

HONORS 4V87: Honors Thesis Course Syllabus

Baylor Honors Program students must write an Honors thesis to graduate from the Honors Program. In almost all cases, students satisfy this requirement by enrolling in HON 4V87 for a total of four credit hours.

HELPFUL WEBSITE: Most information related to the thesis project can be found online at <https://program.honors.baylor.edu/current-students/thesis>. See especially the link for “Thesis Documents” at the top.

I. Overview and Prerequisites

Honors seniors are encouraged to enroll in HON 4V87 during their final two semesters, earning two credit hours in each semester. During their final semester, graduating seniors also enroll in HON 4088, a zero-hour Honors Exit Review. Sequencing of the entire thesis project, including Advanced Readings and Research, will often be as follows:

Junior Year:

HON 3100
HON 3101

Senior Year, Penultimate Semester:

HON 4V87 (2 credit hours)

Senior Year, Final Semester

HON 4V87 (2 credit hours)
HON 4088 (0 credit hours)

Students pursuing a lab-based thesis or who are premed may [arrange their thesis classes differently](#).

Typically, students enrolled in HON 4V87 should have already completed:

- Honors Colloquium (HON 3200);
- at least one upper-level Honors unit (usually via an upper-division Honors contract);
- both Advanced Readings courses (HON 3100 and 3101); and therefore
- the formal thesis proposal.

If you have not already completed these prerequisites or arranged to complete them early this term, and/or if you have not maintained a cumulative GPA of at least 3.2 (required for graduation in the Honors Program), then we suggest that you reconsider the feasibility of completing the Honors thesis in time for your expected graduation. (See a program director or advisor to discuss your options.)

OTHER HONORS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Honors Program students graduating in May, August, or December of 2024 should plan to present their thesis research during **Honors Week in April**.

Honors Program seniors should **complete all Honors contracts during the penultimate semester** rather than the final semester. In the last semester before graduation, there is not enough time for us to report to the Registrar and Graduation Office the successful completion of the contract prior to graduation.

Likewise, students should plan on **completing all Honors requirements (except for the thesis) prior to the start of the final semester**. While this may not always be possible, particularly if adjustments to the schedule have been made for study abroad opportunities and the like, this will allow prospective graduates to focus time and effort on the writing of the thesis. An early finish to Honors coursework will also minimize the chance that some unforeseen problems with the curriculum will hinder Honors Program graduation.

Keep the Honors Program office, particularly Ms. Mary Ziehe, informed about your progress towards graduation. If problems or changes arise, quickly inform Ms. Ziehe via a phone call, 254-710-1662, or via email, Mary.Ziehe@baylor.edu.

II. For All Students Enrolled in HON 4V87

GRADES:

In nearly all cases, students register for HON 4V87, Honors Thesis, for two credit hours during each of their last two semesters. **Students should register for the section of HON 4V87 that corresponds with their thesis mentor.** Students without a thesis mentor at the start of the term may register for section HON 4V87-01 with Dr. Beck, but this will require extra paperwork and may delay the posting of grades.

The thesis mentor will assign a grade of "Credit" or "No Credit." Grades will be awarded at the end of the semester. In most cases, students should not receive an "Incomplete" for thesis hours unless they fail to meet the requirements established in the thesis proposal. The few students who quit their thesis will earn no credit for the Honors Thesis during the semester the project is abandoned. Thesis hours do not factor into a student's GPA.

In addition to the transcript grade of "Credit" or "No Credit," each Honors student will be given a holistic evaluation, ranging from "Unsatisfactory" to "Outstanding," by the examining committee after the thesis defense. The committee will consider both the product (the completed thesis) and the overall process (e.g., conducting research, writing drafts, meeting deadlines) in assigning this mark. The committee's evaluation will be a part of the permanent Honors Program record of each senior, and it may be used as a factor in determining eligibility for awards given to program graduates.

