



# MILLSAPS

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Honors Program Information

2009-2010

# THE HONORS PROGRAM MILLSAPS COLLEGE

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Note: Information in this booklet applies to students who express interest in the Honors Program as juniors in fall 2009 and enroll in Honors I in spring, 2010. Please retain this information for future reference.

## **THE HONORS PROGRAM MILLSAPS COLLEGE**

**Interim Director: Dr. Eric Griffin (Sept. through Dec. 2009)**

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### **I PURPOSE OF THE HONORS PROGRAM**

The Honors Program at Millsaps College offers students the opportunity to pursue original work under the mentorship of a faculty advisor. It affords not only an integration of past coursework but also a bridge to more advanced scholarship through rigorous independent inquiry.

The form of the "Honors thesis" is interpreted broadly. It may be a theoretical analysis, an empirical study, a musical composition, a work of art, a business plan or another form which allows the student to assert and defend an original idea. The thesis project is similar to a master=s project but at a level appropriate to the Millsaps undergraduate student. The thesis is typically in the student=s major area but may be in another field if the student has sufficient prior knowledge of that field. The thesis is written under the supervision of a faculty thesis committee consisting of an advisor, a second reader, and an Honors Committee member.

The Millsaps Honors Program affords excellent preparation for students planning to pursue graduate study or enter the work place. Of equal or greater importance, however, is the personal satisfaction and academic maturity derived from the intellectually challenging journey. Students successfully completing the Honors Program will be recognized at graduation and a designation will be included on the student=s official transcript.

### **II REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSIONS TO THE HONORS PROGRAM**

Students returning to Millsaps in the fall of their junior year with a GPA of at least 3.3 are invited by the Honors Program Director to participate in the Honors Program at Millsaps. Students must also have demonstrated writing proficiency on their sophomore writing portfolio to be eligible.

A transfer student who enrolls at Millsaps in the fall semester of his/her junior year may participate in the Honors Program with (1) a GPA of 3.3 at the prior institution AND (2) a letter of recommendation from a Millsaps faculty member to the Honors Program Director providing support for the student=s academic preparation and potential to successfully complete the Honors Program. Given that these requirements are met, the student may pre-register for Honors I in the fall term. *In order to actually register for Honors I in the spring semester, the student must have a 3.3 GPA in the fall term of the junior year at Millsaps.*

Transfer students who enroll at the college during their freshman or sophomore years are subject to the same entrance requirements as all other Millsaps students.

### III COMPLETING THE HONORS PROGRAM

#### A. Contact the Honors Program Director (Fall, junior year)

Students interested in pursuing the Honors Program should contact the Honors Program Director, Dr. Eric Griffin, as early in the fall semester of their junior year as possible. Dr. Griffin will provide students with additional information about the Honors Program, serve as a resource person for contacting potential advisors, and provide the student with necessary administrative forms. Dr. Griffin may be reached by phone at 974-1312, by e-mail at [griffiej2@millsaps.edu](mailto:griffiej2@millsaps.edu), or in his office, English House #4. You may also contact the Honors Program Administrative Assistant, Becky Swords at 974-1326 or [swordre1@millsaps.edu](mailto:swordre1@millsaps.edu).

#### B. Select an Advisor and a Thesis Topic (Fall, junior year)

Perhaps the most important step in the thesis project is selecting an advisor and defining the thesis topic. Because mentorship is a crucial part of the Honors experience, students should choose their advisor carefully, considering both the faculty member's area of expertise and the potential for a close working relationship. A student may do Honors outside of his or her area of Major or Minor study provided that the student has a sufficient academic background for the research. *However, the student's thesis advisor must teach in the discipline of the student's Honors research.* The second reader for the project may be in the same or a related discipline. Although it is not typical, a student may choose to have two thesis advisors when the project is clearly interdisciplinary and the expertise of two disciplines is vital to the project's completion. Students should not be hesitant to approach a Millsaps faculty member about thesis project mentorship.

The topic should be broad enough to require a spring semester of research during the junior year, a summer of writing, and several weeks of revision in the fall of the senior year. It should not be so broad as to merit the time required of a Ph.D. dissertation. Students may find it helpful to look through previous theses which are available in the archives room of the Wilson Library. The student and the thesis advisor work together to narrow the thesis topic to a manageable set of issues.

