



Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

CRCJ 4908: Honours Thesis Information Sheet*

The Honours Thesis in Criminology is an independent, in-depth, and original research study equivalent to a full year course (1.0 credit). The Honours Thesis offers students the opportunity to do a “deep dive” into a topic of interest to them, to work one-on-one with a supervisor, and to further develop their skills and knowledge in methods and theory. It will help prepare students for any career involving research and serves as an excellent stepping stone for graduate studies. In order to undertake a thesis, students are responsible for finding an available supervisor who is knowledgeable in their proposed area of study and is either a core ICCJ faculty member or is cross-appointed with the ICCJ.

What does the Honours Thesis in Criminology and Criminal Justice involve?

- Identification of a faculty supervisor who is well suited to your topic and available to supervise you
- Regular meetings with the supervisor to discuss the thesis’s elements, including your topic, research questions, methods, theoretical frames, and mode of analysis
- Approximately 10,000-15,000 words (40-60 pages) of written content plus references and bibliography
- Students are expected to spend 7-10 hours per week on this course

Is the Honours Thesis option appropriate for me?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have strong research skills and enjoy researching?
- Do I work well independently?
- Do I have excellent writing skills?
- Am I well organized?
- Do I meet deadlines?
- Am I highly motivated?
- Am I considering pursuing a Master’s Degree or a career involving research and writing?

These skills are required for the successful completion of an Honours Thesis in Criminology and Criminal Justice.

How is an Honours Thesis different from a fourth-year research term paper?

For the Thesis:

- Students select the topic for the Thesis based on their own interests and curiosity
- Students follow a basic but flexible research process over the duration of the full year course under the supervision of a faculty member
- Students design research questions, locate their topic in relation to the existing literature, conduct original research (using appropriate obtrusive or unobtrusive research methods), collect data, analyze data, draws on relevant theoretical frames to discuss the results and implications.
- A 40- to 60-page original research paper is produced

* This information sheet is meant to provide general information about the Honours Thesis in Criminology. For more specific details and policies please see the CRCJ 4908 course outline.

- A grade for the final paper is proposed by the supervisor and ultimately decided upon by the course instructor (normally the Director of the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice).

What are the prerequisites for CRCJ 4908?

Students must be in good standing in their fourth year of the Criminology Honours program. Students must also meet the prerequisites for the Honours Thesis as noted in the undergraduate calendar. They include:

- Fourth-year standing in the B.A. Honours program in Criminology and Criminal Justice with a CGPA of 10.00 (A-) or better in the Major **and/or** permission of the Institute and written acceptance by a faculty member to supervise the Thesis.
- Must have completed the research methods course for your concentration or any relevant methods courses for your proposed project.

How and when should students search for a faculty supervisor?

Students should identify a list of 3 to 5 faculty members whose research areas align with the proposed research topic and then contact them (via email or in person) to inquire about their availability and set up a meeting to discuss their research interest. Any faculty member of the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice (ICCJ) may serve as a faculty advisor. Faculty members of other departments (e.g. Law and Legal Studies, Sociology and Anthropology) who are cross-appointed to the ICCJ may also serve as faculty advisor.

Students can research available faculty expertise to find someone who is a match in the area of interest and who is able to take on the supervision by consulting different Departments' lists of Faculty.

Students should approach potential faculty supervisors toward the end of their third year, and no later than a few weeks prior to the start of the term in which the CRCJ 4908 course will commence.

Faculty members accept only a limited number of students to supervise. They may also be away on a research leave at different points during the year. If students wait until the start of term to find a supervisor, they will have a greatly diminished likelihood of finding one.

Students should identify a topic in Criminology and Criminal Justice in advance of approaching a faculty member for supervision. The topic should be based on the student's existing foundation of knowledge developed in undergraduate courses, however all data gathered and analyzed by the student must be original to their proposed project and not the result of a previous project (such as those conducted during Field Placements).

Students should prepare for the exploratory meeting with potential supervisors by preparing ideas about their chosen topic and approach.

If students encounter difficulties in securing a faculty supervisor, whom should they contact?

Students may consult the **Undergraduate Supervisor** for guidance on supervisor selection and any difficulties that may arise during the process. However, it is up to the student to find an appropriate faculty supervisor. As this is an optional course, there is no guarantee that a supervisor will be available.

Psychology-related theses

Students hoping to do a Psychology-related thesis must be in a Psychology Concentration and must have completed PSYC 3000. In general, Psychology professors give preference to Psychology Majors before other Majors (including Criminology). Note that students generally cannot do a graduate Psychology degree without first completing an undergraduate degree in Psychology degree.

