



**METROPOLITAN
STATE UNIVERSITY
OF DENVER**

Honors Program

Honors Thesis Guidebook

Updated August 2015

HON 4948-Honors Thesis Seminar

HON 4950-Honors Thesis

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Introduction

Congratulations for getting to this point in the Honors Program. You have reached the culmination of your undergraduate career and Honors coursework.

The Honors thesis may seem like a daunting task. With the help of the Honors staff and your Thesis advisor, it will be one of your most rewarding academic experiences. Pursuing a thesis topic of your choice is a wonderful opportunity to experience first-hand the creative processes that are fundamental to higher education. You will benefit from the mentorship provided by your thesis advisor and the advice and support of your committee. Our hope is that by completing the Honors thesis, you will appreciate and understand the challenges, complexities, and rewards of creative activities.

Many of our Honors Program graduates say that the Honors thesis is one of the highlights of their undergraduate academic experience. The thesis allowed them to explore areas of their most passionate interests, engage in the process of discovery, and work one-on-one with outstanding faculty. The Honors thesis has benefits beyond college as well. Former students have used their theses to gain entrance into graduate programs and to secure their first job after graduation. The thesis shows that you are creative and hard working – characteristics highly valued in today's graduate programs and the job market.

Common elements of theses include engaging in an original activity, using your imagination, pursuing your curiosity, developing a productive one-on-one relationship with your Thesis advisor, and making a formal paper and oral presentation on your thesis work. There also is significant variation in theses formats. The thesis related to a senior vocal recital is very different from a thesis based on laboratory research. The thesis requirements recognize these differences so that you will have the flexibility to be creative in your own areas of interest and expertise.

The information in this *Honors Thesis Guide* will help you navigate your way through the process of completing your Honors thesis. It is not an exhaustive resource, so consult with your Thesis advisor and the Honors staff for additional information and guidance. This team of supporters and advisor's is here to help make the Honors thesis a meaningful experience that you will provide you with an excellent capstone to your education at MSU Denver!

Honors Program

1033 9th St Park

P: 303-556-4336

F: 303-556-4337

<http://www.msudenver.edu/honors/>

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is a thesis?

A thesis is an opportunity for students to work closely with your thesis advisor on a comprehensive independent research or creative endeavor that brings to a conclusion your undergraduate academic experience.

This is not meant to be a compilation of previous term papers. This is meant to be original work created expressly for the fulfillment of the Thesis requirement and the Honors Program.

A thesis is not just another research paper. It is more substantial. A thesis will thoroughly investigate previous research on a topic and (most importantly) it will include your own insights and contributions to the topic emanating from your critical engagement in the process.

The Honors thesis is the quintessential capstone experience that allows students to explore academic areas of their most passionate interests, engage in the process of discovery, and make an original contribution in their areas of interest and expertise.

How long is a thesis?

The Thesis needs to be long enough to adequately address your topic. Typically, theses are 30-70 pages. Please consult with your thesis advisors, as well as the Honors Director for guidelines regarding paper length for your topic.

Replacing thesis course (HON 4950) for capstone course

If your thesis will satisfy your capstone (or senior experience) course, your department chair or program director must sign your thesis proposal before it is submitted to the Honors program. Examples of capstone courses include MGT 4950, PSY 3320/HON 3320, and SWK 4820). Ask the Honors Director if you want another capstone/senior experience course to replace the Thesis class. (FYI: HON 4948 is required of honors students even if capstone course satisfies HON 4950).

When should I get started?

As soon as you can. One way to get started is to attend your first of the minimum two (2) formal presentations (such as thesis defenses, presentations at Undergraduate Research and/or other professional conferences, and/or presentations pre-approved by the Honors' Director). All Honors students also are required to complete a one-credit Honors thesis seminar course (HON 4948) the semester or two before registering for HON 4950 (Honors Thesis). While completing HON 4948, students will brainstorm ideas for their thesis and begin working on the thesis during this semester. During HON 4948, you will prepare the materials needed to apply for Honors Thesis. (Refer to the Honors Thesis Application and Record.)

Why am I required to attend at least two presentations before defending my thesis?

