

Syllabus

HNR 325: Honors Thesis Orientation

Tuesdays, 11:00 & 1:00, both APSC 212

Wednesdays, 2:00 (BH 112) & 4:00 (APSC 212)

Dr. Gavin Keulks (he/him/his), keulks@wou.edu

Honors thesis webpage: <http://www.wou.edu/honors/thesis.php>

Course Description & Objectives

By all accounts, HNR 325 is a difficult class to describe, teach, and take. Some of you have no thesis topics; others already have topics and advisors. Your topics are also so diverse that what works for one student (say, in the liberal arts) won't work for another student (in the sciences). SO ... what learning outcomes/goals will we strive to accomplish this term?

1. Make sure each of you has an **interesting, workable topic** that identifies a) your scholarly methods; b) your argument or main focus; and c) your "so what" answers.
2. Make sure each of you refines/focuses your ideas into manageable shape.
3. Make sure each of you has approached a professor who could be your **project advisor**.
4. Make sure each of you has **begun researching** your subject. If your subject involves field research or data harvesting, then you should develop an action – and possibly IRB – plan for that as well.
5. Make sure each of you has started to conceptualize the **organization** of a) your thesis proposal and b) your actual thesis.

Required Texts

None! Expect handouts and Moodle posts featuring past student work, but your ideas are the only "text" for this class, as is completely appropriate for a thesis prep class.

Required Work

A completed thesis proposal, usually five pages, single-spaced, and formatted into sections.

Important note: any student is free to work ahead as rapidly in this course as s/he wants to: when you have completed a full thesis proposal that I approve, then you can stop attending this class (if approved). I may even route it to the Honors Committee early.

Grade Calculation

All grades in HNR 325 are tentative until your work is reviewed during an Honors Committee meeting. The final grade will be based on a combination of factors including a) the timely progression and quality of your work during HNR 325; b) attendance; c) the extent and quality of your revisions and d) the committee's review of your work.

Tentative Weekly Calendar

Based on numerous factors, especially student feedback from past terms, I'm going to mix things up this fall, including changing the sequencing of material and adopting an occasionally online framework. Expect this tentative schedule to be revised depending on student progress and professorial discretion.

Remember too: if you already have a clearly delineated topic and perhaps an advisor, then you are free to move as quickly as you want through this syllabus. Some students have submitted full thesis proposals as early as week five of the term.

9/28-29: Course introduction and overview. Discuss Honors Committee evaluation requirements & criteria. Begin Discussing topic refinement/selection. **Assignment for Weeks 2 and 3:** Complete Topic Brainstorming Worksheet, Topic Generation Prompts, and Types of Thesis Projects PDF. Submit Topic Brainstorming Worksheet. Some things to consider:

- Have you written a paper for a class that you could expand?
- What was your favorite class? Why?
- Have you wished that a class would be taught in one of your favorite subjects? If you could teach it, what would you emphasize?
- Have any current events or news stories captivated you?
- What study abroad or volunteer/service learning projects have you participated in? This is a remarkably fertile topic field ...

10/5-6: Week 2: **No Face-to-Face Class**. **Assignment for Week 3:** Check email for asynchronous material (likely past year's thesis proposal PDFs) and further topic refinement instructions.

10/12-13: Week 3: Discuss past theses, especially research design, methodology, scope, and IRB. **Assignment for Weeks 4-5:** If you haven't already done so, begin **seriously** researching your topic and compiling a bibliography. This will include both primary and secondary sources. You're seeking 10 good sources, not just 10 sources. Do your database searches and order appropriate works THIS WEEK. Also, if you haven't yet done so, feel free to discuss your topic with 1-2 faculty members who could become a thesis advisor. When thinking about possible advisors, consider:

- Faculty members who have expertise in your area
- Faculty whom you respect, get along with, and whose classes you enjoyed. Often the people who motivate us to do well in their classes can also motivate us to finish our theses.
- Faculty members from whom you have taken 2-3 classes. It is allowable to expand a paper from an earlier class into a thesis ...

- If you're truly at a loss, consider speaking with the head of the appropriate department (or division), who might be able to recommend different faculty.
- If you already have a thesis advisor, please meet with him/her to ensure you're both on the same page.

10/19-20: Week 4: Discuss IRB, Annotated Bibliographies, and Personal Interest Sections. Workshop Personal Interest Section. **Assignment for Weeks 6-7:**

- 1) If not finished in workshop, finish your personal interest section
- 2) Also finish your annotated bibliography
- 3) If you still haven't approached a professor about becoming an advisor, please do so this week.