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR THESIS MENTOR

It is necessary that you meet with your faculty mentor at least bi-weekly as you write your thesis. **Never assume that no news is good news when it comes to getting feedback from your mentor.** You are responsible for ensuring that you receive adequate feedback and make the required corrections to your draft. Be diligent in maintaining good communication with your thesis mentor. Contact the Honors Program staff *early* if you are having problems with this.

**** Students must provide a copy of this syllabus to their thesis mentor at the start of the semester. ****

SET UP YOUR BEARdocs ACCOUNT RIGHT NOW

Students will submit a copy of their completed thesis to BEARdocs, the online repository for Baylor research projects. This is a permanent and publicly available repository. You will be authorized to submit your thesis once it has been reviewed by the Honors Program for proper formatting. Before this authorization can take place, you must first set up your BEARdocs account. Please do the following before the end of the first week of class:

- Go to beardocs.baylor.edu .
- Select the "Login" link in the upper right-hand corner. Click the "Log in with your Bear ID" button.
- Enter your Bear ID and password.
- After you log in, your name should display when you click on the person icon where the "Login" link displayed.
- To log out, select "Log out" from the drop-down menu associated with your name.

HONORS WEEK PRESENTATION

For the present, we expect all students graduating from the Honors Program in 2025 (May, August, or December) to make a 10-minute presentation of their thesis during Honors Week in April. **This is required.**

HONORS BANQUET

Similarly, we anticipate that all Honors Program graduates, along with their thesis mentors, will attend the Honors Banquet in April. This is a time of celebration for all involved.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism on the thesis project, whether deliberate or unintentional, will lead to serious consequences. Baylor policies require that students, staff, and faculty act with utmost integrity in academic matters. It is your responsibility to understand the [Honor Code](#) and related policies and procedures affecting academic integrity.

Students agree that by taking this course, all required papers, exams, class projects or other assignments submitted for credit may be submitted to turnitin.com or similar third parties to evaluate for originality and academic integrity. If the results of such a review support an allegation of academic dishonesty, the coursework in question as well as supporting materials may be submitted to the Honor Council for investigation and action.

Students are also encouraged to consider these suggestions:

- Review this syllabus and discuss with your faculty mentor all expectations regarding coursework and academic requirements that go beyond those stated in university policies and guidelines and the Honor Code.
- Be familiar with the importance of academic integrity in the thesis project. Understand how citations show respect for other scholars.
- Talk with your faculty mentor if you are confused about citation practices or other research standards.
- Make sure you understand not only what counts as plagiarism and cheating, but also how to avoid engaging in these practices. Manage your time, take good notes, and use the internet appropriately.
- Make sure you understand your faculty mentor's guidelines about working with other students on assignments, receiving assistance from other students on assignments, citing sources, using notes or exams from previous or other classes, and incorporating information into the thesis. If in doubt – ASK YOUR FACULTY MENTOR!
- Understand that penalties can result from dishonest conduct, ranging from failure of the thesis (and thus forfeiting Honors Program graduation) to immediate expulsion from the university.

For more information see the Baylor University Honor Code on the [Academic Integrity Web](#) page or contact the Office of Academic Integrity at 254-710-8882 or Academic_Integrity@baylor.edu.

III. For Students STARTING Their Honors Thesis this Semester

DATES & DEADLINES: SPRING 2025

1. 2 February 2025	For some enrollees: Submit any outstanding or significantly updated thesis proposals to the Honors Program Office: thesis@baylor.edu . Most students will not have to worry about this. *
2. 10-14 March 2025	Spring Break
3. 24 March 2025	For those planning to defend the thesis in Fall 2025: Submit one completed thesis chapter/section to both the faculty mentor and the HP Office. (HP submission to thesis@baylor.edu .)
4. 7-11 April 2025	Honors Week (note: this year, the Honors Banquet is the following week: 16 April)
5. 16 April 2025	Honors Banquet. All Honors Program students graduating in 2025 (May, August, or December) should attend this banquet.
6. 5 May 2025	For those planning to defend the thesis in Fall 2025: Submit a second completed chapter/section to the faculty director and the HP Office. (Essentially half the thesis should be finished. HP submission to thesis@baylor.edu) For those who plan on defending Spring 2026 or later (usually enrolled in only one hour of HON 4V87): Submit at least one completed chapter/section to the faculty director and the HP Office. (Essentially one-fourth of the thesis should be finished.)