So that you'll see the process and what is expected. This should help you have a more successful defense. We require two so that you have more than one example. Furthermore, even experienced presenters can give a poor presentation. Attending two presentations increases the chances you'll see at least one good presentation. Be sure to ask those who attended the same presentations (especially the Honors representative) for their opinions on what went well and what did not.

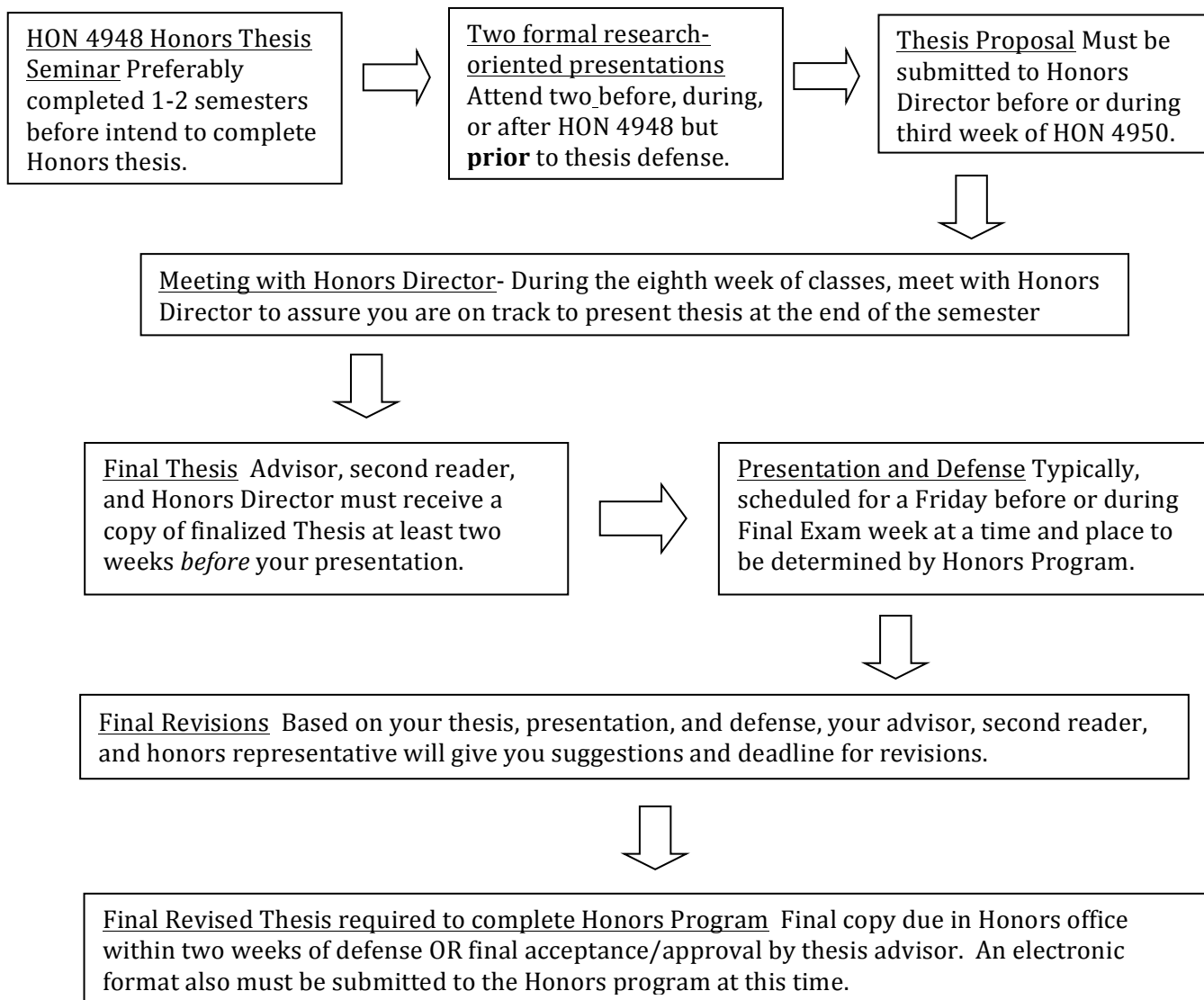
What is the penalty if I don't attend at least two presentations before my thesis defense?

