Intro to Honors Thesis

JUDY GENSHAFT
HONORS COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

The mission of the Judy Genshaft Honors College is to develop tomorrow's leaders by providing first-rate educational opportunities to the most highly motivated, intellectually curious, and academically accomplished students at USF. For this reason, the Honors College aims for you to develop an independent identity as a citizen scholar: a producer of knowledge with beneficial societal impact. There are 4 Research Track Options.

Courses Offered by the Judy Genshaft Honors College

Discovery Track I: Honors Thesis (Thesis I & Thesis II)

OR

Innovation Track: Honors Capstone (+ 1 Add'l Honors Course)

Opt 1

Opt 2

The **Innovation Track (Honors Capstone)** brings honors students together to take an interdisciplinary approach at solving real-world problems within the context of an honors course. Instructors select engaging topics of interest and use an experiential learning model to guide students through structured, collaborative group research projects. Capstone course topics vary from semester to semester.

The **Honors Thesis Track** provides students a 1-to-1 mentoring experience similar to a graduate program with faculty selected by each student based on their area of inquiry. The goal of the Thesis track is to experience building knowledge through integrative and applied learning following a specific research idea, social issue to be investigated, or creative project unique to each student.

The key feature is the process of establishing a meaningful working relationship with the thesis chair in order to effectively support the student's curiosity and scholarly work, encourage interdisciplinary approaches to solving problems, and share the ongoing academic journey together.

Programs Offered by Other Depts: Refer to your Advisor

Opt 3

Opt 4

Discovery Track II: Departmental Honors Programs

Other Options: e.g., Honors Thesis for Engineering

What is "Honors Thesis"?

Individual-based or Team-based Project?

Individual Project

Team-based Project

- Science Labs
- Psychology Labs
- Engineering Labs

STEP 1

First, determine your **Project Setting**—are you starting from scratch or creating a thesis project within an existing research lab/team/ program which you belong to?

*Note: Finding a thesis chair and research lab opportunities can take time—**start early!***

This is mainly for students who are interested in developing their own themes and projects. You will come up with general project ideas and then look for a thesis chair based on your ideas and interests.

***Tips:** Start with faculty you know and feel comfortable talking with. For Interdisciplinary Study ideas, you can also talk with Honors faculty!*

***Note:** Be flexible with the theme/ project ideas as you may not find a thesis chair whose field and experiences perfectly match with what you want to do!*

This is for students who are already in an existing research lab/team/ program. You may utilize the research that the team is currently working on and identify your specific tasks within it, or create a new sub-project which is not part of their major work, but still helpful to the team. One of the team members should become your thesis chair and help you identify the scope of work specific to your thesis.

***Note:** Your work/tasks (2-semester worth) must be clearly defined so that your thesis chair can grade your work each semester!*
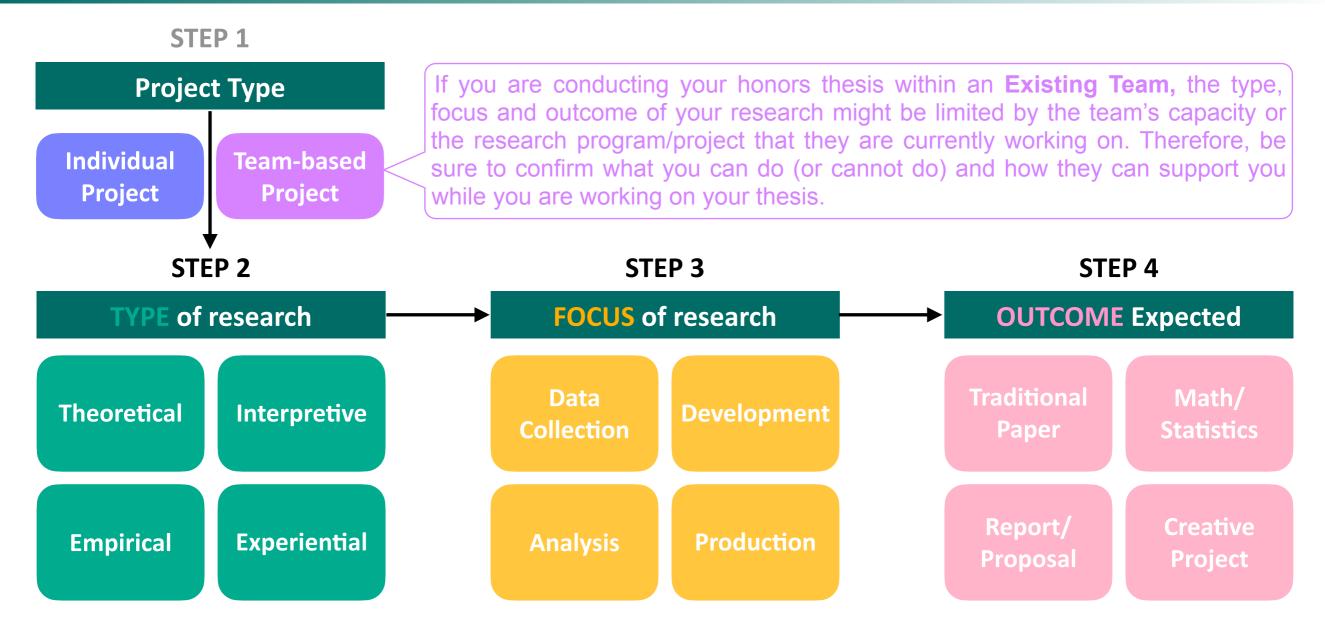
STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
TYPE of research	**FOCUS of research**	**OUTCOME Expected**

