

Undergraduate Honors Program in History

In the second semester of their junior year, qualified history majors are encouraged to apply for History Honors. Honors students will produce a research paper written in consultation with a professor in the history department with whom they have previously worked. Upon admission to the Honors Program, students will complete two courses (six hours) of directed research and writing in their senior year. These courses are in addition to the 30 hours required for the major. The program encourages preliminary research over the summer between junior and senior years on the topic of student interest. Funding is available to support suitable research after approval by the supervising professor and application to the department.

Requirements for Admission to the History Honors Program

- Students applying for honors must have a minimum grade point average of 3.50 in their prior work in history.
- Priority will be given to students who have completed at least one research seminar in the department.
- Application portfolio, including:
 1. Two letters of recommendation written by Rice University faculty. One of the letters will be written by the thesis advisor. The advisor's letter will attest to the student's ability to complete a thesis, confirm the advisor's willingness to direct it, and approve the proposed topic. The advisor should also comment on the availability of primary sources on the student's proposed topic and describe a schedule for meeting with the student and monitoring his/her progress. The advisor must be a regular member of the history department and confirm that he/she will be present on campus during both semesters of the academic year in which the thesis is to be completed.
 2. A written statement by the student (2-3 pages) explaining why he/she wishes to write a thesis and defining the proposed research questions. This statement should also explain how the student plans to obtain primary sources that are necessary for addressing the research questions. An annotated bibliography (1-2 pages) must accompany the application.
 3. A writing sample, preferably from the student's history course work, that demonstrates the student's ability to write clear, analytical prose.
 4. Degree Audit

The application portfolio is due early in March. An announcement will be circulated at the beginning of the spring term specifying the exact date. Students selected for the Honors Program will be notified in time to attend the oral presentations of the prior year's honors thesis projects in April (see below).

HIST 403: Fall Research Seminar

The goal of the seminar is to advance the student from preliminary research to the

formulation of a formal prospectus for the honors thesis, and to move their research forward. Students will meet on a regular basis with their supervising professors over the course of the semester and with the Instructor of the Fall Research Seminar to discuss deadlines, drafts and issues of common concern to all honors students. The honor student's responsibilities in HIST 403 will include:

- A 10-page formal research prospectus will be due in mid-semester, and should include:
 1. a concise and well-presented description of the project's thesis and underlying argument
 2. a discussion of existing scholarship on the subject
 3. a full bibliography of primary and secondary sources
- At the end of the semester, honor students will present a "Summary Report of Research" (roughly 10 pages) describing the progress made in their research and writing. Actual due dates will be specified by the Seminar Instructor at the beginning of the semester.

These assignments will be evaluated by the supervising professor and the Seminar Instructor. Upon approval of the prospectus and research report, students will be advanced to the second semester of the program. Students who do not choose, or are not approved, to advance to the second semester will receive a letter grade for HIST 403 and terminate their participation without receiving honors.

HIST 404: History Honors Thesis (Spring)

In the course of the Spring semester, students concentrate on the writing of an extended historical research paper of some 40-50 pages in text length, in addition to supporting documentation. An outstanding honors thesis makes use of primary sources and shows originality in methodology or interpretation. The essay must situate the problem in the existing scholarly literature on the topic and contain a clear appraisal of how its work fits into the debate and what intervention it proposes to make.

Students will meet individually and regularly with their supervising professor and are required to submit rough drafts by fixed deadlines. These rough drafts will be assessed by both the supervising professor and the Seminar Instructor. A finished draft must be submitted by the middle of March, whereupon the student will make an oral presentation of the paper to an open audience, including the supervising professor, members of the Undergraduate Committee, fellow honors students and others. Guests may be invited. The student will be expected to take questions and defend the thesis presented. After the oral presentation, students will be given the opportunity to make final revisions of their thesis, which will then be submitted for evaluation to their supervising professor. The professor will give the work a letter grade and make a recommendation for or against honors. This recommendation will be taken into consideration by the Undergraduate Committee who will make the ultimate determination regarding the award of honors.

Sample Timetable:

1. January 30th: rough draft 1 shown to supervising professor and Seminar Instructor
2. March 1: rough draft 2 shown to supervising professor and Seminar Instructor
3. March 15: complete draft shown to supervising professor and Seminar Instructor
4. Last week of March/First week of April: Oral Defense of Research Paper