UPDATED THESIS PROPOSALS

* Students should have submitted a thesis proposal at the end of the HON 3101 course. You do not need to submit an updated thesis proposal unless there has been **significant** revision to the thesis, e.g., a new thesis mentor, a dramatically different topic with the same thesis mentor, etc.

SUBMISSION OF THESIS CHAPTERS

Most students who plan to graduate from the Honors Program in a *future* semester (rather than the current term) will register for two credit hours of HON 4V87 this semester and then for another two credit hours of HON 4V87 next semester. **The standard assignment for the first two hours of HON 4V87 credit is to complete two major sections or chapters (about half of the thesis) by the end of the term.** Thesis mentors may modify the expectations for chapter/section submissions in consultation with thesis writers and the Honors Program office.

Thesis writers should discuss with their thesis mentor how they will submit their writing and research, e.g., via email, shared online folder, hard copy, etc. Chapters/sections submitted to the Honors Program will be emailed to thesis@baylor.edu. Each submission should include an inclusive bibliography or works-cited listing. Keep up with sources chapter-by-chapter rather than waiting to document them all at the end of the project. Students should also [format](#) their chapters as they write.

The first submission need not be the introductory or first chapter of the thesis. Students and mentors often begin with a “literature review” that surveys current scholarship pertaining to the topic and describes the central problems that the thesis will explore. In other instances, the first written chapter may analyze some of the primary sources or laboratory/field-work procedures that will provide the foundation for the overall thesis. Occasionally, other submissions may be appropriate at the direction of the thesis mentor and in consultation with the Honors Program office.

In any case **the chapter/section should be polished and revised (not a rough first draft)** and should include appropriate and properly formatted documentation (i.e., references and bibliography) as evidence of significant research. Moreover, it should reflect the quality of the finished thesis that will be submitted for Honors graduation. Let your work-in-progress, even at the level of style and mechanics, do justice to your thought and time.

Two Notes:

- (1) Meeting these deadlines will require careful planning. A link to a useful **scheduling calculator** can be found on the Baylor Libraries website, <http://planner.bulibtools.net>.
- (2) If your mentor requests significant deviation from the deadlines noted below, have them email thesis@baylor.edu (while also copying you, the student) with an overview of those deviations.

FORMATTING

As you are writing, we recommend that you format each chapter/section according to the guidelines that apply to the finished thesis. Detailed formatting instructions are online, but several important guidelines are worth noting here. You should use:

- standard font in 12-point size; double-spaced text; **no bold-face type or larger fonts for headings;**
- **left margins of 1.5 inches**, and one-inch margins on the top, bottom, and right of each page;
- pages numbered continuously throughout thesis at the **bottom center** of each page;
- parenthetical references, footnote or endnote references; and/or other references and bibliography in a *standard style guide*, as recommended by your faculty mentor and thus appropriate for your academic discipline. See the [formatting instructions](#) for specific suggestions regarding style guides.

IV. For Students FINISHING Their Thesis this Semester

Dates & Deadlines

See *Description of Assignments* following this timetable for more information, including guidelines and specific submission instructions.

