

USSC American Studies Honours Thesis Guide 2019

The Thesis: some practicalities

Theses are between 18,000 and 20,000 words in length. This figure includes appendices and discursive footnotes, but neither citation (parts of the footnote that identify sources) nor bibliography.

Two hard copies of the thesis plus a pdf version are to be submitted to the Honours Coordinator on **Friday, 11 October, 2019, by 5pm**. The USSC also expects students to submit electronic copies of their theses and their abstracts so that they can be archived in the Sydney eScholarship Repository. Students must also submit a copy through Turnitin in the Canvas site for AMST4114.

The deadline is absolute. No individual arrangements between thesis supervisors and students are permitted concerning this deadline. Requests for extensions on the grounds of illness or misadventure should be made to Special Considerations: <https://sydney.edu.au/students/special-consideration.html>. ('Misadventure' is defined as accident without negligence.)

Work submitted after the due date (or date of extension) will be penalised at the rate of 10% of the possible mark for each week, or part of a week, that the work is late.

Each student writes an 18,000–20,000-word thesis under the supervision of a full-time member of the United States Studies Centre staff. The thesis is expected to make some original contribution to the study of America and will count for 60 percent of the student's fourth year grade.

Ideally, students will have identified a specific thesis topic and a supervisor before the commencement of the Honours year.

While Honours students do the bulk of the work on their thesis during second semester (after the seminars are over), starting the year with a clear idea of what the thesis is to be about and the literature to which it relates is highly desirable. Regular conversations with your supervisor throughout the year, identifying sources and avenues for research, and drawing connections between your thesis and coursework will enrich the thesis significantly.

Students who need to process data on computers should ensure that appropriate facilities are available to them before they commence work on the thesis. Discuss your needs early with your supervisor or the Honours Coordinator.

Students whose research involves human intervention (interviews, questionnaires, etc.) must have their projects approved by the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). If you are considering doing primary research involving people, it is important to discuss this early on with your supervisor.

Once the honours year has begun, you are advised not to make any major change to your thesis topic, particularly after you have submitted your bibliographic essay. You can make minor changes to your thesis topic in consultation with your supervisor but may only make a

substantial change with the agreement of your supervisor and after discussion with the Honours Coordinator. Agreement for such a change will be given in writing.

You are expected to submit a draft of your thesis to your supervisor in late August. The draft will give you and your supervisor the chance to iron out problems in the thesis and produce a better final piece of work. If the draft is not submitted on time, the supervisor may decline to comment on it or may read only part of it. Students who do not submit a full draft for comment reduce their chances of completing a good thesis.

Formatting and Presentation

The hard copies should be on A4 size paper, double spaced, with reasonable margins to allow for binding. Ensure the binding is secure: buckram binding, spiral and plastic comb binding and springback binders are all acceptable. Theses should be printed on a good-quality laser printer. The text should be in a standard serif font such as Times New Roman, Palatino or Book Antiqua, in 12 or 11 point. Use footnotes, not endnotes.

You may include pictures or other designs on the thesis cover but it should include your name, your thesis title, the year and the following wording: “A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA (Hons) in American Studies, University of Sydney.”

The thesis needs to start with an abstract, which is a very brief summary of what you set out to achieve in your thesis, your major findings, and conclusions. It should be approximately 150 words and should be on a separate page. The purpose of the abstract is to provide a ‘snapshot’ of what is to come.

Footnotes and bibliography

You should use whatever citation style is most commonly used in the disciplines or fields on which you have drawn in your scholarly reading and into which you wish to speak. Your basic choice is between in-text citation styles (such as Harvard or APA) which are mainly used in the social sciences or note and bibliography citation styles (such as Chicago or MLA) which rely on footnotes and are favoured by the humanities.

For a detailed style guide for Chicago, MLA, or APA see <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01>

For a style guide for the Harvard referencing system see <http://www.swinburne.edu.au/library/referencing/harvard-style-guide/>

Further advice

You would do well to read through a few theses, so you get a feel for the genre. While it is longer than essays you’ve written before, it is not a book-length project; the scope and structure are specific. Electronic versions of theses from the past few years are available at <https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/simple-search?query=honours+theses>. Hard copies are available on the ground floor of the USSC office.