

# Honors in Geography & Global Environmental Studies

## Program Rationale and Overview

The Honors Program in Geography provides qualified students majoring in Geography an opportunity to conduct a major independent research project on a topic of interest.

Honors students must successfully complete a two-semester independent honors project conducted under the supervision of a faculty advisor and one additional faculty member, who together constitute the student's honors committee. Successful completion of the honors project will be recognized at Commencement. Most students will produce the honors thesis during their senior year, although in some circumstances students may opt to enroll in the honors program for the spring semester of the junior year and the fall semester of their senior year. (Usually this occurs when a student has declared the geography major early in her/his undergraduate career and has taken a substantial number of geography courses by the end of their fifth semester at Clark.)

Because the honors thesis is a two-semester commitment, and often involves research during the summer before the senior year as well, it allows the student to explore a topic in considerable depth. The project should make an original contribution to geographic knowledge. In crafting the research project and the honors thesis, the student will work closely with a faculty advisor and will also be able to draw upon the advice of an additional faculty member who will serve on the student's honors committee. In consultation with the faculty advisor and the committee member, the student will shape the research project and the thesis, including the length and format of the thesis itself. In addition to writing the thesis, the student will prepare a poster for presentation at Academic Spree Day and may have the opportunity to participate in a poster session at the national Association of American Geographers meetings as well.

## Program Requirements and Procedures (for Spring graduation)

- Geography honors is open to juniors who, by the end of the first semester of their junior year, have a minimum grade point average of 3.25 overall and a 3.5 GPA in the geography/GES major, and who can demonstrate the appropriate research background to undertake independent geographic research.
- Normally the School of Geography assumes that participants have taken Geography 141 (Research Methods), or its equivalent, before enrolling in the Honors Program.

### *In the beginning*

The program begins when potential eligibility is established and students and their faculty advisors are so notified in the fall semester of every year.

- A letter introducing the Honors Program and application for the program is sent to all junior students previous to the Fall registration period for Spring-semester course work.
- Applications should be submitted to the Undergraduate Program Assistant and must be received by **December 3<sup>rd</sup>** of the student's junior year .
- A calculation that incorporates overall GPA and major GPA is made for all applicants,

and those provisionally qualifying are notified.

- Provisional acceptance becomes formal acceptance once the applicant has met the GPA criteria noted above.
- Students pursuing Honors should register for Geography/GES 297 – Honors Directed Research.
  - Registering for Honors:  
How:
    - Simply add honors to your course program (as long as course load does not exceed maximum)
    - If you are a junior and adding another course exceeds your maximum course load then you must either drop another course in your program or get special approval to add a fifth course from Academic Advising.When:
    - Enroll for G 297 in the spring term of your junior year and fall term of your senior year.  
*or*
    - Enroll for G 297 in the fall and spring semesters of your senior year.

### *Double Honors*

In special circumstances some students may wish to register for "double honors." This situation may arise when geography major is double majoring in another discipline and would like to receive an honors designation in both majors. There are 2 instances for double honors:

- One is when a student is doing one honors thesis where the subject matter encompasses both departments. In this instance the student will register for honors for a total of 2 semesters, one semester in each department for one credit each. *The student should keep in mind that each department has its own evaluation process to designate the level of honors the student will receive for the honors thesis within that major. It is possible to get "honors" designation from one department and declined in another department. It is especially important to meet with your advisors in both majors regularly to make sure that your thesis encompasses recommendations, requirements and expectations of both faculty members. This will eliminate variance in the level of honors from one major to the other.*
- The other instance is if you are producing 2 separate honors theses because your topic does not encompass both departments. In this case the student should be registering for 2 semesters of honors thesis directed research within each major.

### *The Honors Program and your Requirements for the Major:*

The two semesters of G 297 Directed Research that a student must register for to gain credit for their thesis research and receive an honors designation at graduation can fulfill one requirement within the geography major; the research applications requirement or the capstone requirement.

### *The Honors Program and the HERO Program:*

The two semesters of work within the HERO program can be counted for the 2 semesters of honors work.

### *Making Progress*

Once you have spoken with your advisor, identified a second faculty member who agrees to serve on your committee, and registered for Honors, you will need to decide what specific topic of research and what methodology will use to collect your data.

- You should expect to meet with your faculty advisor every two or three weeks during the semesters you are in the School of Geography's Honors Program, and you should consult with your faculty honors committee member (your second reader) once or twice a semester. It is the responsibility of the student to seek out their advisor for advice.
- In the *Guide to the Major* booklet, and also available in the School of Geography office, is an Honors Program Form that requests basic information about the proposed thesis. This form should be completed in consultation with your advisor, updated periodically as appropriate, and kept in your file in the School's central undergraduate major's records.
- Before you begin to collect data and write your thesis, consult with your advisor and second reader after you have drafted an outline for the honors research project and established a timetable for submitting drafts of different parts of the thesis.
- Thesis format should follow the current accepted practice of the Graduate School at Clark University. The secretary to the Dean of the Graduate School or the Graduate School's web site can provide the basic format information you need. Settle on the format for references, headings, and style early in the research and writing process with your honors thesis advisor. The simplest format guide is to pick one of the major North American geographical journals, such as the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* or *The Geographical Review*, and follow their (directions about how to structure your thesis.) When in doubt about particularly intractable issues of editorial minutia, consult The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers, the sacred text of the publishing world.
- At least once a semester you should have a formal meeting with your committee to assess progress. Ideally preliminary drafts of portions of your thesis should be the focus of these meetings so your committee can read, comment on, and provide feedback to you.
- During the last semester of the Honor's thesis work, the student will present a poster at Academic Spree Day (or Fall Fest if graduating in the Fall Semester).

### *The End Game*

The final draft of the thesis should be finished well before the end of your second semester in the honors program. This draft is a "working draft" and is the document that you will defend before your committee.

- The final draft of the thesis is due two weeks before the date for the student's defense of the thesis, but in no case should it be handed in later than **1 April**.
- No defense can take place after **15 April**. After the defense of the thesis, the student has two weeks in which to revise the document and submit a final version of the thesis that meets with the advisor's approval.
- Your faculty advisor, in consultation with your committee member, will grade the thesis. On the basis of the thesis and your overall academic performance, your committee (subject to the approval of the Director of the School of Geography) will also decide whether or not you will receive Honors at Commencement and the level of honors (honors, high honors, highest honors) to be awarded. Your faculty advisor is responsible for notifying the Undergraduate Program Assistant who will in turn notify the Registrar

no later than **30 April** of the award of honors so this may appear appropriately on your diploma and in the Commencement program.

- Binding:
  - Once the final version receives the advisor's and committee member's signature, a departmental copy of the thesis should be made on archival paper and delivered to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator's office in JAC 220B who will make arrangements for binding. The cost of producing of the requisite copy of the thesis is the student's responsibility. Cost of additional bound copies is the students responsibility.
  - The paper for the student's copy can be of any quality the student wishes.
  - The student is responsible for binding of all copies of the thesis at the Bindery inside of the Goddard Library.
  - If the student will not be on campus when their thesis will be ready for pick up, the student must make their own arrangements for mailing with the Bindery.

For further information about the School of Geography Honors Programs, see your advisor or the director of the School of Geography.