REGISTRATION

What is the registration process?

Once an appropriate faculty member has agreed to supervise you, an email confirmation of this along with a tentative thesis title should be sent from the supervisor to the Undergraduate Administrator. They will then provide you with “Departmental Permission” so that you can register for CRCJ 4908. The student is also required to complete and submit the “Student-Advisor” contract provided in the CRCJ 4908 Syllabus.

CRCJ 4908 is presented in both the Fall/Winter and Summer sessions. Your first registration in the course is designated as Section A (i.e., 4908A). Some of you may require more than the first full term to complete your Honours thesis. Subsequent and consecutive re-registrations in what are designated Sections B and C are permitted. No more than 18 months can elapse between initial registration in Section A and completion of your thesis. You must be registered in all terms that you are working on your Honours thesis with your advisor.

Students should note that approval to register in the Honours Thesis is granted on the understanding that the student will be in regular contact with their supervisor, and that thesis research will be actively pursued in each term of registration. Completion of the thesis will typically require a process of drafts, modifications and revisions culminating in a final research product. *Unlike other undergraduate courses an Honours Thesis is not repeatable.*

THE COURSEWORK

How and when should students plan their Honours Thesis?

At the start of the course, students may work with their faculty supervisor to determine a proposal, including relevant research questions, theoretical frameworks, methods, a preliminary bibliography, and a timeline. Not all supervisors may require this step. Any questions regarding style and format should be directed to the supervisor.

Students should communicate regularly with the supervisor with a brief update on their progress. The student should provide advance notice when they are about to submit written work for review. With such notice it is reasonable to expect the supervisor to provide comments within a couple of weeks. Without such notice, it may take longer for the supervisor to provide input because of the many other demands on their time. Good communication is key to a satisfactory supervisory relationship.

What can students expect from their faculty supervisors?

The expectations for the thesis need to be discussed and decided between the student and the supervisor early on in the course. Students should keep in mind that the thesis is an exercise in *independent work*; it is not the faculty supervisor’s task to police the student’s work habits or cajole them into meeting deadlines or attending meetings. It is important for students to be in regular contact with the supervisor via email and/or through meetings.

Faculty supervisors will offer feedback and guidance and make suggestions about additional materials that may be relevant to the topic. Supervisors may require multiple drafts and revisions of select sections or of the thesis in its entirety.

Students may wish to consult their supervisor about publication, networking, and conference opportunities that relate to the work. The supervisor may make a great reference for the student for future employment or if they decide to further their education with a graduate degree.

Ethics Clearance (Not required for all Theses)

You must submit your proposed research for approval to the Ethics Committee in the Department you are working in, if human participants are to be involved. Detailed information as to what is required for the Ethics Committee plus the required forms can be obtained from the Department (that you are doing your project in) Ethics Committee. Be advised that ethics reviews may take a few weeks or more to complete. This ethics approval must be obtained before the research can be carried out. A copy of the one page note from the Ethics Committee indicating such approval must be provided to your supervisor and the Director of the ICCJ. If an ethics approval form is not provided, you will not receive a grade.

Is there a dedicated space in which students participating in the Thesis can convene to discuss their work and share ideas?

In addition to working with your supervisor, the thesis includes a course component that is designed to facilitate the completion of your Honours thesis. The course is administered by the Director of the ICCJ. Details about course meetings are provided on the CRCJ 4908 course syllabus. Unfortunately, there is no dedicated undergraduate student lounge.

Format

You should consult your faculty advisor about the style you will use when writing your Honours thesis. Different Departments may use different formats. You should choose a style based on journals in which your type of research is typically published. Please note that while there are some variations in style among the disciplines, most follow a generally accepted format (Introduction, Statement of the Problem/Issue, research questions, Literature Review, Methodology, Theoretical Frameworks, Analysis/Results, Conclusion).

You must submit one appropriately bound copy of the final version of your Honours thesis directly to your faculty advisor and one to the Director of the ICCJ.

COMPLETING THE COURSE

How is the Honour's Thesis grade determined?

The supervisor will forward a suggested grade and a brief synopsis of their justification for the grade to Director. The Director will then assess the thesis. The final grade for the thesis is determined by the Director of the Institute.

What if I am unable to complete the course?

You may withdraw from CRCJ 4908 up to the last date for withdrawal from full credit courses in the session in which you are registered. As with any course, if you decide to withdraw from the thesis you should seek advice from the Undergraduate Advisor about the impact of this decision on your path to graduation.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE CONTACT;

Undergraduate Advisor: criminology@carleton.ca

Course Director: The Director of the ICCJ during the year that you are enrolled in the course