A half grade is subtracted from the thesis grade for not attending each presentation (for a maximum of a full grade being lost if no presentations were attended prior to defending). This penalty will not be removed for any presentations attended after the defense because of the above-noted purpose of this requirement.

Requirements to Complete the Honors Program

- Students must complete the coursework detailed in the relevant MSU Denver Course Catalog and MSU Handbook for the year of their entrance into the Program. This includes completion of HON 4948 (for students beginning the program after Spring, 2012) and HON 4950.
- Students must also maintain a 3.25 GPA to remain in good standing in the Honors Program and must have at least a 3.25 at the point of their completion of the Honors Program.
- In addition to the requirement of receiving a passing grade in HON 4950 (of C or better), students must also complete a successful Honors Thesis Defense.
- A grade of C or better on the oral defense and thesis.

The following is the Honors Thesis Timeline (HON 4950 is typically completed during the last 30 credit hours at MSU Denver.)



General Format of the Honors Thesis

- Honors theses come in a variety of formats but all include a formal written component and a formal oral presentation.
- Although the format will vary upon discipline, the following format ideas have been utilized by students in the past:
 - Research paper
 - Scholarly research paper
 - Business plan
 - Portfolio
 - Education unit
 - Fine arts display or performance
 - Design project

Please note: Students must have their Honors Thesis Proposal approved by the Honors Director and the thesis advisors before or during the **third week** in which they are enrolled in HON 4950.

Thesis Advisor and Second Reader

- Each student will choose a thesis advisor and a second reader. The thesis advisor and second reader must be faculty members at MSU Denver and regularly available during the semester they serve as your advisor and second reader.
- It is helpful to meet one-on-one with potential thesis advisors because you will get a better feel for their personalities and interests. Explain the concept of the Honors thesis; articulate your expectations for their participation.
- The Thesis advisor's responsibilities require that s/he meet with you regularly to discuss ideas and review drafts of your work.
- When choosing a thesis advisor, first ask yourself the following questions.
 - Do you like this individual on a personal basis? Will s/he be a good mentor and supporter?
 - Is this person easily accessible in terms of scheduling appointments and responding to phone calls and e-mails?
 - Are you excited by the prospect of learning under his/her guidance?
 - Is this person knowledgeable in the area of your topic?
 - Look up some recent papers s/he has written and read them, this will give you a better idea of what the advisor does or is interested in.
 - Will your advisor and second reader be available for your public presentation and defense at the end of the semester? The thesis advisor and second reader **MUST** be in attendance at your defense in order to complete the Honors Thesis. Thus, it is useful to verify their availability for the typical thesis presentations (during the last two weeks of the semester) before finalizing your choice of advisor and second reader.
- Questions like these will help you find a Thesis advisor who not only fits your academic interest but also your personal needs and preferences. The thesis advisor is the person responsible for regularly meeting with the Honors student, shaping the content of the thesis and your final grade on the Thesis, presentation, and defense. (Refer to the scoring rubric at the end of this document.)
- Thesis advisors are often the best recommendation writers for further education. Prospective employers and graduate schools are also impressed by the dedication and intellectual independence required to contribute to the discipline through the writing of a thesis.
- During your enrollment in HON 4950 you should meet with your advisor once a week, on average. Your advisor assigns you the grade for this course which will be entered by the Honors Director (or faculty of record).

- The second reader should also be kept abreast of your research progress and should be knowledgeable in the field. You should meet with the second reader two or three times during the semester to get feedback and research advice.
- The thesis advisor and second reader also serve on your Thesis Defense Committee, along with a representative from the Honors Program. The thesis defense takes place at the end of the semester. Both advisors and the Honors representative must attend the defense.

You will work very closely with your advisor throughout the thesis experience, relying on him/her to guide the direction of your original work, review and edit your writing, assist you with preparing for the thesis presentation, and advise you on everything from statistical analyses to the font of your final project. Therefore, choose wisely!