#### C. The Honors Thesis Proposal (Fall, junior year)

The Honors Thesis Proposal provides the broad framework for the thesis project. It is completed by the student and the advisor and is **due electronically to the Honors Program Director by October 26, 2009** (two weeks prior to pre-registration for spring courses), with an **electronic duplicate sent to the Administrative Assistant.** While some portions of the proposal are completed by the student and some by the advisor, it is imperative that the two meet to discuss all areas of the proposal before the student prepares it. The proposal **MUST** be typed and **MUST** include the following:

#### **To Be Completed by the Student:**

1. General information
  - Student's name
  - Student's campus e-mail address
  - Student's campus box number
  - Student's telephone number
  - Title of the project
  - Advisor's name
2. Brief project description. This should be as detailed as possible but at the minimum should include the question being addressed by thesis and an outline of the research methods to be used in addressing the issue.
3. Specific timetable for completing project. This should include a list of tasks to be completed and deadlines for completion, meeting dates with the advisor for the spring term and where possible, the summer. The timetable should indicate what work will be completed during the summer and how contact between student and advisor will be made over the summer. This section should also include a statement indicating when the advisor will return work to the student and the consequences of missed deadlines.
4. The name of the second reader. It is understood that the second reader will be asked in advance and that he/she has agreed to serve in this capacity. See p. 6 for more information on the role of the second reader.

**To Be Completed by the Advisor:**

5. Basis of evaluation
6. Description of the advisor's role. The advisor describes how she/he sees her/his role in guiding and evaluating the student's work.

**Both the student and the advisor must sign and date the proposal document.**

*At this point, it is the responsibility of the Honors advisor to notify his/her department chair that Honors I should be added to the department's course offerings for the spring semester.*

- D. Honors I (Spring, junior year)
  1. Thesis Research and Progress Report

During the spring of the junior year, students research their thesis projects under the direction of the thesis advisor while enrolled in Honors I.

By **March 12, 2010** students provide a written progress report to all members of their thesis committees. **Failure to complete the progress report on time could result in**

**expulsion from the Honors Program.** The progress report must contain the following information:

- ≡Description of the honors project. What questions do you want to answer and what strategies will you use to find answers?
- ≡Discussion of what work has been completed
- ≡Discussion of the work yet to be completed and a time frame for completion
- ≡Bibliography

The thesis committee then meets with the student to discuss any issues which must be considered before the student begins to write the thesis. The time frame for progress meetings is April 1-15, 2010. The advisor is encouraged to participate fully and actively in the discussion.

## 2. Junior Honors Colloquium

While students will work independently on their respective projects, all junior Honors participants will as a group two times during the first half of the spring semester (time and place TBA). This joint time will allow students to explore together issues common to the scholarly inquiry process such as academic integrity, time management in large projects, writing longer papers, and working with a thesis committee. Junior students are also required to attend the Honors Conference Weekend in February 2010.

## E. Writing the Thesis (Summer)

*It is strongly recommended that the student use the summer to write the thesis.*

The thesis should be written in the style appropriate to the discipline with professionals in the discipline as the primary audience. Many students find it helpful to model the paper on a particular journal format. The two most common writing formats are the Modern Language Association (MLA), which is most often used in the liberal arts and humanities, and the American Psychological (APA), more commonly used in the social and natural sciences. The student and advisor should discuss writing style before significant writing has begun.

Generally speaking, the thesis should include a table of contents, a thesis body, accompanying material (graphs, tables, etc.), and a bibliography. While the primary audience is professionals in the discipline, keep in mind that others not as familiar with the area will be readers as well (for example, Honors Committee reader, other students, etc.) As a result, even though it is not standard in academic journals, the paper should include a glossary to explain any terms or procedures not easily understood by the lay reader.

## F. Thesis Completion and Defense (Fall, senior year)

Ideally, a substantial draft of the thesis should be completed by the beginning of the fall of the student's senior year and given to the advisor and second reader for comments. A "defense version" of the thesis, signed by the advisor, must be given to all thesis

committee members by the **Friday prior to fall break in October, 2010**. Because science students typically conduct lab research in the summer, these students may extend the deadline until mid-November 2010 with prior permission of the Honors Director. The members of the thesis committee inform the Honors Committee member if there are serious problems. If the thesis is fatally flawed, then the student will not be allowed to proceed with the defense.

The thesis defense is a 45-minute conversation between the student and the thesis committee about the thesis topic. Held in the weeks between fall break and Thanksgiving break of the senior year, the thesis defense provides an opportunity for students to present their work to a group of knowledgeable and interested researchers in the field. Typically students give a short (roughly 15 minute) presentation of the thesis followed by questions from the thesis committee.

Students are expected to incorporate any necessary changes into the final version of the thesis which is due in February of the senior year.

#### G. Honors Conference Weekend (Spring, senior year)

The Honors Program is initiating a new Honors Conference Weekend, held in the spring semester of the senior year. The Honors Program Director will co-ordinate the weekend of presentations which are a mandatory final stage of the Honors Program. This is an exciting opportunity for all honors students to share their completed projects with each other, with the Millsaps community, and their families and friends. All students will present their research to the public over a two-day event that will celebrate the achievements and research of all students in a campus-wide event.