STEP 1

Project Type

Individual Project

Team-based Project

If you are conducting your honors thesis within an **Existing Team,** the type, focus and outcome of your research might be limited by the team's capacity or the research program/project that they are currently working on. Therefore, be sure to confirm what you can do (or cannot do) and how they can support you while you are working on your thesis.

STEP 2

TYPE of research

Theoretical	Interpretive
Empirical	Experiential

STEP 3

FOCUS of research

Data Collection	Development
Analysis	Production

STEP 4

OUTCOME Expected

Traditional Paper	Math/ Statistics
Report/ Proposal	Creative Project

Now that you have determined your project type, consider what kind of research you would like to do or experience. These categories are also useful to determine the skills and specialities that you would learn from your thesis chair.

A research process can be very long. Therefore, you may have to focus on a certain area. For example, if you focus on collecting data, you may not have a lot of time to analyze and synthesize the data. Of course, there should be a process—even if you focus on collecting data, you still need to organize the data and produce a report (or some sort) to present your findings in a meaningful way. Therefore, discussing the scope of work and expected outcomes with your prospective chairs is critical. Your thesis chair should be able to support both the overall process and each step listed here.

What Can I do with my Honors Thesis? - From an Idea to a Project

There are many ways to develop a thesis project—visit faculty and talk with others to brainstorm your ideas!

- Business Plan
- Marketing Research

- Poetry
- History
- Philosophy
- Language

Proposal

Business

Anthropology

Arts & Humanities

Mathematics

Social Sciences

- Behavioral Analysis
- Human Experiences
- Observations
- Interviews
- Case Studies

- Literature Review
- Theory & Concept
- Analysis
- Synthesis

Theoretical

Interpretive

Traditional Paper

Creative Project

Arts & Humanities

- Methodology
- Data Collection

Empirical

Experiential

Global Studies

- Visual Art
- Music
- Performance
- Digital Media
- Design
- Architecture

- Study Abroad

Report

Lab-based

Statistics

Service Oriented

- Experiments
- Ethnographies
- Direct Observation
- Measurement
- Surveys

Technology

Environmental Studies

- Community Service
- Internship

- Programming

- Problem Solving
- Field Research

What's Your Plan?

STEP 1

Project Type

Individual Project

Team-based Project

Note: *If you are interested in this type, you will need to look for lab opportunities 1-2 semester before Thesis I.*

Talk with your team/lab director first and go through steps 2-4 with the director.

Regardless of format, the central aim is for you to practice the mechanics of moving from idea to active inquiry.

STEP 2

TYPE of research

Theoretical

Interpretive

Empirical

Experiential

What do you want to experience?

STEP 3

FOCUS of research

Data Collection

Development

Analysis

Production

What do you want to learn?

STEP 4

OUTCOME Expected

Traditional Paper

Math/ Statistics

Report/ Proposal

Creative Project

How do you want to tell your story?