**YOU are responsible for the timely and successful completion of your thesis.
It is this independence and commitment that separates thesis work from normal
coursework.**

The advisor's role is to *help* you with your thesis.

Thesis Topic

Completing a thesis is a rigorous and time-consuming endeavor, so you should select a topic that is intellectually exciting, challenging, and fun. The following are some helpful hints about finding and choosing a topic.

- You can start a "topics file" where you keep track of potential areas of interest.
 - For class paper assignments, choose topics that are potential thesis ideas and use them to explore the ideas further.
 - Visit with thesis advisor and discuss ideas with him/her. Faculty members have a great deal of knowledge and experience that may help you discover a topic.
 - Many students are engaged in undergraduate research. This may make the selection of a honors thesis topic and advisor a clear choice.
 - If you change your thesis topic, you must file a new Honors Thesis Approval and Record Form.
-

Honors Thesis Proposal

- The Proposal serves to organize your thoughts, clearly describe your course of action and research goals to your committee members, and identify likely resources to be used during your Thesis work.
- The Thesis Proposal must include the following components.:

- A completed and signed Honors Thesis Approval and Record Form (see p. 15 and the Honors website)
 - An abstract stating the purpose and goal of your research/project/creative endeavor, and the means by which you plan to achieve these stated goals
 - A preliminary outline for your paper/project endeavor
 - A preliminary bibliography, listing at least two primary sources or a description of your plans to obtain primary information (i.e. experiments, questionnaires)
 - Dates/titles of the 2 required formal presentations you attended (or will attend) before thesis defense
 - The Honors Thesis Proposal must be submitted to the Honors Program Director no later than the third week of the semester you are enrolled in HON 4950.
 - See the Thesis Proposal Guidelines and Example (p. 13) for a sample format.
-

Overview of Writing the Honors Thesis (also refer to Appendix)

- Specific writing styles vary by discipline. So you should consult with your Thesis advisor for guidance about the writing style appropriate for your topic and audience.
- Style manuals will help you understand and stay within the boundaries of your discipline. Other resources are the Writing Center (KC 415) and Tutoring Center (SSB 220).
- The writing component of the thesis experience *must* reflect excellent writing skills. You need to pay particular attention to:
 - Organizing your writing for your particular audience.
 - Engaging in writing as a process which includes formal and informal writing, and writing multiple drafts that are reviewed and subsequently revised.
 - Utilizing the writing expertise you have learned while writing summaries, syntheses, evaluations, and arguments in your Honors seminars
 - Strategizing for cohesion
 - Editing and proofreading
 - Utilizing appropriate citation styles

Overview of Honors Thesis Presentation and Defense (also refer to Appendix)

- The Honors thesis oral presentation is an opportunity to formally present your activities to the committee. You must give a formal oral presentation on your thesis to the committee. Available dates and times will be announced by mid semester.
- Your required attendance at a minimum of two formal presentations also will guide your presentation.
- The presentation is approximately 20-30 minutes followed by a 20-30 minute question and answer defense.
- Practice giving the presentation as you would with any formal speech. You need to pay particular attention to:

- Writing, reviewing, and revising a completed sentence outline of your presentation.
 - Introducing the presentation in a way that captures audience attention and interest, and previews the main points.
 - Developing a main body that presents key ideas and perspectives, analysis, arguments, and results.
 - Focusing on a delivery that is well organized and clearly presented.
 - Ending with a summary and conclusion.
 - Using Presentation technology is acceptable as long as the presentation is formal and follows the presentation guidelines.
-

Helpful hints

- Pick a topic that is interesting to you.
- Create timeline for completion of project.
- Set mini-goals in cooperation with your Thesis Advisor including attending at least two professional (formal) research presentations prior to your defense.
- Look at past Honors theses that are on file in the Honors House, Library, and our website.
- Make bi-weekly (at a minimum) appointments with your thesis advisor.
- Give yourself plenty of time to research/create your thesis. You can write your paper more successfully when you're well informed.
- Utilize the library and other campus resources.
- Revise as needed. Have a friend, your thesis advisor, fellow thesis-writers, or at least one other person you trust read your thesis.
- Make sure all citations are correct and noted in manuscript.
- Outline your thesis presentation ahead of time, paying close attention to your time limit.
- A week before your presentation, start practicing presenting in front of others (or a mirror).
- Visit the room where you will be presenting prior to the day you present to make yourself feel more comfortable on presentation day.
- Work on your Thesis at least 15 minutes per day to help keep the project fresh in your mind and for you to meet your goals.