#### H. Graduation with Honors

Students successfully completing the Honors Program and graduating in May 2010 will receive hoods and be recognized in the Commencement program. Students graduating in August or December 2010 will receive their hoods upon completion of degree requirements.

### IV SUPPORT MECHANISMS

#### A. The Thesis Committee

A student's thesis committee consists of the thesis advisor, a second reader, and an Honors Committee reader appointed by the Honors Program Director. The Honors Program Director will serve as this reader on some but not all thesis committees. All thesis committee members must be full time Millsaps faculty, or two of three if a compelling case can be made for outside involvement (such as of an adjunct professor or a professional expert from the community).

##### 1. The Thesis Project Advisor

The thesis project will be conducted under the supervision of an advisor/ mentor selected by the student. The student and the thesis advisor should meet regularly (at least once a month) from the time they agree to undertake the project until its completion. The greater the interaction between the student and the mentor, the better will be the end product and the more rewarding will be the experience. Advisors are expected to uphold the rigor of the Honors program and to help students meet the criteria of excellence in research and writing required of an Honors thesis –a “baccalaureate level thesis, not an extended term paper, one which approximates a Masters thesis at the undergraduate level.”

The advisor helps the student refine and focus the student=s ideas into a Adoable@ thesis project and develops a timetable for completing the thesis by the deadlines set. The advisor reviews progress and reads drafts of the thesis and gives detailed feedback. The thesis typically goes through several iterations. Students are expected to give the advisor ample time to read and comment on each revision.

Should insurmountable problems occur or the student does not make sufficient progress, it is the responsibility of the advisor to convey this to the student and terminate the thesis project.

## 2. The Second Reader

The second reader is selected by the student and the advisor as part of the initial Honors project agreement. While second readers do not need to be experts in the thesis topic area, they should have enough expertise to offer productive feedback. The second reader=s responsibility is not as great as that of the thesis advisor and thus is not expected to read *every* draft of the project; however, the second reader is expected to offer substantive, constructive feedback on the major stages of the project including the proposal, first draft and defense draft. He or she should have the opportunity to comment on major stages of the process, however, so that he or she generally agrees with and supports the thesis’s quality and research.

## 3. The Honors Committee Reader

The Honors Program Director assigns one member of the Honors Committee to serve as a third thesis reader after the initial Honors Agreement has been approved. While this reader may provide substantive feedback, she/he also serves as liaison to the Honors Committee and ensures the integrity of the process and the thesis. The Honors Committee reader serves as convener for the progress report meeting and the Honors defense and conveys the results of these meetings to the Honors Director in writing.

## B. The Honors Program Director

While actually serving on only a small number of Honors thesis committees, the Honors Program Director serves as a resource for all Honors students and members of thesis committees.

## V. GENERAL TIME FRAME AND DEADLINES

### **Fall, 2009 B 1<sup>st</sup> Semester Junior Year**

- \$ Meet with Dr. Eric Griffin, interim Honors Program Director, to explore the Honors Program
- \$ Select a thesis advisor and a thesis topic
- \$ Select a second reader
- \$ Submit Honors Thesis Proposal to the Honors Program Director two weeks prior to pre-registration, **October 26, 2010**
- \$ Pre-register for Honors I

### **Spring, 2010 B 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester Junior Year**

- \$ Enroll in Honors I
- \$ Conduct research under direction of thesis advisor
- \$ Submit Progress Report to Honors Program Director by **March 13, 2008**
- \$ Meet with Thesis Committee to discuss progress report
- \$ Pre-register for Honors II

### **Summer, 2010 B Summer between Junior and Senior Years**

- \$ Complete research and write thesis

### **Fall, 2010 B 1<sup>st</sup> Semester Senior Year**

- \$ Enroll in Honors II
- \$ Distribute a substantial draft of the thesis to all committee members by early September
- \$ Revise thesis
- \$ Submit Adefense version@ of thesis to all committee members by Friday prior to fall break.
- \$ Defend thesis in weeks between fall break and Thanksgiving break
- \$ Begin thinking of presentation focus for Honors Conference Weekend

### **Spring, 2010 B 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester Senior Year**

- \$ Submit final version of thesis to the Honors Program Director by the **first Tuesday in February, 2010**
- \$ Participate in and present at Honors Conference Weekend.
- \$ Complete all paper work and sign permissions with the library to deposit thesis and have it bound by the library.

## **VI HONORS RESEARCH AND TRAVEL GRANTS**

The Honors Committee awards financial grants to enhance the Millsaps Honors experience. Two types of grants are awarded on a competitive basis and are available to all Honors students graduating in May, 2011. Applications will be evaluated by the Honors Committee with priority given to projects which can be significantly enhanced with the funds. Successful applications will generally funded in the \$250-\$750 range.