0. 24 January 2025	May graduates MUST register for HON 4088-01 , Honors Exit Review.
1. 19 February 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Initiate discussion with your faculty mentor regarding the constitution of your examining committee (usually the mentor and 2 other Baylor faculty). B. (Rarely) If registered for the final three hours of your thesis, the second complete chapter/section is due to faculty mentor <i>and</i> HP Office (thesis@baylor.edu); or (typically) If registered for the final two hours of your thesis, the third complete chapter/section is due only to the faculty mentor only.
2. 10-14 March 2025	<i>Spring Break</i>
3. 17 March 2025	Final chapter/section due only to faculty mentor.
4. 2 April 2025	<p>Three items due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Complete draft of thesis project due to faculty mentor only. B. One-paragraph thesis abstract due via email to <u>Dr. Beck</u> (if not already submitted). C. Thesis Defense Scheduling Form due to the Honors Program office. This form must be signed by the student and 3 faculty members of the defense committee. Email submission to thesis@baylor.edu.
5. 7-11 April 2025	<p><i>Honors Week</i>: thesis presentations (all week) Note: the Honors Banquet will be held the following week this year (16 April).</p>
6. 14 April 2025	<p>Last day to distribute <i>complete & polished</i> drafts of thesis to (1) all members of the examining committee AND (2) to the Honors Program for formatting review. Formatting review copy should be sent via an email attachment to thesis@baylor.edu. UNSC students should also email the thesis to university_scholars@baylor.edu.</p>
7. 16 April 2025	Honors Banquet. All Honors Program students graduating in 2025 (May, August, or December) should attend this banquet.
8. 28 April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Last day to defend the thesis before the examining committee. B. Following the defense, submit the Oral Defense Evaluation Form to the Honors Program.
9. 7 May 2025 (last day of class)	Firm deadline for thesis submission. Final thesis submissions will be via BEARdocs. Theses submitted after this day will not be accepted.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

1 & 3. Continuation of research and writing:

As a candidate for May graduation, you should have already submitted drafts of at least one or two working chapters of the thesis project. Your timetable for completing the remaining thesis chapters will, of course, be determined by agreement with your faculty mentor. In order to allow adequate time for you to revise and prepare to defend the thesis project, the Honors Program established the deadlines noted above. During the graduation semester you *need not* submit copies of the third and fourth completed chapters, one by one, to the HP office. Note that students with more than two remaining

chapters/ sections to complete must operate on a more accelerated schedule during the graduation semester.

As you conclude the writing of your thesis, it is strongly recommended that you meet with your faculty mentor at least once a week. **Never assume that no news is good news when it comes to getting feedback from your mentor.** You are responsible for ensuring that you receive adequate feedback and make the required corrections to your draft. Be diligent in maintaining good communication with your thesis mentor. Contact the Honors Program staff *early* if you are having problems with this.

Determine Your Thesis Committee Members

This examining committee will evaluate the finished thesis at the thesis defense. The committee must include at least: (1) the supervising Baylor professor, who serves as committee chair or first reader; (2) another full-time Baylor professor from the project area (i.e., discipline or department), who serves as second reader; and (3) an outside reader, an expert in the field from another discipline/department. The third reader may occasionally be an Honors Program representative, or, even more rarely, an expert from outside of Baylor University. Additional committee members may be appointed at the discretion of the committee chair. You should discuss the composition of your committee with your faculty director prior to the completion of your first draft.

4. A. Draft of complete thesis project (the version distributed to the examining committee):
Monday, 2 April 2025, given to the faculty mentor.

This version of the thesis essay, pending some refinements, will be evaluated by a faculty committee during your oral defense of the Honors thesis. It should be a near-finished product, revised in consultation with the faculty mentor, free of grammatical and spelling errors, and logical in its reasoning and presentation of evidence and conclusions. (It should therefore include such elements as introductory and concluding chapters.) You must make and distribute copies to your examining committee (see #4 below), and you must give these faculty members time to study the thesis, i.e., at least one to weeks, before the oral defense occurs. As your faculty mentor will likely remind you, *the committee cannot assume that you will make important revisions to this draft after the oral defense.*

- B. Thesis abstract (one paragraph, 150-200 words):
Monday, 2 April 2025: send by e-mail to Dr. Beck, Albert.Beck@baylor.edu

The abstract is a very concise summary of your thesis project that:

- (1) defines the purpose and *scope* (boundaries) of the research;
- (2) describes the primary *sources* or experimental data that have been utilized;
- (3) explains specific *methods* which guided the research and analysis;
- (4) previews the *structure* and content of the thesis essay; and
- (5) provides a clear statement of the central argument or purpose (*thesis*) and conclusions.

