

# The Honors Thesis

## Thesis Guidelines

1. **Introduction and Literature Review:** This section sets the stage for your work. It gives the reader a view of the framework for your project - the particular field in which you are working - and brings the reader logically to the project at hand. The introduction should answer two questions: 1) Why did you focus on this particular subject?; and 2) How does your work fit into the larger context? Finally, the introduction and literature review should lead logically and clearly to your research question or hypothesis.
2. **Research Problem, Question, or Hypothesis:** Your hypothesis or research question should be able to be stated succinctly in two sentences. You can spend more time explaining its context – but if you cannot state your research question this directly; it probably means you are unsure of what you are writing about.
3. **Methods and Procedures:** What exactly did you do? Situate and validate your topic among the sources and materials you used. Readers should be able to understand clearly the analytical or procedural steps you undertook to arrive at the answer to your thesis question or hypothesis.
4. **Results and Discussion:** What did you discover, learn, or uncover? Present and discuss the specific material, data, or ideas you have collected or generated through the examination of your primary and secondary sources. Describe your findings in a precise and concise manner. This is the real heart of your project and contains your original contribution of new knowledge in your field. Be sensitive to your audience since this is primarily where you can persuade your readers to adopt your perspective on the subject. The discussion should present your results, interpret them for the reader and relate them to the larger field. In a sense, this requires you to view your work from the outside. Since all projects are by their very nature are limited in their scope an essential part of fully utilizing your work is to understand its limits. So think about the robustness of what you have done: if you had collected your materials or data differently, could you still expect to replicate your findings? Could you have approached your project in a different way? Did your assumptions lead you to a certain bias that has implications for your conclusions? The ability to view one's own work critically and objectively is essential for all fields of scholarly research, and a thorough discussion of your findings demonstrates your potential as a scholar.
5. **Conclusions:** What, briefly, will the reader learn or discover from reading your thesis? What are the larger ramifications of your work? Your conclusions should not be stated in personal terms, but should be your last attempt to appeal to the reader about your work. Solid conclusions NEVER introduce new material that has not been covered in the body of the thesis, and USUALLY point to future research that may be spawned by your work.