

## **Pointers about the O’Neill Honors Thesis:**

The O’Neill Honors Thesis is intended to be a high quality 25-35 page paper dealing with a topic of mutual interest to the student and to his/her thesis advisor. In the very first week, it’s key to set up a meeting with your thesis advisor to get the ball rolling for the rest of the semester. In that session, you can usually hammer-out a meeting schedule for the term, like, e.g., meeting every other week for 45-60 minutes.

In the first week, and no later than the second, you and your faculty advisor should draft a syllabus for the course. The syllabus should map out the broad contours of the question you are pursuing and a timeline for getting work done, e.g., due dates for a problem statement; outline; bibliography; introduction; full draft; final draft. Generally, by the time of your second meeting with your advisor, you will have drafted an abstract for your thesis that specifies a research question and some key bibliographic resources that you expect to use in your research. In all likelihood, there will be one or two drafts of this key output before you and your faculty advisor are satisfied. It’s critical for you to identify a research question that is at once manageable, but that is also analytically-rich (not just a summary or sketch or overview of a problem) and original. Naturally, the project should be interesting to you, too.

The first third of the semester is the time to do the vast majority of your research for the project. In most cases, this will be library-based research, and perhaps, some “field” research, i.e., if your project has a local context involved. Travelling to collect data poses some problems for a project that’s due in just four months and should be thoroughly outlined with your faculty advisor.

Before spring break (or for students writing in the fall, before T-giving), a full rough draft of thesis should be turned in. You need to leave your faculty advisor with enough time to turnaround comments on your draft. The final draft is typically due in the last week of the term or early during finals period.

As the project is coming to a close, it is customary for students to give an oral presentation of their work one-on-one to their faculty advisor. But in addition, an important intellectual and educational function of the honors program are students’ presentation of their theses to fellow honors students and to any faculty and staff who are interested in their work. This “community” presentation takes place sometime during the last month of the semester. We realize that not all students will have final drafts of their theses ready by then. Nevertheless, they usually have enough work done to give good presentations of their work.