

The Honours Essay in Religion (RELI 4990) Guidelines for Students

The Honours Essay in Religion is intended to allow 4th year students majoring in Religion the opportunity to undertake an independent, sustained, and critical investigation into a particular topic in Religious Studies. The Honours Essay is a full (1.0) credit elective; it is not required in order to earn an Honours BA in Religion. It is generally assumed that the student interested in undertaking the Honours Essay has an active interest in, or at least the potential to pursue, graduate work in Religious Studies. The Honours Essay is excellent preparation for the rigours of graduate work.

Prerequisites:

- Student must be in the BA Honours with 4th year standing;
- Student must be a Religion Honours degree or a Combined Major with Religion; this option is not open to Minors in Religion, Jewish Studies, or Muslim Studies; Combined Honours students may write an Honours Essay in only one of their majors;
- Student must hold a 10.0 GPA in Religion;
- Student must have 1.0 credit in the area in which they wish to write in order to prove expertise;
- Students falling outside of any of these requirements may seek the permission of the Department to undertake the Honours Essay.

Honours Essay Proposal:

- The Honours Essay Proposal is to be prepared by the student in consultation with a director;
- The Honours Essay Proposal shall consist of a preliminary title and thesis, a 1-2 page (maximum) prose outline/explanation of the project, and a preliminary bibliography appropriate to the project. In the proposal, the student should indicate which Religion faculty member has agreed to direct the project;
- The Honours Essay Proposal is due on the first day of classes in the Fall term (please consult the University Calendar to determine the correct date). Late proposals will not be considered. It is expected that part of the summer between 3rd and 4th year will be spent preparing the Honours Essay Proposal. Submit your proposal electronically in .doc or .rtf to the Religion Coordinator (please do not use PDF);
- The Honours Essay Proposal Board (made up of the Religion Coordinator and two other full-time faculty members) will review the proposals in the second week of classes in the Fall term. Prospective students can expect to know by the end of the second week of classes whether their project has been approved, and if not what changes have been requested.

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Honours Essay Submission

- The Honours Essay is about 40 pages (not including title page and bibliography, but including foot- or endnotes).
- The student will submit **two clean copies** of the final version of the Honours Essay on the last day of classes in Winter Term (again, please consult the University Calendar to determine that date).
- Papers will be done with a 12 point standard font (e.g., Times New Roman, Garamond, Calibri, Cambria), double-spaced on good quality clean 8½ x 11 paper, with one-inch margins. None of these things should be manipulated in order to make a shorter paper appear longer, or *vice versa*.

Final Mark

- Each of the two copies of the essay that the student submits will be marked independently by the director of the Honours Essay and one other full-time faculty member in Religion. This “second reader” will usually be selected by the director of the Honours Essay and the student in consultation with each other;
- Both readers give the paper a mark out of 100. 75% of the student’s overall grade will derive from the average of these two assessments;
- The remaining 25% of the student’s mark derives from a cumulative assessment undertaken by the director of the Honours Essay alone (e.g., regular meetings/discussions with the director, interim outlines, written progress reports, annotated bibliographies, etc.). The nature and duration of these activities will be determined by each individual director and expressed clearly to the student at the outset of the project.

Unique Qualities of the Honour’s Essay

- The excellent Honours Essay engages with primary texts (where applicable), critically engages secondary scholarship, is theoretically and methodologically rich, and reflects the ability to think independently and to make an original contribution to scholarship, is well-argued and structured, and is cleanly and articulately composed.
- Students are reminded that the Honours Essay is a full-credit course. Were this a scheduled class, there would be 72 contact hours, two examinations, two term papers, as well as possible in-class exams and other assignments. The Honours Essay requires the equivalent amount of time and commitment and a high degree of self-discipline and independent work-ethic to carry it out successfully.