

# HONORS CAPSTONE PROJECT OPTIONS

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Honors capstone projects offer students the opportunity to pursue individual interests under the direct supervision of a faculty mentor. The purpose of these projects is to build the skills of independent thought and research in order to produce something original in a particular field of study. Depending upon the project, students will be required to enroll in one or two honors research courses. Students may choose a creative endeavor, such as writing a collection of poems, composing a piece of music, or making a body of artwork. They may also choose to conduct an original scientific research study (two semesters are recommended), or they might choose to write a traditional honors thesis.

Each capstone project consists of two components: a written or creative piece, and a presentation of the final product in an academic, professional, or creative forum. The public presentation may take place either in an academic conference or symposium outside of the college (such as a statewide, regional, or national disciplinary or honors conference) or it may take place at the annual honors capstone project presentations on campus. In either case, the project must be presented to a wide audience beyond the classroom in which the work was created.

## THESIS OPTION

An Honors Thesis involves an extensive research process that results in a thoroughly researched and well-written paper. The length of the paper will reflect the professional standard for publication in the given field of study. The advisor will guide the student in the proper citation style and formatting requirements commonly used in their academic discipline.

Students may write a thesis in any field, from political science, to psychology, to art history. The advisor will guide the student in the procedural expectations of their chosen field of study. For example, students in the social sciences who are conducting surveys will need to have their surveys approved by an Institutional Review Board whereas those writing in the humanities do not have to meet such requirements.

You must choose a faculty member to guide you who is qualified in the subject area you wish to explore. Make an appointment with the professor a semester before you plan to do your independent research. You must register for an Independent Research course the semester you conduct your research. Your professor and the Program Coordinator will help you ascertain if your project warrants 1-3 credit hours. By the end of that semester, your thesis should be fairly polished and you should be ready to present your research at the Honors Capstone Presentation event. You will be given four weeks after the presentation to turn in your final draft. Once your professor has approved of your final draft you must sign the library irrevocable license and FERPA waiver so we can add a digital copy of your thesis to the FSW library.

## CREATIVE ENDEAVOR OPTION

In lieu of a written thesis, students involved in advanced work in the arts may choose to produce an original work of art or body of work.

## **Disciplines Approved for Creative Endeavors**

Visual Arts

Theater

Music

Creative writing

Cinematic arts

Examples of projects include but are not limited to:

Painting, sculpture, installations, or performance art

Screenplays

Novels

Collection of short stories

Collection of poems

Spoken word

Documentaries, narrative or experimental films

Theatrical performances

Musical compositions

### **If you choose to pursue and creative project:**

1. Your work must be displayed, exhibited or performed for a general audience.
2. Creative writing students must schedule a reading of their work and are strongly encouraged to submit some of their work for publication.
3. Music students who are composing original music must submit copies of the sheet music along with a CD or videotape of your recital.
4. Students who select this option are still required to enroll in an Independent Research course the semester they complete their project. They must select an advisor skilled in the creative activity in which they will be engaging.

## **SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH THESIS**

A scientific research thesis provides an opportunity to conduct research either in a laboratory or field setting. Generally, scientific theses require two semesters to complete. Students are strongly encouraged to identify a topic of interest as early as possible in order to find a suitable and willing professor to mentor them. Your faculty thesis advisor will guide you in the design, development and execution of your project.

The first semester will focus on preparing for the research. This involves conducting an in-depth literature review, drafting an introduction, designing the experiment or project, determining the appropriate methods, and procuring the necessary supplies. The following semester will be spent conducting the field or laboratory research, analyzing the data, and producing an original scientific paper that includes an Abstract, Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results and Discussion/Conclusion.

### **SELECTING AN ADVISOR**

Selecting an advisor with whom you feel comfortable is one of your most important decisions. For instance, if you work best under rigorous guidelines and strict, organized conditions, choose a faculty member who consistently exhibits those work habits. An advisor must commit time and effort to your project, and will need plenty of advance notice. You should secure the Capstone Project Form from the Honors Scholars Program Coordinator and arrange for an advisor, preferably before the end of the semester preceding the term in which you will complete your thesis.

Full-time instructors may serve as Thesis advisors; part-time or adjunct faculty may not serve as advisors without the approval of the Program Coordinator. The advisor should be familiar with requirements for the Honors Capstone project as well as knowledgeable in your field of inquiry. Do not wait until the last minute, expecting to recruit an advisor who is both familiar with your topic and willing to serve. Further, meet with your advisor prior to the beginning of your thesis semester.

Once you and your advisor have agreed upon the broad overview of your project, you need to write a 350-word prospectus and ask them to sign off on it. A prospectus should include: a clear, precise definition of the purpose of the research or creative project, a brief summary of the organizational plan and working schedule you have set up with your advisor.