Campus Resources

- Writing Center: located in King Center, office 415. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please visit the Writing Centers website at: <http://www.msudenver.edu/~writectr/>
- Tutoring Center: located in SSB 220. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please visit the Tutoring Center website at: <http://www.msudenver.edu/sas/tutoring/>

- MSU Denver computer labs: Are located in 1033 9th St, 100 Science 1058, Tivoli 225, Plaza 307, West classroom 244/243, Admin 260, King Center 317, Admin 250. A list of hours can be found at: <http://www.msudenver.edu/studentlabs/faculty/locations/>
- Auraria Campus Library: The library has many journals that will likely be of use to you during your thesis work. You can search for resources using the online search engine at: <http://library.auraria.edu/>
- Reference Library: Utilizing reference librarians in your area can be helpful in guiding your search. You can find a reference librarian within your respective specialties at: <http://library.auraria.edu/directory>

The following rubric will be used to evaluate your final paper, presentation, and defense. Familiarize yourself with these expectations as you complete your Honors Thesis.

MSU Denver Honors Program Thesis Rubric

Criteria/Standard	Excellent –Exceeds standard (3 points)	Adequate – Meets Standard (2 points)	Poor – Does not Meet Standard (1 point)	Score
Conforms to disciplinary norms and Honors Standards	Student will comply with disciplinary norms with respect to length, topic, form and purpose. Sources are sited appropriately.	Student fulfills assignments with minor discernable problems in this area.	A sufficient number of discernable problems in this area interfere with understanding and quality.	
Development of Ideas	Student presents ideas with relevant support (e.g., facts, statistics, and examples. Reasoning is sound.	Student fulfills assignments with minor discernable problems in this area.	A sufficient number of discernable problems in this area interfere with understanding and quality.	
Organization	Student promotes coherence by logically ordering paragraphs and using devices, such as thesis statements, topic sentences, introductions/conclusions and transitional phrases.	Student fulfills assignments with minor discernable problems in this area.	A sufficient number of discernable problems in this area interfere with understanding and quality.	
Language	Student uses language appropriately for the topic, field, genre, and rhetorical situation.	Student fulfills assignments with minor discernable problems in this area.	A sufficient number of discernable problems in this area interfere with understanding and quality.	
Grammar and mechanics	Student uses grammar, punctuation, syntax, and spelling appropriately.	Student fulfills assignments with minor discernable problems in this area.	A sufficient number of discernable problems in this area interfere with understanding and quality.	

Analyzing information - interdisciplinary	Student interprets information accurately and appropriately in new contexts.	Presents information accurately and appropriately with minor inconsistencies, irrelevancies, or omissions.	Student often uses information inaccurately, incompletely, with citation errors, or with major omissions.	
Presenting multiple solutions/position	Student accurately presents and explains multiple solutions, positions, or perspectives.	Student accurately presents two views but lacks depth of research into contrary perspectives.	Student omits contrary views altogether.	
Drawing well-supported conclusions	Student creates a detailed, complex solution that is well-supported, logically consistent and complete.	Student organizes a solution that is logical and consistent with evidence.	Student presents a conclusion that is illogical or inconsistent with the evidence presented.	
Synthesizing ideas into a coherent whole	Student integrates ideas or develops solutions that are exceptionally clear, cohesive and coherent.	Student connects ideas or develops solutions in a clear and coherent order.	The student presents fragmented ideas and solutions without a clear, coherent order.	
Engagement and application	Student identifies effective, highly relevant venue in which to present findings, and presents relevant solutions or perspectives to the community.	Student identifies a modestly relevant venue or group, presenting findings in a way that allows useful conclusion.	Student fails to identify relevant application of their research. Research is not connected with any real-world situation, population or context.	
			Total Score	

Grading Scale

Note: A grade of “C” or better is a “passing” grade for any Honors course including the combined grade for the Thesis and defense.

