

WWU Political Science Departmental Honors

General Information

Departmental Honors offers you an opportunity to work with a faculty member one-on-one, exploring in detail a topic that has piqued your interest in your coursework in Political Science, and producing a piece of original independent research. In the last two quarters before graduation, you will research and write a thesis, under the mentorship of a faculty member, and orally present and defend the final project. The final thesis is published in Western CEDAR, an open access platform that shares scholarly work by Western faculty, staff and students.

To get ready... please review the requirements below, identify and confirm a project with a faculty member, and sign the thesis contract **at least three quarters before your intended graduation.**

Entrance Requirements

Students must satisfy the following eligibility requirements **prior** to registration for PLSC 496 *Honors Tutorial*. The student must:

- be a declared Political Science major with senior standing (135+ credits)
- have a cumulative GPA of 3.5 in all upper division Political Science courses
- have completed **all** of the following with a minimum GPA of 3.0:
 - PLSC 250, PLSC 261, and PLSC 271 and 291
 - Completed courses in the area most closely related to the thesis topic
- have completed **one** of the following:
 - two years of foreign language with a B (3.0) or better GPA, or demonstrate a satisfactory reading knowledge of the language or,
 - Demonstrated coursework or training in Research Methods. This can be satisfied by PLSC 366 *Research in Politics*, or an equivalent class in research methods, such as GIS, archival research, statistics, qualitative research methods, interview or survey research methods, to name a few.
 - You should have earned a grade of B (3.0) or better in your research methods option.
 - All substitutes for PLSC 366 are subject to the approval of the Political Science Department and will require documentation.
- submit the completed *Honors Contract* to the Political Science Department Office with proper faculty signatures
 - This must be completed at least **3 quarters before graduation**—so if you plan to graduate in the Spring, you should complete the Honors Contract in the Fall to be eligible to register for Honors Tutorial Credits for Winter and Spring.

Completion Requirements

To graduate with honors in Political Science the student must:

- maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.5 in all upper division Political Science courses
- complete 4-10 credits of PLSC 496 *Honors Tutorial* over two quarters under the supervision of a Faculty Thesis Advisor
- give an oral presentation of the thesis in arrangement with the Faculty Thesis Advisor
- submit a copy of the honors thesis to the Political Science Department Office

Course load

What is the general course load? You can sign up for a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 10 credits spread out over two quarters. In general, students sign up for a total of 6-8 credits, averaging about 3-4 credits per quarter. You can decide the total credit load with your advisor. Students are expected to complete approximately three (3) hours of research/writing per week per credit hour and usually write a 8,000-10,000 word thesis under the direction of the Faculty Thesis Advisor. You will meet actively and regularly with your

advisor. You should plan on approximately 10-12 hours of work on the project per week, and perhaps more if you are taking a full 5 credit a quarter maximum load. Please note that PLSC 496 Honors credit is in addition to the 60 credits of required coursework for the Political Science major.

Procedures

Students should contact the Departmental Honors Advisor at the end of junior year or beginning of senior year if they intend to participate in the program. The Honors Advisor will provide information and assist in selecting a Faculty Thesis Advisor.

Students register for PLSC 496 with the Faculty Thesis Advisor. The *Honors Contract* must be completed as part of the registration process. *Honors Contracts* will be kept on file in the Department Office (we have an esign form for this process).

At the end of the first quarter, the Faculty Thesis Advisor will assign a *K* grade for PLSC 496. The *K* grade is changed to the earned letter grade upon completion of the thesis at the end of the second quarter.

The Faculty Thesis Advisor will select one other faculty who will serve as thesis reader. The reader will confer with the advisor on the grade. The student will present the thesis findings orally to the advisor and a small audience and “defend the thesis.” This means you will take questions and respond to comments from the audience as part of the process of finishing your thesis.

The student must submit a copy of the completed honors thesis to the Political Science Department before the final grade is assigned. Thesis formatting is established under advisement of the Faculty Thesis Advisor. The department’s copy of the thesis should be submitted electronically. A copy will be filed and made available to other students considering the Honors program. It will also be shared in Western CEDAR so the thesis is available to the wider academic community.

Upon receipt of the completed honors thesis, the department will notify the registrar’s office that the student has completed all requirements for graduating with departmental honors. The registrar’s office then notes it on the transcript.

How does the University Honors Program relate to Political Science Departmental Honors?

Earning Departmental Honors is **not** the same as earning University Honors (and vice versa).

Students must apply and be accepted to the University Honors Program. See <http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~honors/> for information, or call the program office at 360-650-3034.

The University Honors Program is entirely separate from Political Science Departmental Honors, except that the senior project required for UHP, with approval from the UHP Director, can be the same as the senior thesis required for Departmental Honors (but not the other way around). Note, a student wishing to graduate with both distinctions must complete the requirements for each program.

Registration

For students in both the University Honors Program and the Political Science Departmental Honors program, students should register for both HNRS 490 *Senior Project* and PLSC 496 *Honors Tutorial*.

