Geography Department Honors Program

Guidelines for Faculty and Students

**Purpose:** The Honors Program allows students who have shown academic promise and excellence in the classroom to complete a research project/thesis that requires original research and writing. This program is for Geography majors and is **not** affiliated with the Honors Tutorial College. By requiring students to apply geographic concepts and theories to a research problem, the Honors Program provides the opportunity for students to grow intellectually and to improve their research and writing skills. Working in consultation with a two-member faculty committee is critical to the success of the program, both to create an intellectual environment and to provide constructive criticism and feedback. The experience should also increase a student’s potential as a graduate student and/or to seek employment. Students who plan to pursue graduate work in Geography are encouraged to meet the eligibility requirements of the program and to apply for admission.

**Eligibility and Selection:** Eligible students must have completed 75 credit hours and maintain a minimum overall and major GPA of 3.5 to be considered. Exceptions can be made for students with a 3.3 overall and major GPA if the student’s supervisor and/or advisor strongly recommend the student and has justification for the student’s admission. Students are expected to enroll one calendar year from their expected graduation date, but may apply up until the 5th week of the academic year in which they expect to graduate (typically, the 5th week of their senior year). The timing is to ensure that students have one year to complete the thesis/project. Under exceptional circumstances, students may enroll during spring semester of their junior year.

Interested students must complete an application form available from the Department Honors Coordinator (DHC) and should consult with the DHC before applying. Students must identify a full-time faculty member who is willing to serve as his/her supervisor and meet with this faculty member to discuss the application and proposed project/thesis. The student must provide a written description of the proposed thesis/project and the thesis supervisor and second committee member must sign the application.

**Types of Projects:** The primary requirement of the Honors Thesis is that each student complete a geographic thesis or project that requires significant research and writing. This may be completed by writing a 30-50 page thesis that has received approval from the student’s committee. For projects that require substantial technical work (cartography, remote sensing, GIS), the written component of the thesis may be shorter, but an analytic written component is still required. Creative projects that promote the purpose of this program may also be considered. Students are expected to enroll in GEOG 4990H [Geography Honors Thesis] for one year and may earn no more than 8 hours in any one semester and no more than 12 hours total.

Departmental Honors students are eligible to take graduate-level classes (form is available from the registrar’s office), and the thesis supervisor may encourage an Honors student to enroll in a graduate seminar, but no coursework besides Geography 4990H is required.
The Honor’s thesis can satisfy the University Tier III requirement, as long as a minimum of 3 hours of 4990H are completed. This means that students completing a thesis will not be required to take GEOG 4800 [Capstone Experience in Geography]. However, students who do not take 4800 and then fail to complete the Honors Program will not meet the University Tier III requirement, which is necessary for graduation. These students will need to take an alternative Tier III course.

**Format:** The thesis should follow the format required by the committee supervisor.

**Evaluation and Oversight:** The Honors student must have a committee of at least two faculty members. The supervisor must be Geography Group One Faculty. Upon completion of the thesis/project, students must present their work to the committee or to the department as part of a colloquium. All members of the committee must approve of the final thesis/project, and upon approval will submit a signed form to the DHC. Students must maintain a 3.3 GPA (overall and major) during their enrollment in the Honors Program; falling below a 3.3 GPA is grounds for termination from the program. If the committee determines that the student is not making satisfactory progress towards completion of the thesis/project, the student may be terminated from the program. Unsatisfactory progress means failing to complete assigned work or meeting deadlines for data collection, chapter completion, or simply completing work of insufficient quality.

Each semester of 4990H will be graded separately by the student’s supervisor, based upon progress toward the completion of the project and thesis. If a student voluntarily withdraws from the program or is dropped from the program, the student will not receive credit for Geography 4990H that semester, but will retain credits earned for previous semesters of 4990H.

**Funding:** When necessary, students are encouraged to apply for funding through the Provost’s Undergraduate Research Fund (PURF). The committee is expected to encourage and advise students on applying for the PURF.

**Submission and Deadlines:** Please speak to the Department Honor’s Coordinator for specific deadlines.

**Criteria for Awarding Departmental Honors:**

- Maintain the required overall and major GPA. A 3.5 GPA is standard, but exceptions can be made for students with a 3.3 GPA.
- Meet committee expectations for satisfactory progress. Expectations, including appropriate deadlines, must be conveyed to the student by the committee.
- Complete an original thesis/project of approximately 30-50 pages, which requires original research and significant writing. The thesis/project must be approved and signed by the thesis committee.
- Deliver an electronic copy of the thesis to the supervisor and the Departmental Honors Coordinator.
Department of Geography

Honors Program Application

Before completing this application, students should carefully read the department guidelines and consult with the Departmental Honors Coordinator. Students must also consult with the faculty member who has agreed to supervise the honors thesis. The application should be submitted to the Departmental Honors Coordinator by the beginning of the student’s senior year and consist of three components:

1) The form below, signed by both faculty members.
2) Statement of Proposed Project Description.
3) A copy of your most recent DARS.

You will be notified of your status within two weeks of submitting a completed application.

Name: _________________________________________ Email: ________________________
Campus Address: ________________________________________________________________
Permanent Address: ________________________________________________________________
Major: ____________________________ Advisor: ____________________________
Overall GPA: _______ Departmental GPA: _______
Credits earned as of the end of last semester: ____________

Proposed Project Description: In no more than three pages, describe the research project that will be undertaken. Be sure to explain carefully how the project will be designed, how it will be accomplished, and the final outcome, especially if the project includes a significant geo-technical component. Include a timetable for completing the project. Note that this application will not be complete until you have written this part, your committee has approved its content, and signed below.

Supervising Committee: By signing below you are agreeing to supervise the above student’s honors thesis, following the rules set forth by the department and the college. You have read and you approve of the project description and timetable.

Supervisor Signature: ____________________________ Date: __________________
Second Faculty member Signature: ____________________________ Date: _____________