

**Completing an Honors Thesis in the  
Hugh Downs School of Human Communication  
(Updated: Fall 2019)**

***Overview***

Completing an Honors thesis in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication (HDSHC) allows for a broad range of possible topics and methodologies, including quantitative, qualitative and web-based research. Completing an honors thesis in the HDSHC provides the first step towards establishing your expertise formally and more publicly, while it provides you with valuable research and/or creative experience. The thesis process will help you hone your investigative and critical thinking skills, as well as your oral and written communication skills, which all COM majors recognize as vitally important in today's competitive work environment.

***STEP 1: Start Thinking About Your Honors Thesis EARLY.***

1. Students are encouraged to select a research topic in an area that is particularly interesting to them. One place to start is to consider which communication courses are of particular interest. Of course, Communication faculty members are available to discuss students' potential thesis topics and methods. Often, students have developed working relationships and skills with professors who have supervised an Honors contract, and you might also wish to talk with one of them for suggestions. It helps to talk over your interests, to be mentored and advised, especially if you are nervous, have multiple ideas, or don't know what you might do next.
2. Students should also consider their research methods preference/expertise when choosing a research topic. The methods could range from statistical analysis, qualitative or ethnographic research, creative activity as a form of research, or developing and testing innovations or social/organizational programs. This is of extreme importance to completing many projects! Talking with your FHA, as well as faculty members who are familiar with the ideas you wish to pursue, can help you identify the various methodological options for your skills and interest.
3. You should schedule a time to talk with an FHA (Faculty Honors Advisor) to determine the possibilities and 'fit' of particular faculty members in the HDSHC who may serve as the members of your committee. You may also wish to discuss the range of options that are available for you in creating your committee, depending on your interests, as well as your timeline for registering for required thesis hours (COM492/COM493--see below).

***IMPORTANT: Your Thesis Director is a separate role from FHAs.*** Thesis Directors are selected from the list of qualified faculty (see list of faculty provided on the HDSHC Honors website), who will be able to help direct your thesis in the Hugh Downs School (or other academic departments).

***STEP 2: Get Familiar With Your Academic Requirements as an Honors Student in the Hugh Downs School.***

- The maximum number of honors thesis credit allowed for a thesis/creative project in our School is six (6) credits. In order to get this credit, you must register for COM 492 and COM 493. You would register for three (3) hours for each class.
  - There is a special form you must complete to register for COM492 and COM493—this form is available on the Hugh Downs website, on the student forms page: <https://humancommunication.clas.asu.edu/resources/forms>
  - ***These forms must be signed by an FHA before you submit it or attempt to register.***
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  - The courses COM 492 and COM 493 have “suppressed line numbers,” which means that until you have been approved to take the course by the FHA, the staff of the Hugh Downs School is not authorized to provide the number you will need to register for the class.
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  - Once your form is signed by an FHA, it will be submitted to the main office of the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication so that either the Director of Undergraduate Education or another qualified school official can sign off on it. Once that is done, you will be notified at the address you provided on the form that you may contact the office for the registration line number.
- Before enrolling in COM 492 or 493, **Barrett requires all students to complete a thesis/creative project information session conducted by Barrett.** You can meet this requirement by completing *one* of the following:
  - HON 498 “Thesis Prep Course,” a one-credit course offered on the downtown campus
  - One of the Thesis Workshop Sessions periodically offered by Barrett
  - The online workshop offered through Barrett via ASU CANVAS

For general information about Barrett College thesis/creative project guidelines (including information about thesis prep workshops, visit <http://barretthonors.asu.edu/academics/thesis-and-creative-project/>)

***STEP 3: Become Very Familiar With the Thesis Guidelines and Deadlines—and Follow Them!***

Here are the basic considerations you should take into account to be ready for your thesis.

1. METHODS APPROPRIATE to TOPIC. You should meet with an FHA in the ideal situation, at least a year before you propose your thesis to determine the methods you might need to accomplish your desired thesis project. This may require enrollment in a methods course or an independent study in methods with an approved faculty member. *If you have let time lapse and have not yet done this, please schedule this meeting as*

*soon as possible*. We will work with you to find the faculty member best able to support your interests and level of methodological preparedness, and to help you complete your honors thesis to graduate with honors.

2. **THESIS DIRECTOR.** Your Thesis Director will actually work the closest with you on your thesis research or creative activity. Your thesis director is named on the official thesis proposal that you will submit to Barrett. If you will be doing a COM thesis and wish to work with a faculty member from the Hugh Downs School, your Thesis Director must be from the list of faculty provided on the HDSHC Honors website (Look for **QUALIFIED FACULTY** link)

If you have a particular reason for requesting someone else (including a faculty member outside of the school), please schedule a meeting with the FHA to determine the appropriate avenue to pursue. In some instances, a faculty member from another school or program may be more suitable for your thesis interests, and you should discuss this with the FHA.