A+ = 97% - 100% 29 - 30 points	C+ = 77% - 79% 23 points
A = 90% - 96% 27 - 28 points	C = 70% - 76% 21 – 22 points
B+ = 87% - 89% 26 points	D = 60% - 69% 18 - 20 points
B = 80% - 86% 24 - 25 points	F = <60% <18 points



Thesis Proposal Guidelines and Example

After you have chosen your thesis topic and made the initial research steps into your line of inquiry, you should submit your thesis proposal for approval to your advisor, second reader, and the Honors Director. Your proposal is to be presented on the Honors Thesis Approval and Record Form (see p. 15) which is attached to the following. The following should be approximately two-four typed pages and should include the following information.

1. Your name and other information included on the Thesis.
2. The proposed title of your thesis.
3. An approximately 350-500 word abstract describing your thesis topic. The abstract should include an overview of the project, your central argument, and expected outcomes.
4. A bibliography of your most essential sources.
5. Dates/titles of the minimum two (2) required formal presentations you attended (or will attend) before your thesis defense

The following is an example of a thesis abstract and initial bibliography.

[Thesis Title]

This thesis examines the role of women in Anglo-Saxon poetry and history. Historians and literary critics alike have often focused on the masculinity of the Anglo-Saxon corpus and dismissed its female characters as insignificant or misogynist portrayals. This misinterpretation of women in Germanic poetry often stems from a lack of knowledge of Anglo-Saxon culture, or possibly an unwillingness to reconcile it comfortably with the literary corpus. This thesis seeks to present the poetry alongside the historical accounts and archeological evidence in order to paint a more even-handed portrayal of Anglo-Saxon women. The findings are surprising and illuminating.

Old English poetry consistently shows women living in a rough equality with men, a conclusion borne out by the hard historical evidence. In addition, linguistic evidence consistently argues that Old English poetry borrows heavily from older Germanic myth in the characterization of its women. Poems ranging from "The Wife's Lament" to "Maxims I" show women as sharing the fate of men, (good or bad) and should not be read as helpless or tragic simply because women are the main characters.

Old English poetry often celebrates men's valor but it does not neglect the strength and importance of women. Germanic heroines are able rulers, diplomats and warriors. Queens such as Beowulf's Wealhtheow and Hygd are far from background decoration, but characters who carry the weight of heavy symbolism and power, subtly influencing the life of the titular hero. Old English heroines are not confined to the rich atmosphere of the mead hall, but can also lead armies and wield swords, as evidenced by Judith and Elene. Even Juliana (a martyred saint) is shown to be in direct control of her own destiny.

When we read the poetry from this perspective (one that avoids the extremes of gender criticism), a new picture emerges that challenges our perceptions of the medieval era. While we know that things cannot have been perfect, the overwhelming impression from the historical and literary evidence is that Anglo-Saxon women were given a fair place in a dangerous and uncertain world. They were seen as competent and able individuals and were accorded respect and dignity as a matter of course. They are women of intelligence, valued for their wise words. When their entreaties to reason fail, they can easily leap into action. The impression they give off whether they are a lonely exile, a determined saint, or a glittering queen, is one of calm courage and acceptance.

Works Cited

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- Damico, Helen, and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, eds. New Readings on Women in Old English Literature. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990.
- Enright, Michael. Lady With a Mead Cup. Portland: Four Courts Press, 1996.
- Fell, Christine, Cecily Clark, and Elizabeth Williams. Women in Anglo-Saxon England and the Impact of 1066. London: British Museum Publications, 1984.
- Stenton, Doris Mary. The English Woman in History. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957.



Honors Thesis Application and Record

Must be submitted to the Honors Director before or during the **third week** of HON 4950.

Note: Required attachments are completed in HON 4948.

