

Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College
Sample Syllabus
First Semester

This is a recommended syllabus. Most students will have completed a semester or more of Capstone work before beginning the more focused research and writing referred to in this document.

You and your thesis advisor should adapt the syllabus to meet individual and discipline-specific expectations.

The senior thesis is above all a project that requires continuous independent research, reading, and writing on your part. There are no off-weeks!!! Because you are expected to do independent work throughout the entire semester, it will not be mentioned explicitly in the syllabus.

To make the senior thesis a success and actually enjoy the process, it is crucial that you establish a schedule that includes ample time for work on the senior thesis every week. The senior thesis is a class, and you should think of it as such in terms of time commitment.

The **MAJOR REQUIREMENTS** for the first semester of the senior thesis class are:

1) **Ensure that you are registered for thesis credit by the end of the first week of the semester.**

Be sure that you are registered for the appropriate course credit. Thesis courses usually have to be booked by the major department (if you are using a class in your major) or by the Honors College (if you are using Hon 401 and 402).

2) **Choose a SECOND READER (due by September 14).**

The second reader should be a professor in your major department, unless you are working on an interdisciplinary thesis. **Consult with and get your thesis advisor's approval in choosing the second reader.** After the second reader agrees to work with you, e-mail the Honors College Secretary so we can update our records (letolber@olemiss.edu).

3) **Develop a THESIS PROSPECTUS (by the End of September or a date determined by your thesis advisor).**

The thesis prospectus needs to be a polished text that...

- a) clearly states the topic of the thesis (= the research question);
- b) explains what sources or methodologies you will use to address your research question;
- c) reviews what the existing literature says on your topic;
- d) suggests what your conclusions or preliminary hypothesis might be (based on your readings and preliminary research);
- e) provides a bibliography of relevant sources.

The length of the prospectus should be 8-10 double-spaced pages plus the bibliography. It will be read and critiqued both by the thesis advisor and the second reader.

4) Submit a **PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PRODUCT** (due **the last week of class**).

The preliminary research product will commonly be at least one complete chapter/section of the thesis in an advanced draft. If your project is heavily quantitative or requires extensive primary research, a database, well-designed tables or graphs, or transcribed interviews may count as the preliminary research product. In lab sciences, you may have elements like the introduction, literature review, and/or methods sections completed while you continue experiments.

REMEMBER:

- 1) Whenever you read something relevant for your thesis, whenever you have an idea on the structure of your thesis, or whenever you think of a good interpretation for material you researched/read, ***make a note***. If it is a note on readings, always include a clear reference to the publication and page number. There is nothing more frustrating than having a good quote or piece of information, but not knowing where it came from; that means, strictly speaking, that you cannot use it, or you have to search for the reference again, which is a big waste of time. The better and more systematic your note-taking, the easier the actual writing of the thesis!!
- 2) Meetings are no substitute for actual independent work; they merely prepare you to do your independent work more effectively, or they allow for critiques or advice from your advisor.
- 3) We cannot stress enough that you are the one moving the project ahead at all times. The advisor and outside readers merely help you to direct your work and pursue a promising path. Do not ever wait for your advisor or others to tell you that you need to do work – you need to be self-motivated and work on your own initiative.

RECOMMENDED SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Activity
1	August 21-25	a) Meet with Thesis Advisor; develop schedule for the semester if you have not already done so
2	August 28-September 1	a) Senior Thesis Meetings b) Select and contact second reader, after consulting with thesis advisor
3	September 4-8	a) Students do independent research and reading on their topics to prepare a prospectus draft for thesis advisor. b) THESIS PROSPECTUS Due September 11 to Advisor & Second Reader (due date negotiable with thesis advisor)
4	September 10-14	a) Students' independent work to focus more heavily on research in primary sources; b) Revise Thesis Prospectus based on comments by advisor and reader. c) E-mail the Honors Secretary (letolber@olemiss.edu) by 5:00 Friday, September 14 after second reader agrees to work with you.
5	September 18-22	Student research and writing; consultation with thesis advisor
6	September 25-29	Student research and writing; consultation with thesis advisor
7	October 2-6	Student research and writing; consultation with thesis advisor
8	October 8-12	a) Student research and writing; consultation with thesis advisor b) Advisor posts mid-term grade or communicates with student about progress by October 8
9	October 16-20	Student research and writing; consultation with thesis advisor
10	October 23-27	Student research and writing; consultation with thesis advisor
11	October 30-November 3	Student research and writing; consultation with thesis advisor
12	November 6-10	Student research and writing; consultation with thesis advisor
13	November 13-17	Student research and writing; consultation with thesis advisor
14	November 17-25	Thanksgiving Week; Student research and writing
15	November 26-30	Student submits preliminary product to thesis advisor by Friday, November 30
16	December 3-7	Finals Week; Advisor posts final grade for capstone/thesis course