Note: A graduate student instructor *may NOT* direct your thesis or serve as the second reader for your thesis. This is not negotiable, even if the master's or doctoral student holds a position as an instructor or lecturer. Graduate students *may* serve as a **third** reader). See below on Committee Composition.

3. **Committee Composition.** Committees usually comprise of two members, your thesis director, and another reader. In addition to your Thesis Director (who is your first reader), you *must* have a second reading with a Ph.D. or other terminal degree (i.e., MFA, Ed.D., J.D.), who is on the faculty of Arizona State University at large, including but not limited to the faculty of the HDSHC. It is optional but your committee may have a third reader who is an expert of your choice with expertise related to the thesis project. This person need not have a Ph.D., and may also be someone external to Arizona State University, but must indicate a willingness to serve. Oftentimes, persons with specific expertise or life experience relevant to particular thesis projects are good persons to fill this role.

A thesis for graduating with Honors in Communication may **not** be directed by instructors not listed on the approved faculty list. If you have any questions about a faculty member's eligibility, please check with an FHA in COM **before** you ask one of your teachers about advising, to avoid an unnecessarily uncomfortable or embarrassing situation for you and the instructor.

- a) Your second reader must be a Ph.D. (or other terminal degree--M.F.A., Ed.D., etc.) with an active research program.
- b) Graduate students and other instructors may not serve as your director or second reader but may serve as a **third** reader for your thesis.

The particular roles and levels of involvement with your thesis of your readers will be negotiated between you, your thesis director, and the members of the committee. It is

important that both professors and students set clear expectations, deadlines and working arrangements that are mutually agreed upon. There is no uniform norm for this, to allow for the most workable circumstances for the students and well as faculty.

***It is the responsibility of the Honors Student to file the names of the Thesis Director and Reader(s) with Barrett: The Honors College, as required by Barrett.***

Finally, if there are creative and collaborative options not included here which have been suggested at Barrett as possibilities (i.e., **joint theses** (co-authored with another honors student), collaborative projects with individual theses, etc.), it will be more work, but we will work to help you fulfill the logistical requirements to make it possible.

***Samples of Past Honors Thesis Topics in the HDSHC:***

(Please see below for a sample list provided to demonstrate the array of possibilities. These are not meant to limit you in any way. If you are interested in something not listed here, by all means, discuss it with your professors and Faculty Honors Advisor! We will help you accomplish your desired goals.)

<u>Interpersonal Communication</u>	<u>Organizational Communication</u>	<u>Intercultural Communication</u>	<u>Health Communication</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Maintenance Strategies in Long Distance versus Proximal Close Relationships.</li> <li>● Comparisons of Body Image among Adolescents and Older Women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sex Differences in Managerial Work Styles</li> <li>● Conflict Resolution Strategies in an Insurance Company</li> <li>● Job Satisfaction and Work Variables</li> <li>● Analysis of Organizational Structure of Barrett: The Honors College</li> <li>● Ethnographic Study of Arizona Wild Fire Fighters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cultural Analysis of the Arizona Tribal Gaming Initiative</li> <li>● Relationship between Intercultural Friendship Patterns and Attitudes toward Intercultural Dating</li> <li>● Nonverbal Communications in Various Settings in Western Samoa</li> <li>● Autoethnographic Grounded Theory Analysis of Identity and Intercultural Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Persuasion strategies related to Pharmacists and Patient Compliance</li> <li>● Causes of Unsafe Drinking on Campus</li> <li>● Using the EPPM Persuasion Model to Increase Sun Safety Among College Females</li> </ul>

<u>Rhetoric</u>	<u>Communication Technologies</u>	<u>Performance Studies</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feminist Songwriters and Women's Bodies</li> <li>● Social Movement Analysis of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)</li> <li>● Contested American Values Demonstrated in the Welfare Reform Act of 1998</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Politicians' use of digital media to construct their authority</li> <li>● A Media Fast: Digital Divides and Disconnections</li> <li>● Use of Social Media to Avert Public Relations Disasters</li> <li>● Analysis of Online Content of Religious Blogs &amp; Tweets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Forced Labor and Sex Trafficking among Filipino women</li> <li>● Performing Femininity</li> <li>● Exploring Discursive Identity Construction and "What it Means to be a Man"</li> <li>● Culture and Women's Socialization Across Religion, Ethnicity, and Society</li> </ul>