

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY OF ART
U.C. BERKELEY**

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF HONORS THESES

PURPOSE

The Honors Thesis in History of Art is an advanced research and writing project that presents an original and thorough analysis of a discrete topic that may focus upon specific works of visual art, architectural, or archeological sites, contexts of production and reception, canons of criticism, and/or methods of interpretation. Requiring a depth of investigation, level of analytical, and quality of writing that exceeds a term paper, the thesis project introduces you to the caliber of work expected in graduate programs in art history and the humanities generally.

ELIGIBILITY

Students with at least a 3.5 grade point average in the major are eligible for admission into the Honors Program Admission is dependent upon the willingness of a member of the permanent faculty to supervise the candidate throughout the honors program. Admission is dependent upon the willingness of a member of the permanent faculty to supervise the candidate throughout the Program. Before granting permission, the faculty member may consider several facets of a student's prior work in History of Art, including breadth of courses in relevant topics and level of academic achievement. The faculty member may require the student to prepare a thesis prospectus that succinctly describes the thesis topic, identifies core works of visual art/architecture as well as primary texts, and prior scholarly literature relevant to the proposed direction of research. A faculty member may decline to supervise a student or may recommend a different prospective advisor.

Candidates for Honors are required to complete satisfactorily, generally within their senior year, an Honors thesis developed usually over the course of two semesters of continuing academic work under faculty supervision: 1) a seminar in the first of two semesters taught by a permanent faculty member or a directed research or independent study course, 2) HA195 Special Study during the second semester. The two semesters are usually consecutive, although they may precede and follow the Summer Session.

In the event that a student's seminar or most advanced work has been done with a visiting faculty member who will be in residence during the second semester of Honors work, the student must identify a permanent member of the faculty to oversee the thesis. That faculty member should be in the same field of art history or in a related field. A visitor may not supervise a thesis after departing campus. A student may wish to consult informally with other faculty in History of Art and in other departments regarding how to plan for and admission to the Honors Program should speak with an Undergraduate Advisor well in advance of enrolling in HA195. The Department Curriculum Committee will make decisions regarding exceptions.

Advance planning is essential. Students considering the Honors Program should consult with an Undergraduate Advisor as soon as possible and begin to plan for the program by the mid point of their junior year, if not earlier; transfer students should begin to plan by the mid point of their second semester at Berkeley.

REQUIREMENTS

Format and Content¹

The minimum text length (not including endnotes), bibliography, and list of illustrations) is 30 pages double-spaced, 12-point type; the text (including endnotes and bibliography) should not exceed 60 pages. You should illustrate your analysis with the work(s) of art, architecture, or material culture at the core of your thesis, providing captioned figures referenced in the body of the text (unless absolutely necessary to your analysis, you should not exceed 20 figures.)

The content of your thesis must be your own original scholarly work. Any statements, opinions, or ideas quoted or paraphrased from the work of others (as opposed to well-known factual material) MUST be correctly acknowledged in complete endnotes, in accordance with College of Letters & Science regulations. Immediately after the title page, you must include a signed statement that "This thesis represents my own work in accordance with College of Letters & Science regulations."

The various components of the thesis should, in general, appear in the following order:

- Title page
- Affirmation of independent work
- Table of contents
- Preface (with acknowledgements, if any)
- Text chapters
- Endnotes
- Appendices (if any)
- Bibliography
- List of illustrations
- Illustrations.

Two guides to writing about art are strongly recommended: Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art* (Longman; most recent edition), and Henry M. Sayer, *Writing About Art* (Prentice Hall).

For endnotes, please follow the rules appropriate to your field and subject as established by leading journals: e.g., *American Journal of Archaeology* (www.ajaonline.org); *The Art Bulletin* (www.collegeart.org); *Archives of Asian Art*, *Journal of Asian Studies*. Do not mix citation styles.