Once your prospectus has been approved, it is up to you to begin serious research and/or the creative process. Your advisor cannot be expected to gather materials for you. He or she may lend you books and/or articles, suggest academic publications relevant to your work, or guide you to experts in the field, but the responsibility for gathering data lies with the student. Allow time to first locate, and then obtain, a reliable cross-section of sources. You should establish a series of deadlines to assure that you are prepared to present your work to the public at the end of the Spring semester. Presenting the project publicly does not entitle you to an automatic "A" in the course. You must also meet the advisor's academic expectations.

### **What role does each person involved in the Honors thesis perform?**

The Research Advisor and the student work closely to develop the capstone project. For this reason, an understanding of roles and responsibilities, and a conscious effort to communicate frequently about these elements of the student/advisor relationship, are critical.

#### **The Student:**

- is responsible for working out a meeting schedule with the advisor and attending every session.
- keeps the advisor informed of the results of ongoing research, and any factors that might affect the progress of his/her research.
- Shares all drafts and final versions of thesis documents with his/her advisor(s), and gains the advisor's approval before submitting the final document to the Honors Program Coordinator.
- Takes responsibility for completing required paperwork, including Honors Prospectus/Contract forms and the library waiver that needs to be signed so that a digital copy of the thesis can be entered into the library catalogue.
- Informs himself/herself of the regulations, policies, and practices governing research activities including IRB requirements, copyright limitations, restrictions related to collecting or working with scientific specimens and/or chemicals.

- Adheres to agreed deadlines for work to be completed.
- Maintains academic integrity in collecting, analyzing, and presenting research data.

### **The Research Advisor:**

- Oversees the student's progress, and helps the student resolve issues of research focus, content, and form.
- Helps the student develop an understanding of the challenges and important questions in his/her field of study, and the significance of his/her work in the context of these driving challenges and questions.
- Helps students set reasonable and attainable goals and establish a timeline for completion of work.
- Meets regularly with the student and provides the student with an evaluation of his/her progress and performance in regular and informative ways.
- Assigns deadlines for bibliographies, drafts of chapters, presentations, posters and revisions.
- Defines the length of, and reads and comments on the various drafts of a written thesis that the student submits, responding to questions promptly.
- Assists students in preparing for their thesis presentation at the end of the Spring semester.
- Informs the student about authorship, environmental health and safety, and intellectual property practices.
- Encourages the student to participate in professional meetings, perform or display his/her work in public settings, and publish the results of his/her research.
- Communicates any challenges that might prevent the student from completing the project with the Honors Program Coordinator in a timely fashion.

*These guidelines have been adapted from “Guidelines for Faculty Advisors of the Senior Honors Thesis at Tufts University,” “Guidelines for Advising Relationships Between Faculty Advisors and Graduate Students” at Stanford University, and “Toward Best Practices for Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors” at the University of Iowa.*



## **A GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

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### **Conducting Research & The FSW Libraries**

Students completing an honors thesis that requires research should seek the guidance of an FSW Faculty Librarian to learn how to effectively and efficiently identify, locate, evaluate, and use information and its sources at an advanced level. Competencies addressed include determining the nature and extent of information needed; designing search strategies; accessing and retrieving information; critically evaluating and interpreting information; using and communicating information to accomplish a specific purpose; understanding the economic, legal, and social uses of information; and observing the laws, institutional policies, and ethics related to the access and use of information. The librarians will help students not only work with the FSW Libraries' Collection of print, electronic, and audiovisual resources, but also with information available on the free Web, as well as resources available at other libraries throughout the U.S. and beyond. FSW Librarians ultimately help students separate authoritative information from that which is spurious within the vast extent of available information.

All students have access to several online tutorials and research guides that are created and maintained by FSW Librarians. To learn about and engage in the research process in its entirety, go to the [FSW Libraries' Homepage](#), and find the [FSW Libraries' Research Tutorial](#). This tutorial contains print and video instructions that cover the following: how to launch a research project; searching skills/search methods; how to use specific search tools, including the FSW Libraries' many databases for articles, the Libraries' online catalog for books and film, and the Free Internet; identifying and understanding different types of sources; and understanding citation styles, the citation process, and how to cite sources. The FSW Libraries also provides the [Understanding Plagiarism Tutorial](#), which defines plagiarism, explains the consequences of plagiarizing, and teaches (and empowers) FSW students to develop the requisite skills to avoid

plagiarizing. In addition, students have access to a large collection of [FSW Libraries' Research Guides](#), which FSW Librarians create and maintain to help students get started with their research. These guides feature the most relevant resources, all linked, for any research-driven assignment within a specific discipline. Organized primarily by subject, the Research Guides provide resource suggestions on a wide range of subjects, from the Humanities, History, and Psychology, to the Natural Sciences, Business, and Interdisciplinary Studies.

The FSW Libraries retain print copies of Honors Theses completed by former Edison and FSW Honors Program students. The theses are available on Reserve at the Thomas Edison (Lee County) Campus Library.



