

Guide to the Honors Program in French, Italian, or Spanish at Cornell

Opportunities for Independent Critical and Scholarly Work

Completing the French, Italian, or Spanish major with Honors allows students to do independent study on a topic they choose, to work closely with a faculty adviser, and to write a researched critically analytical paper of approximately 50 pages. Students almost always find the Honors Thesis an incalculably satisfying project and a memorable achievement. In fact, many graduate school applicants submit part of their Honors Thesis as a sample of their critical, scholarly work that demonstrates their future promise as scholars. Students find the thesis work an excellent preparation for other career paths as well. Successfully completing an Honors Thesis will require sustained interest, ability, diligence, and enthusiasm, and is always a rewarding experience.

Requirements and Courses

To qualify for the Honors Program, students should have an average of 3.5 in courses that count toward the French, Italian, or Spanish major.

The Honors Program is a two-semester commitment and represents the equivalent of 2 courses worth a total of 8 credits. Students enroll in French, Italian or Spanish 4290 (Fall) and French, Italian or Spanish 4300 (Spring). These semesters must be *consecutive during the senior year*. Both semester courses must be taken for a letter grade.

Stages of the Program

The year-by-year and semester-by-semester schedule sketched here should give those interested in the Honors Program an idea of the usual way students move through the Program. Other patterns are possible. Some students know at the time they declare the French, Italian, or Spanish major that they wish to pursue Honors, while others may discover later in their studies a riveting interest they desire to pursue in depth, and only then consider writing an Honors Thesis.

Junior year

Look over the papers you have written in your French, Italian, or Spanish courses; identify your interests; and think about work you have done well in the past and about what work you would enjoy pursuing for two semesters. These suggestions should help you identify your topic for the Honors essay and should help you think about the adviser with whom you would enjoy working. Some of the most successful Honors essays have come out of course work.

In April or early May before your year of Honors work, speak to faculty members who would be suitable advisers for your project, keeping in mind that your Honors Thesis adviser **should be in residence both semesters**. Ask for some suggestions for preparatory reading. Remember that when you pre-enroll for your Honors Work adviser's section of French, Italian, or Spanish 4290/4300, **you must have your adviser's approval and the approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies**. French, Italian, or Spanish 4290/4300 is a year-long, 8-credit course, for which you will receive letter grades each semester. S/U grades are

not an option.

Feel free to consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies about appropriate advisers. Spend some time in the summer months reading primary texts and thinking about your topic, approach, and argument. If possible, be in occasional email contact with your adviser over the summer.

Senior year

As soon as you return, consult with your Honors Thesis adviser about your topic, discuss requirements and procedures, and set up a schedule for **regular meetings, usually at least once every two weeks**. If you have not yet pre-enrolled for French, Italian, or Spanish 4290 you will need to do so with the approval of your Honors essay adviser.

Set up and follow a schedule for your Honors essay work. Depending, of course, on what you and your adviser agree to, it would be reasonable in the first semester (French, Italian, or Spanish 4290) to complete in the target language:

- a short prospectus or essay proposal
- a bibliography of available and relevant secondary or conceptual work on your topic
- an annotated bibliography of the work you wish to use, critique, and apply to your research
- about 20-30 pages of writing

In the second term, while registered for French, Italian, or Spanish 4300 (Honors Work), you will write the final draft. Your essay should be about 50 pages in length. Your adviser should read a few drafts of the final version, drafts which you should be submitting and revising under your adviser's engaged supervision. **Your thesis must be written in the language of your major.**

Allow yourself the last two weeks before the deadline to edit and proofread your Honors Thesis. Please take care that it follows a style guide -- either the MLA guide or the Chicago Manual of Style -- in quotation, internal citation, footnotes or endnotes, bibliographical entries, etc. Above all, do not sabotage your own project by trying to do too much at the last minute and by not allowing time for refinement of ideas and execution.

Submit two spiral-bound copies of your thesis by the deadline in mid-April (or early November for those graduating in January).

In determining the level of Honors awarded with your degree, the Honors committee considers your GPA in the major as well as the two grades you receive from the two readers of your choice of your senior Honors Thesis, one of whom will be your Honors Thesis adviser. The committee also considers your grades in other courses, especially in those related to your major.

