

## Honors Program in Medicine, Health and Society

**Purpose:** The Honors Thesis in Medicine, Health, and Society seeks to encourage undergraduate majors in MHS to engage in critical thought and original research in collaboration with faculty.

**Eligibility:** MHS majors who wish to write an honors thesis must have a GPA of at least 3.3 and the endorsement of a faculty advisor who is willing to direct the honors thesis. Whenever possible, the student should choose as an honor's advisor a faculty member with whom they have taken at least one class. Students secure the advisor's consent and apply to the honors program in the spring semester of their junior year. Proposals must be submitted to MHS **no later than April 1<sup>st</sup> of their junior year**. Application includes the Redcap form and a letter of recommendation from your thesis advisor. Redcap form is linked [here](#) and on the website and proposal details are attached.

**Program:** In consultation with the thesis advisor, the student will carefully define and complete a substantive project involving original and independent research. Honors thesis research must include data analysis which may be primary research on a small scale, using suitable research methods, or secondary analysis of existing data. "Data" is broadly conceived ranging from interviews, media representations, policy documents, original or existing survey data, maps, etc.

Honors thesis projects are typically 40-60 pages (double-spaced, 1 inch margins and 12 point font) including bibliography and endnotes. Honors thesis students enroll in MHS 4998 (3 credits) in fall semester senior year followed by MHS 4999 (3 credits) in the spring semester. Students enrolled in MHS 4998 are expected to meet regularly with their faculty mentor and produce a draft chapter of the honors thesis project. During the spring semester, students meet with their faculty advisor as needed. Honors students are also eligible for enrollment in MHS graduate-level methods courses.

It is expected that the student will work in close consultation with the advisor throughout the process of conceptualizing, researching and writing the honors thesis during the senior year. Typically, honors research projects are completed according to the following schedule:

Fall Semester: In the first few weeks of the semester, the student will devise, in consultation with the thesis advisor, a detailed work plan to be submitted to MHS (See attached Work Plan). The first stage of the work plan may be a preliminary bibliography and/or a prospectus in which the student defines the problem to be addressed and outlines the approach to be used. It is important that the student begin the writing process in some form before the end of the fall semester.

Spring Semester: The student will continue writing according to the established timetable.

**Thesis Defense:** A thesis committee composed of the advisor and one additional faculty members will review the thesis and conduct an oral defense of about one hour in length. The Director of Undergraduate Studies and Assistant Director of MHS assign committee members based on the students' research topic. Thesis defenses are scheduled in the Spring semester no later than two weeks before the last day of class. Students submit an electronic copy of their honors thesis to their faculty advisor and committee members at least 5 days before the defense.

Following the thesis defense, the student will make any changes deemed necessary by committee members. After receiving revisions, the committee will determine whether the thesis justifies the award of honors. After receiving approval from their thesis advisor, the student will submit one unbound copy of the finished thesis to MHS for our library. The deadline for this process is the Friday after the last day of classes in the spring semester, which is the University deadline for MHS to submit the honors thesis forms to the Registrar. Students who successfully complete an honors thesis project will have "Honors" recorded on their diplomas and transcripts and printed beside their names in the Commencement bulletin.

## MHS HONORS PROGRAM APPLICATION

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

Title of Honors Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Cum GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ MHS GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Honors Thesis Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Applications are due **April 1** by the [redcap form](#)." A completed application includes this form, letter of recommendation from your thesis advisor, and your thesis proposal (PDF).

### **Letter of Recommendation:**

Request a letter from the faculty member who will supervise your honors thesis. In addition to detailing why you should be a candidate for the MHS honors program, the letter should indicate that the advisor has read and approved your thesis proposal.

### **Thesis Proposal:**

Attach a 2-3 page description of your proposed thesis project. Please address the following questions:

1. What is the exact nature of your research? What question(s) will you be posing?
2. What data and methods will you use to answer this question?
3. To the extent that you can, please explain the contribution you hope to make to the existing literature on the subject.
4. In what way is this topic appropriate to MHS?
5. Briefly explain the plans you and your faculty advisor have made for regular interaction and supervision.

## Sample detailed work plan

Please append a list of tasks and due dates as appropriate to your project. The following is a sample work plan that can be modified in accordance with the student's project and the supervisor's recommendations. The exception are the last two MHS and A&S deadlines which cannot be changed.

### Fall Semester:

End of September	2-3 page proposal with preliminary literature review, aims and objectives, and data collection plan (if applicable)
First week of October:	Preliminary bibliography due; data collection begins (if applicable)
Before Thanksgiving break:	Preliminary outline of thesis sections, including literature review
First week of Dec:	Student to begin writing

### Spring Semester:

January	Data collection should be complete
First week of February:	Rough draft of first 15-20 pages due
First week of April:	Final draft of the thesis due to thesis adviser
<b>April 4-11</b>	<b>Thesis defense</b>
<b>April 23</b>	<b>Deadline to notify A&amp;S of honors conferral</b>

Honors thesis work plans should be emailed to [mhs@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:mhs@vanderbilt.edu) by **September 1** in the student's senior year.