

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 a faculty. 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

LLS Students with at least a 3.25 overall GPA and at least a 3.5 GPA in the major are eligible (but not required) to write a senior honors thesis.

Thesis Advisor

The student is responsible for finding a professor who will act as his or her thesis advisor. You might want to choose a former instructor whom you admire and feel comfortable with. Faculty members supervise honors theses on a voluntary basis, but many will be pleased to assist students with a thesis topic pertaining to their field of study or interest. The thesis advisor must be a member of the Latina/Latino Studies Program faculty (this includes affiliates). Information on each of the faculty can be found on the LLS website (<http://www.lls.illinois.edu/people/>).

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. He or she provides 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.

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 pp.), and format of the thesis, the frequency of advising sessions, and a timetable for completion.

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:
 - a. title page
 - b. table of contents
 - c. abstract (with 4 keywords)
 - d. body of the work
 - e. endnotes (if endnotes are used instead of footnotes)
 - f. 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

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 meet with appropriate department faculty, begin developing a thesis topic, and select a thesis advisor.

After choosing an advisor, and in consultation with him/her, you must decide if you will write the honors thesis over the course of one semester or two. If you choose to 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 choose to write the thesis in one semester, you will sign up for 4 units of LLS 495 in either the Fall or Spring semester. (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 in to the LLS office for final approval no later than the last day of instruction (during the semester in which you finish writing the thesis).

The thesis must be presented unbound in a manila envelope. A copy of the Title Page must be attached to the front of the envelope.

Inserted into the envelope must be a certification sheet signed by the instructor in charge (your thesis advisor) and by the head of the department. Forms for this purpose can be downloaded from the LAS Honors website or obtained from the LAS Honors Office, Room 1 of the University YMCA. LAS forms can be found at the following web

address: <http://www.las.illinois.edu/students/honors/departmental/>.

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 5-10 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 Honor Thesis
for the
Degree of Bachelor of Art
in
Latina/Latino Studies

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

2009