Previous years' abstracts can be found on the Honors Program web site, <https://program.honors.baylor.edu/current-students/thesis/thesis-abstracts>. Include your abstract in your final, bound thesis. **Note:** If you submitted an abstract to Dr. Beck last semester, you do not have to resubmit an abstract unless it is significantly different or improved from your last submission.

- C. Thesis Defense Scheduling Form
Monday, 2 April 2025, submitted to the HP office via email to thesis@baylor.edu or to MH 203.4.

This form, available on the Honors Program web site at <https://program.honors.baylor.edu/current-students/thesis/thesis-docs>, must be signed by you and all the members of the thesis defense committee. The form must include all the requested information, or it will be rejected by the Honors Program, potentially delaying your thesis defense, and consequentially putting Honors Program graduation at risk. While you should seek the aid of your thesis mentor in making these arrangements, it is your responsibility to secure the location (usually a room on campus, but occasionally Zoom or other video conferencing platform) and ensure that the defense is scheduled at a time that works for all the members of your committee.

Once the form has been signed, scan it and attach it to an email to thesis@baylor.edu, or bring the hard copy to Ms. Ziehe's office in Alexander GL30.03. When sending the email, copy (CC:) all of your readers/committee members. If you are unable to gather signatures because of social distancing or absence from campus, you can send an email with the above information to the same email address in lieu of the scan, once again copying all your readers/committee members.

As you arrange for the thesis defense, you should also print out and provide to your thesis mentor a copy of the (1) Oral Defense Guidelines and (2) Oral Defense Evaluation Form. These documents are also available on the Honors Program web site, <https://program.honors.baylor.edu/current-students/thesis/thesis-docs>.

5. Honors Week:

Monday, 7 April 2025 through Friday, 11 April 2025

All Thesis Presentations: All students defending theses in Spring, Summer, and Fall 2025 must present their work during Honors Week. Signups for presentation blocks will occur online towards the end of March, and presentations will be held **7-11 April 2024**. Each block will last approximately 2 hours; individual presentations will last approximately 10 minutes, plus a little time for audience questions. Snacks and beverages will be provided. The intended audience for your presentation is other students starting the Honors thesis.

6. Distribute polished drafts to (1) your thesis committee and (2) the Honors Program office

On or before Monday, 14 April 2025

This draft differs from the earlier version submitted to your thesis advisor in the level of polish and revision evidenced in the writing. This draft will be the basis for the thesis defense. **Students are strongly encouraged to submit the draft to the thesis committee prior to this deadline.** It is expected that each committee member will have at least one week to review the completed draft. Failure to provide at least one week for committee review may, at the faculty director's discretion, lead to an unsatisfactory grade assignment and a failure of the entire thesis project.

The electronic draft submitted to the Honors Program will be evaluated for **proper formatting and errors**. As such, this draft needs to be in near perfect condition. You can find guidance and examples of proper formatting in the Thesis Formatting Guide available online at <https://program.honors.baylor.edu/current-students/thesis/thesis-format>.

Specific factors that will be evaluated include (but are not limited to)

- proper margins (1.5" on the left side; 1" on top, right, and bottom),
- formatting/spacing of section headings,
- pagination of various sections, and
- formatting of notes and bibliography.

The draft submitted to the Honors Program office should be emailed to thesis@baylor.edu. Submit the thesis in either MS Word or PDF format. UNSC students should copy (CC) university_scholars@baylor.edu on this email.

7. Honors Banquet:

16 April 2025.

This is a time of celebration for you and your thesis mentor. You will invite your thesis mentor to join you for this required (but fun!) event.

8. Oral defense of the thesis project (approx. one hour long):

On or before Monday, 28 April 2025

If necessary, the Honors Program office should be notified via e-mail (thesis@baylor.edu) of any last-minute changes to the time and place of the thesis defense or to the people serving on the examining panel. For more information regarding the thesis defense, see the [Oral Defense and Submission Guidelines](#) available on the Honors Program web site. Afterward, the [oral defense form](#), signed by your

thesis advisor and other committee members, should be submitted either directly to Ms. Ziehe's office in AX GL 30.03 (paper form) or via email to thesis@baylor.edu. If the oral defense form is submitted electronically, it must still be signed by the committee members, and all committee members should be copied on the email.