Student Name: _____ **ID#** _____

Proposed Honors Thesis Title: _____

Attach (verify your attachments with "X"):

- Honors thesis abstract (350-500 words) describing your thesis topic, overview of thesis project, your central argument, and expected outcomes
- Preliminary outline of thesis
- Bibliography of your most essential sources (using your discipline's preferred citation style)

List dates/titles of formal presentations you attended (or will attend) before your defense:

1. _____

2. _____

Proposal Approval

Thesis Advisor: _____	_____	_____
Printed	Signature	Date

Second Reader: _____	_____	_____
Printed	Signature	Date

Honors Director: _____	_____	_____
Printed	Signature	Date

Thesis and Defense of Thesis Approval

HON 4950 grade: _____

Thesis Advisor: _____	_____	_____
Printed	Signature	Date

Second Reader: _____	_____	_____
Printed	Signature	Date

Honors Director: _____	_____	_____
Printed	Signature	Date

Appendix: Thesis and Presentation/Defense Guidelines

Thesis Guidelines

- Copies of the final paper must be turned in Thesis Advisor, Second Reader, and Honors Director at least two weeks prior to the thesis presentation and defense.
- Although variations in the paper's format are to be expected (given the variety of disciplines from which the project might draw) certain aspects **MUST** be included:
 - Statement of Problem/Purpose of Research
 - What is your ultimate goal in completing this Project? (What are you trying to accomplish?)
 - List objectives you hope to accomplish in completing your research. Discuss each in detail.
 - Why is this research important for an audience to learn?
 - How does your research project meet the objectives of an Honors Program? (How do your research efforts exceed research accomplished by the traditional college student not enrolled in an Honors Program?)
 - Literature Review and Background of this Project
 - What research has been done previously, who are the leaders in this research, and how have they carried it out?
 - Be sure to site at least one instance of *disagreement* amongst scholars in this area. Explain *both* viewpoints and then explain why your research or analysis supports one over the other. By citing scholars who disagree with you, you make your own argument seem far stronger because you acknowledge and explain the strongest counterarguments.
 - Be sure to explain how this is *interdisciplinary*.
 - Bibliography
 - List a complete bibliography of all sources referenced in your thesis.
 - You should choose the citation method appropriate to your field (APA, MLA, etc.) and you must be consistent in your usage of it
 - Summation, Conclusions, and Evaluation Procedures
 - Now that your research is nearing completion, summarize what you have learned.
 - Discuss your conclusions. You may include tables and other statistical data but you must include a narrative including the accomplishment of your original objectives.

NOTE: Failure to submit a completed Thesis at least two weeks prior to your scheduled presentation and defense will result in the cancellation of your scheduled defense.

Thesis Presentation and Defense Guidelines

- The presentation may take different forms. However (in most formats), the presentation should include at least 20-30 minutes of prepared remarks followed by a 20-30 minute question and answer defense from the audience. The prepared remarks can be a recitation of the thesis, but you are not limited to this.
- A time during the last two weeks of the semester is scheduled (by the Honors Program) for students to present presentations. Students frequently use PowerPoint, Prezi, physical artifacts,, or other visual aids.
- The above-mentioned formats are NOT the only formats available. The Honors Program encourages active learning and creative approaches to problems, and (in keeping with this philosophy) different and creative approaches to a presentation format are encouraged.
 - o Which venue best matches your project's objectives?
 - Music students may do their presentations as lecture-recitals in which they combine their 20-30 minutes of lecture with a recital on their primary instrument.
 - If you are a Chemistry major and want to demonstrate a new technique you have developed, perhaps a presentation in a lab environment would be better suited.
 - If you're an educator and your project deals with getting students interested in the library, perhaps you could present at the Auraria Library or a public school library.
 - o The only restrictions are that it must be accessible to the faculty and students of MSU Denver. This could include any venue within Downtown Denver!
- Presentations should be *engaging*! Your project should be of great interest to you. Be sure your presentation conveys that excitement to the audience!
 - o Reading PowerPoint slides to an audience is NOT engaging. Do not do it.
 - o Use what you learned in your ENG classes to create an engaging, interactive and (most importantly) *interesting* presentation!
 - o Encouraging audience participation (when applicable) is always a good idea.
 - o Handouts, physical objects, demonstrations and charts are engaging. Mix your presentational media!