**Junior Honors Research or Artistic Funding Grants** may cover research-related expenses that aid in realizing the stated objectives. These expenses may include but are not limited to travel, meal, and hotel expenses for trips specifically related to the stated objectives, project supplies, copyright/patent costs, permissions, photocopying, transparencies, photographs, mailing, faxing, relevant membership fees, proofreading and indexing, printing (e.g. of survey instruments), subject payment and conference calls, etc. Books and software essential to research projects may be purchased if this is the most cost-effective way to achieve results. Equipment purchases such as computers and microscopes will not be funded. The deadline for applications for a Junior Research or Artistic Funding Grant is February 15, 2010. Funds must be used and reimbursement requested by September 15, 2010.

**Senior Honors Conference Travel Grants** will support student travel to professional conferences at which the student will present Honors work. Reimbursable expenditures include travel, meal, and lodging accommodations. Applications for Senior Conference Travel Grants are due September 30, 2010. All travel must be completed by May 15, 2011.

A student may receive both a Junior Research Grant and a Senior Conference Travel Grant.

### **Criteria for Grants**

In order to be considered, a grant proposal must include the following:

- A description of a well-developed project with concrete, realizable objectives and the status of the project to date. This should include a brief justification of budget items and the funding=s importance to the project.
- A time line for expenditure of funds.
- An itemized budget which estimates specific reimbursable costs and names the total sum requested.
- A statement evaluating the request from the student=s Honors advisor. In the case of a Travel Grant, the faculty statement should include an assessment of the student=s potential for being accepted as a presenter.

Applications are due to the Honors Program Director by the deadlines listed above.

## **VII GUIDELINES FOR THESIS ADVISORS**

### **A. General Comments**

The thesis advisor wears many hats.

- § First and foremost, the advisor models the process of academic inquiry for the student. It is largely through the advisor that the student learns to frame a question, to troubleshoot problems, to celebrate unexpected findings, and to produce a paper which effectively relays the discovery.
- § Second, the advisor should help the student meet deadlines imposed by the Honors Program. Students often find it difficult to pace themselves in a project which spans an entire calendar year, and the advisor should help the student set intermediate deadlines.
- § Third, the advisor is responsible for ensuring the quality of the project. If the project faces insurmountable obstacles, the advisor should end the project.
- § Finally, the advisor provides moral support, encourages in the face of setbacks and pushes in the face of lethargy.

For additional comments on the role of the thesis advisor, please see [The Thesis Project Advisor](#) on p. 6.

## B. The Thesis

First-time advisors often question what degree of rigor is required of an Honors thesis. As the name implies, it is a baccalaureate level thesis, not merely an extended term paper. It may be thought of as a process similar to a master's project but pitched to the undergraduate. The paper should be written in the style appropriate to the discipline and of the caliber of a paper acceptable for presentation at a regional academic meeting.

## C. Administrative Issues

1. **Scheduling Honors I:** The Honors Thesis Proposal, signed by both the student and the advisor, must be submitted to the Honors Program Director *no later than two weeks before registration*. **The thesis advisor must inform the department chair that Honors I be added to the list of the department's course offerings.** The Records Office provides the department Chair with the appropriate form.
2. **Grading:** The thesis advisor is responsible for assigning a grade for Honors I and Honors II. While there may be a tendency to give the student an AA@ for effort, please consider the following in assigning grades: To what extent was the student's work truly original vs. implementing the ideas of the advisor? How well did the student complete the assigned tasks? Did the student complete assignments by the agreed upon time? How successfully did the student incorporate the advisor's suggestions during the different stages of the process B researching, writing, and revising?

## D. A Final Word to Advisors

Thank you. Your mentorship is invaluable to the students exploring new ideas in the Honors Program. Undertaking this role indicates the value you place on opportunities to work with students who are enthusiastic about learning. While you could be seeking your own objectives, you have chosen the time consuming task of mentoring a student=s intellectual pursuit. The impact you have on your Honors student both personally and intellectually is profound.

Thank you for your time and your commitment.

## **VIII HONORS COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Honors Committee members for 2009-10 are:

### **Honors Program – Fall 2009**

- **\*Eric Griffin , interim Director**
- Ray Grubbs
- Wolfgang Kramer
- Melissa Lea
- Anne MacMaster
- Sandra Murchison
- Ashleigh Powers
- Ming Tsui
- Steve Smith
- Holly M. Sypniewski (on sabbatical)

### **Honors Program – Spring 2010**

- **Holly Sypniewski, Director**
- Ajay Aggarwal
- Kristen Brown Golden
- Ray Grubbs
- Wolfgang Kramer
- Melissa Lea
- Anne MacMaster
- Ashleigh Powers
- Shadow Robinson
- Ming Tsui
- Steve Smith