9. Final submission of the Honors thesis:

Final Deadline: End of the day, Wednesday, 7 May 2025

NB: Students are STRONGLY urged to submit the finished project sooner than this.

The final version of the thesis essay should include all revisions suggested by the defense committee and Honors Program staff.

The *signature page* can be signed or unsigned by the thesis mentor. If signed, it must be inserted electronically after the abstract page (in place of the unsigned page) in the final PDF copy of the thesis submitted to BEARdocs. (Note: the signature page will remain unsigned by the Honors Program director, Dr. Elizabeth Corey, until bound copies return from our third-party bindery a few months later.)

BEARdocs is the online repository for your thesis. All theses must thus be submitted online in Archival PDF format (PDF/A). After submitting your thesis (along with the required Honors College agreement form) to BEARdocs, it will be available to you and other researchers and libraries via the internet. As such, it is important that the formatting of your thesis be polished and consistent with the standards of the Honors Program. Converting your thesis into a single archival PDF may take some time, so it is best to plan and finish the thesis well before the final deadline.

Honors Program students only submit the thesis to BEARdocs. Any printed and bound copies of the thesis will use the BEARdocs PDF for printing. While not required, **students are encouraged to purchase a bound copy of their thesis to give to their thesis advisor as a thank-you for their service.**

Students will upload two (or three) separate documents to BEARdocs to complete this requirement: (1) a complete copy of the thesis saved as an archival PDF, and (2) an [agreement form](#) signed by both the student and the thesis mentor which is then scanned and saved as either a PDF or image (e.g., jpeg).

RARELY: If a student is unable to gather signatures on the agreement form, the student will submit (3) a PDF of an email chain that will replace the missing signatures on the form. Instructions for this can be found online at https://program.honors.baylor.edu/sites/g/files/ecbvkj1701/files/2023-07/BEARdocs_agreement_form_without_signatures.docx. Note that the rest of the agreement form (i.e., everything but signatures) but still be uploaded, along with the PDF of the email chain.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT THE FINAL DEADLINE: To process the thesis in time for graduation, the thesis and *all other* Honors Program requirements must be completed by this final deadline. Failure to meet this final deadline will necessarily mean that you will either not graduate from the Honors Program in May or that you will have to delay graduation entirely until a later semester. Please plan your schedule accordingly and make sure that you give yourself a cushion of at least a day or two in case something should go awry.

STUDENT QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS:

Double-check the various resources on the [thesis websites](#) as nearly all questions about the thesis process can be answered there. Specific questions about your thesis should be addressed to your thesis advisor. If there are still questions after doing both of the above, please contact Dr. Beck via email.

Dr. Al Beck
Alexander Hall GL 30.04
Email: Albert_Beck@baylor.edu

FINAL REMINDERS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS:

1. Honors Program students graduating in May, August, or December of this calendar year will present their thesis research during Honors Week in April.
2. Don't miss deadlines. Instead, beat these deadlines by a week or more.

3. **Regularly communicate with your thesis mentor.** Be persistent but polite; get practical feedback on how to improve the drafts.
4. A little writing over many days produces a better thesis than a lot of writing over a few days. Use time wisely.
5. **Regularly communicate with your thesis mentor.** Meet at least weekly during this final semester.
6. Rewriting is a necessary part of good writing. Make time for rewrites.
7. **Regularly communicate with your thesis mentor.** The Honors Program will defer to the judgment of your thesis mentor and the thesis committee in evaluating your work, so you need to thoroughly understand their expectations early in the writing process.
8. Review the information in the revised [thesis guidelines](#) document and the [Honors Program Handbook](#), particularly the notes about final deadlines and the requirements for theses incorporating creative work or translation.