Irrevocable License and FERPA waiver  
to Florida SouthWestern State College  
for the use of Capstone Projects, Thesis, and Student Papers

I am entering into this FERPA waiver and Irrevocable License Agreement on this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_ for the benefit of Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW). Florida SouthWestern State College will digitize archive and provide access electronically as a library resource Capstone Projects, Thesis, and Student Papers (hereinafter referred to as CPTSP) to members of the community. FSW may also use these same CPTSP in the marketing and promotion of the college to prospective students, alumni, and the community.

I hereby represent that I am the original author of a CPTSP, that I possess all rights necessary to grant FSW the rights under this agreement, and I solely responsible for the creation of the following Capstone Project, Thesis, or Student Paper:

*Please describe the CPTSP by title, author, year it was created, course and professor, and any other identifiable description that would assist in the identification of the CPTSP.*

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In consideration of the foregoing, I agree as follows:

In compliance with the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) I hereby grant permission to the officials of Florida SouthWestern State College to digitize and archive and electronically publish as a library resource open and available to the public at large my Capstone Project, Thesis or Student Paper identified above.

I hereby agree to grant a perpetual license to Release for digitizing, archiving, use, display, publish, copy, reproduce, broadcast, perform, transmit, distribute, transfer, create derivative works based on, combine with other information or materials, sell, and/or otherwise exploit the CPTS, in any manner or media throughout the world, currently existing or hereafter devised, for any commercial, educational, marketing, editorial, or other purpose, without any obligation to provide compensation or credit to me or to seek my approval in respect of any such use of the Work. FSW shall also be entitled to display the CPTSP, or other media or objects depicting the CPTSP in whole or in part, in public, private, commercial, educational, artistic, or other venues where such CPTSP is typically displayed. FSW may digitize, duplicate and redistribute the CPTSP by any means. FSW may utilize or display the CPTSP in electronic format to the same extent as it is entitled to utilize or display the CPTSP in physical formats under the terms of this Agreement.

I agree that I am not entitled to royalties for FSW's use or display of the Work.

I hereby grant to FSW an unrestricted, irrevocable, perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, freely transferable and sublicenseable, right and permission to use, re-use and incorporate, in any form, manner or media whatsoever, now known or developed hereafter, my name, likeness, image, photographs, biographical information, and other indicia of my identity or persona (collectively, "Persona") in connection with FSW's use of the CPTSP, the marketing and promotion of FSW and in connection with FSW's fundraising and educational efforts, without any obligation to provide compensation to me or to seek my approval in respect of any such use.

I hereby fully and forever release, hold harmless, waive, discharge and covenant not to sue FSW or any members, directors, officers, employees, volunteers, agents or representatives of FSW from and against any and all damages, liabilities, actions, causes of action, suits, claims, demands, losses, costs and expenses of every kind and nature whatsoever, arising directly or indirectly from, or in connection with, the FSW's use of the CPTSP and/or my Persona as permitted in this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have executed this Agreement as of the date of this Agreement

**Student Author:**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No.: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

# **HONORS CAPSTONE PROJECT AGREEMENT**

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENT**

1. Make an appointment to speak with the Coordinator of the Honors Scholar Program to get your project approved.
2. The Independent Research course may be taken for one to three credits. The Coordinator of the Honors Program will determine the demands of the research project you select.
3. Choose a faculty member to assist you who is qualified in the subject area you wish to explore.
4. Make an appointment with the faculty member a semester BEFORE you plan to do your Independent Research.
5. You must receive approval of the project from the faculty member and the Dean of the respective School. Their signatures must be written below in the appropriate areas.
6. Write a 350 word essay discussing your interest in undergraduate research. The essay should discuss your commitment to investigation and/or a creative endeavor. This essay must accompany your application to participate in undergraduate research.
7. Return your undergraduate research application to the Coordinator for the Honors Program.
8. Once accepted by the Honors Program Coordinator, obtain the course number from the School Dean and register for the class.
9. Commit to meet the faculty member once a week to discuss your work. These meetings count as class attendance. Missing appointments will result in grade reductions.

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF FACULTY DIRECTING RESEARCH**

1. Assist student with clarification of topic. This includes preparation of prospectus which must be submitted to the Coordinator of the Honors Scholar Program for approval no later than the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of class.
2. Direct student through the techniques and development of research design.
3. Assist student with the rationale and design of a literature review.
4. Be available to student for weekly appointments and other support sessions mutually agreed upon between student and faculty.
5. Evaluate progress. Problem-solve with students on any difficulties they may encounter in the conduct of their study.
6. Evaluate final research project. Assign a final grade. Send a copy of the completed project to the Coordinator of the Honors Scholar Program.



**COURSE NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COURSE NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CRN:** \_\_\_\_\_ **SECTION:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TERM RESEARCH WILL BE COMPLETED:** \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Signature \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

School Dean Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Coordinator of Honors Scholar Program Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

**RETURN THE COMPLETED FORM TO THE COORDINATOR, HONORS SCHOLAR PROGRAM**

