during the semester in which you finish writing the thesis). All final edits to the thesis must be completed and approved by the faculty advisor by the end of finals week.

The final copy of the senior thesis must then be sent to the undergraduate advisor. The undergraduate advisor will do a final copy edit of the paper (to check for formatting errors) and create a bound copy of the paper to include in the LLS departmental library.

If you would like to submit your thesis to the College of LAS and university library system, follow the directions here <https://las.illinois.edu/academics/distinctions>.

Oral Presentation of Thesis

At the end of the school year, you will participate in the Latina/Latino Studies Symposium, where you will make an oral presentation of your thesis. The length of your presentation should be 8-10 minutes. This is a formal presentation. Thus, plan to either read from a prepared text or speak from a clear outline and have well-designed PowerPoint slides to accompany your presentation. Practice your talk ahead of time and time it to make sure you can stay within your allotted time. Your presentation should include (although not necessarily in this order): your primary research question or problem, the motive or import of your study, your methodology or how you went about answering your question or developed a response to a problem, a summary of the main point of your argument and interpretation of evidence, and if appropriate, the steps you would take next with your project given further time, access to other research material, etc. You should be prepared to answer questions.

Evaluation

Honors theses will be read and commented upon by the thesis advisor. They will be graded on the following scale.

- “A” – Superior
- “B” – Good
- “C” – Fair
- “D” or “F” – Unacceptable

Sample Title Page

Each copy of the thesis must be accompanied by a cover page in the following format:

LATINA/OS AND THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION

by

John L. Doe

Senior Honors Thesis
for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
in
Latina/Latino Studies

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign, Illinois

2009