Protocols

As a historian, your first duty is to develop a body of pertinent and factual evidence (be it textual, visual, or material) and to evaluate it in relation to carefully proposed problem(s) or question(s). Your descriptions of works of art or architecture should be lucid and succinct, with pertinent examples introduced at the appropriate point(s) of the text. Remember that a thesis is exactly that: a *thesis*, i.e., a pondered statement of your own opinion or "take" on a particular topic or problem. Your thesis must be based on

¹ Some of this information is adapted from senior thesis guidelines supplied by art history departments at Columbia University and Princeton University; we thank their staffs and undergraduate advisors for their assistance.

your thorough knowledge of the topic and its English-language literatures and present thoughts and ideas of your own developed clearly and in logical order. You need not attempt to “solve” a problem or “prove” a point of view definitively, but you should endeavor to articulate what is at stake, intellectually and rhetorically, in your analysis and to bring readers to a new, critical understanding of your topic and its related works.

Please pay close attention to English usage and style, research ethics and techniques, organization, endnote conventions, and formatting. You will need to copyedit your work prior to submission; if necessary seek assistance from writing resources on campus. You should not expect your advisor to read multiple drafts or devote considerable time to copyediting. Advisors are generally willing to read a maximum of two, sometimes three, drafts.

Use quotations sparingly, and work them as much as possible into the flow of your own narrative. If a long quotation is necessary, separate it from the body of the text, indent it, and single-space it without quotation marks (known as a block quote). If you need to insert a clarifying word or phrase of your own into a quotation (for clarity or in the case of elision), use brackets [] to signify the insertion, which should also be italicized. If you wish to give emphasis to a part of a quotation, italicize the word or text and, at the end of the quotation, add [italics supplied]. In general primary texts (historical documents, religious scripture, artists’ writings, and the like) that you use as evidence in the thesis should be quoted directly, not paraphrased.

Clear and accurate endnotes are an essential part of your thesis’s argumentation; they open your research to verification. They should take readers directly to your sources (primary or secondary) and provide precise credit for the statements, phrasing, and intellectual property of others. Cite primary texts in accordance with the citation practices current in that particular field, and cite them before you cite secondary sources on the subject. If you are quoting a translation of a primary textual source (e.g. Pausanias; Vasari; the Qianlong emperor), you must acknowledge the translator (if identified); and provide an exact reference to the original text in accordance with the citation practices current in that particular field; if it is your translation, indicate as “translation by the author.”

Unless you are directly discussing web art or art criticism on the web, you should not use websites as sources for historical information or scholarly opinions unless they are “authoritative,” namely sites developed by museums, research institutes, scholars, or foundations. You should indicate the date that you accessed the site, and employ the same practices of source citation and endnoting that you yourself are obliged to use in your own thesis. In some cases you may wish to organize your bibliography into separate sections for primary and secondary sources or add vernacular text. Consult your thesis advisor on the strength of your sources and the most appropriate format and practice for endnotes/bibliography in your particular case.

Deadlines

All honors candidates must adhere strictly to the following deadlines for preparation and completion of the thesis. Failure to adhere to these deadlines may result in rejection of the thesis. To repeat, you should not expect your advisor to read multiple drafts prior to the submission of the completed thesis.

1. **Outline and Bibliography:** Due to your advisor by the end of week 5 of the term in which the thesis is written. Students may also submit an initial draft to the primary advisor.

2. **Full Draft:** Due the Monday after Spring Break or the equivalent day in the fall semester.

3. **Completed Thesis:** Due on the Friday of the second-to-last week of full instruction during the semester in which HA195 is taken, OR the date specified for a given semester by the Department.

Evaluation

Each honors thesis is read by the primary advisor and a second full-time faculty member in the Department appointed by the Chair of History of Art. Both readers will prepare brief reports on the thesis, which will be made available to the student, and rank the thesis. In the event that the two readers recommend divergent rankings, the Chair may appoint a third reader. Those who have satisfactorily completed the program may graduate with Honors, High Honors, or Highest Honors in the major depending upon their performance in the thesis and their final GPA in all upper division courses taken to fulfill the major requirements. Completion of a thesis is not a guarantee of Honors. A student who does not receive Honors will receive a letter grade for HA195.