While applying to the Honors program and writing an Honors Thesis is not a guarantee that

you will be awarded Honors in French, Italian, or Spanish, most of our students completing an Honors Thesis have been successful candidates for Honors. In the event that you are not awarded Honors, you will receive 8 credits for the two courses you did during the academic year and grades for those two courses.

Enjoy the remainder of your final semester and graduate with Honors!

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I write an Honors Thesis if I also plan to study abroad?

French, Italian, and Spanish majors who want to write Honors Theses as seniors may study abroad as juniors, whether for one or two semesters. To make this process as easy as possible, we encourage you to discuss your plans with the Director of Undergraduate Studies as soon as possible.

When do I decide on my topic?

Many of the most successful thesis have come out of past course work that sparked curiosity, that made a student want to go further, and to revisit and revise previous work. Students should review their past course work, brainstorm freely, dream, and identify their intellectual interests and passions. Ask yourself, during the junior year: What project will nurture and sustain my interest over two semesters of independent study.

How do I find a thesis adviser?

Once you have determined where your interests lie, consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies for help in identifying faculty members who match or support your interests. Speak to them about becoming your thesis adviser. **You may also choose your second reader.**

Can I switch my thesis adviser once I've started work in the Honors Work?

Most working relationships between Honors candidates and their thesis advisers go well, and the learning is genial, exciting, and mutual. Many Honors students recall their tutorial as a highlight of their Cornell experience, and professors, too, typically enjoy working with intellectually engaged students on a developing thesis. However, if you realize that the shape your topic is taking calls on a different kind of expertise from the one represented by your Honors Thesis adviser, it is possible to change adviser. Consult the Director of Undergraduate Studies for advice.

What are the guidelines for the format of my Honors Thesis?

Approximately 50 pages of text, **written in the target language (that is, not English)**, not including endnotes and bibliography, double-spaced in 12-point type.

Use either the MLA or Chicago manuals of style for footnotes or endnotes, quotations, internal citations, bibliographical entries, etc. Handbooks are accessible online as well as in printed form which can be purchased or used in libraries.

Two copies of your spiral bound thesis must be handed in to the Romance Studies Department by the day the thesis is due.

Campus Copy in the Statler, Gnomon Copy, and the FedEx Office can copy and spiral bind your thesis. It is not necessary to have a hardcover binding.

There are no predetermined formats for the title page, dedication page, or table of contents. The Romance Studies undergraduate office has a number of theses written by former Honors students, which you may review.

How is my final Honors grade determined?

The thesis writing process is determined in two parts. The entire course (Honors Work I in the Fall and Honors Work II in the Spring) will give you 8 credits. Both your first and second semesters will be graded by your thesis adviser. These may be different grades from that assigned to your thesis by your adviser and second reader.

The completed Honors Thesis is read and assessed by two readers. One reader is the thesis adviser. Both readers write a report and assign a grade to the Honors Work. You will receive both of the reports.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY
Department of Romance Studies

To be admitted to the Honors Program in French, Italian, or Spanish:

Calculate the GPA of your courses that count toward the French, Italian, or Spanish major: A GPA of 3.5 or above is required for eligibility to the Honors program.

Email the Director of Undergraduate Studies, Cecelia Lawless, at cbl6@cornell.edu to schedule a meeting during her office hours, which can be found on the Romance Studies Department website at <http://romancestudies.cornell.edu/office-hours>

Complete this form and take it with you to your appointment. The Director of Undergraduate Studies will review your transcript and sign the form during your meeting. **If you are doing a dual Honors with another department you will need written consent from that department that they agree to all conditions for fulfilling the Honors Theses.**

Submit the signed form to Cal Hile, K165 Klarman Hall, Undergraduate Coordinator of the Romance Studies Department.

Once a faculty member has agreed to be your thesis advisor, have them send an email stating his/her agreement to Cal Hile at clh2@cornell.edu.

When Cal Hile receives your advisor's email, she will email you to come in and complete in person the manual form to add Honors Work to your schedule.

<u>CUID</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Initial</u>
NetID	French, Italian, or Spanish major advisor		Graduation MONTH and YEAR
Class:	First Year	Sophomore	Junior Senior
			Today's Date

If you are or plan to be a *double major*, list your other major(s)

Romance Studies Faculty member(s) who know your work.

Have you received written consent from your other major to do a dual thesis?
 Department
 Name Thesis
 Advisor

Some preliminary ideas for area of Honors essay

Ideas for faculty with whom you would like to work

Signature of the Director of Undergraduate Coordinator

Date