

# Environmental Studies Honors Thesis

## Introduction

The Honors Thesis of the Environmental Studies Program is awarded to ES majors who produce academic work that meets these three conditions: a) scholarly excellence through original research worthy of peer-reviewed publication or presentation to the general public; b) it has an environmental issue as its main topic; and c) it is situated in an interdisciplinary context. Approaches that encompass two or more disciplines across different areas of knowledge, i.e., social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, are particularly encouraged. Students pursuing the Honors Thesis are expected to make a major commitment in terms of time and effort. This endeavor should be undertaken only by those with strong research interests and the ability to focus intellectually in scholarly production.

## Requirements

**Initial Consultation:** A student interested in undertaking an Honors Thesis should discuss their ideas with the ES Chair and/or their preferred ES faculty advisor. After reaching tentative agreement on the topic and approach, the students must submit an Environmental Studies Honors Thesis Application, found at the end of this document. The application includes a project summary, a proposed timeline of work, a brief bibliography, an unofficial transcript, and a letter of support from the thesis advisor. This step should be taken ideally during the second semester of the student's junior year, no later than September 15 of the first semester of their Senior year.

**Course Work and Schedule:** For most students undertaking an Honors Thesis, it is best if they have completed a significant portion of the basic research by the start of their Senior year. During their senior year, honors students are expected to commit the equivalent of at least one course to work on the thesis. This commitment involves registering for ENVI 644 - Honors Independent (4 credits) during at least one semester (most often Spring). Before their final semester, honors students are required to submit a detailed outline or review of the literature for review by the ES Department members for approval. Only those students whose initial work is approved by the ES Faculty will be permitted to proceed with their Honors Thesis.

## Written work

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the department and major, different formats are acceptable as long as they conform with the standards of scholarly work in the chosen field(s) of knowledge. Students must demonstrate mastery of the literature of the field they are working in, originality of ideas, insight, and the ability to communicate those ideas and insights effectively.

## **Oral Presentation**

Honors Thesis students are required to give a 30-60 minute presentation before a wide audience of faculty and students during a regular EnviroThursday or in a specially called ES Program Seminar. Additional presentations before a professional meeting are also encouraged. Presentations should conform to the high standards that are typical for delivering a paper at an academic conference or giving a professional presentation to a public audience.

## **Evaluation**

The Honors Thesis will be read by a committee of faculty members, usually three, and often including faculty or other experts from outside the ES department and/or Macalester. The student will meet with this committee to discuss their thesis and address the committee's questions for about an hour shortly after the oral presentation. Following the discussion with the student, the committee decides as a group whether the paper merits an Honors designation and communicates their decision to the student along with any suggested revisions to be incorporated into the final draft.

# **Environmental Studies**

## **Honors Thesis Timeline and Due Dates**

### **Junior Year**

- Explore honors topics.
- Project proposals will be accepted first and second semester junior year.
- Summer prior to senior year, continue research.

### **Senior Year**

~September 15	Final deadline to submit an Honors Thesis proposal. At a September department meeting, the Environmental Studies faculty will review submitted proposals and decide which proposals are approved to proceed.
September 30	List of students pursuing Honors Thesis is submitted to the Dean of Academic Programs (include project title and name of primary advisor).
October 15	Student identifies three faculty members to serve on their honors committee (at least two of these members must be ES Department faculty, and the Chair is usually an ES faculty).
First Day of Classes – Spring semester	Detailed Thesis outline or review of literature due to advisor.
Early February – before the add/drop period	ES Department reviews outline/review of literature and approves continuation of the Honors Thesis. A revised list of students who have been approved to continue their work is submitted to the Dean of Academic Programs (include project title and name of primary advisor).
March 15	First draft of thesis due.
Early April*	Final abstract due.
Early April*	Outside examiner payment form due (if applicable).
Early-Mid April*	Oral defenses to be scheduled.
April 15	Final draft due.
Late April*	Honors Thesis due.

\*Note: Dates are determined by Academic Programs. Check their website for specifics:  
[www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/honorsprogram](http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/honorsprogram)

# Environmental Studies Honors Thesis Application

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Potential three member thesis committee (one outside member is common):

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Attach the following documents to this application:

1. One page thesis summary including a preliminary title, your guiding research question, methodology, and relevant coursework and experience.
2. A timeline indicating work done and to be done.
3. Short bibliography.
4. Unofficial college transcript.
5. Letter from your department advisor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date