10/26-27: Week 5: **No Face-to-face Class.** Check email for asynchronous material and assignment.

11/2-3: Week 6: Discuss the Methods/Process section. **Assignment for Weeks 7 & 8:**

- 1) Draft your Methods/Process section (250 words)
- 2) Continue drafting/revising your other sections.

11/9-10: Week 7: Discuss Larger Context section. **Assignment for Weeks 8 & 9:** Draft your Larger Context section. Also catch up on any lagging assignments.

11/16-17: Week 8: Discuss Abstracts and Titles. Revisit Larger Context, if needed.

11/23-24: Week 9: **No Class (Thanksgiving Holiday).**

11/30-12/1: Week 10: Course conclusion and leftovers. **Assignment for finals week:**

- 1) Finish all sections of your thesis proposal and email to keulksg@wou.edu in Word or Pages by the due date we'll determine. I'll then read over this "final" draft and request any further changes.
- 2) VERY IMPORTANT: also email your proposal to your thesis advisor for their approval.

Finals week: "Final" draft due over email. Please note that this won't be a true "final" draft because all of you will have to make revisions over holiday break and even into winter term. H 303 does not end with the end of the term: it only ends when your proposal has been approved by both me and your advisor. This regularly stretches into January and February.

Disability Accommodations

WOU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering full participation for all students. Please notify your instructor if there are aspects of the instruction or design resulting in barriers to your participation.

Disability related accommodations are determined through the Office of Disability Services (ODS). If you, as a student, believe you may be eligible for disability related accommodations please contact ODS, they would be happy to work with you. ODS notifies students and faculty members of approved academic accommodations and coordinates implementation of accommodations.

APSC 405 (office) / 503-838-8250 / <https://wou.edu/disabilityservices> / ods@wou.edu

COVID-19 Information

COVID-19 is an ongoing, dynamic situation that may change during any given term, leading to changes in rules and guidance. Find up-to-date information at:

Western Oregon University: wou.edu/coronavirus
Oregon Health Authority: govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19
CDC: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov

Vaccinations

All students who take in-person classes or who will spend time on campus are required to be fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus or submit an exemption before the start of classes. Please contact the Student Health and Counseling Center (SHCC; 503-838-8313, health@wou.edu) if you have questions about how to submit proof of vaccination or claim an exemption. Further instructions can be found on SHCC's website at www.wou.edu/health.

Vaccination against COVID-19 remains one of the best ways to protect your health and the health of our community. At least one vaccine has now received full approval by the FDA. For more information on COVID-19 vaccines, including how you can get vaccinated, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>

Masks and Face Coverings

The purpose of WOU's Mask Policy (https://www2.wou.edu/nora/policy.entry.view_policy/?ppolicyid=1077) is to promote the health and safety of students, staff, faculty and the broader community. The State of Oregon and Western Oregon University require that masks or face coverings be worn when indoors on campus (Monmouth and Salem), except when you are actively eating, drinking or engaged in public speaking. If you are alone in an enclosed room (i.e., with four walls, ceiling and a closed door), you can remove your mask. Masks or face coverings should be worn in combination with other measures, such as physical distancing, proper hand washing and vaccinations. Masks or face coverings are also required outdoors, if physical distancing cannot be maintained.

If you have concerns about the behaviors of students, faculty, or staff, please discuss your concerns with an instructor, a staff member, or your resident advisor. You may also report your concerns to Campus Public Safety here: <https://form.jotform.com/200826499819065>

Be prepared for the possibility of remote delivery

Due to ever-changing conditions with COVID-19, students and faculty should be prepared for the possibility that fully in-person and hybrid courses might be switched to remote delivery at any time.

Classroom Behavior Statement

As we return to campus, we need to actively engage in behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 and comply with statewide public health requirements. Therefore, WOU students, faculty, and staff will:

- Wear a face covering or mask that covers both nose and mouth when indoors
- When possible, try to maintain increased physical distancing
- Engage in proper hand washing hygiene
- Self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19, and stay home if you are ill.
- Cooperate with local public health authorities if you contract COVID-19, or are notified that you came into contact with someone who contracted COVID-19
- Comply with directions from local public health authorities to isolate if ill, or quarantine if you have been identified as a contact (fully vaccinated individuals will not need to quarantine unless they have symptoms)

Attendance

In order to facilitate contact tracing in case someone in our class tests positive for COVID-19, attendance will be taken for every class meeting. Please be sure to comply with the system of attendance used by the instructor in your classroom.

In the case of illness that will keep you from attending class, you should submit a Student Absence Notification request form at: www.wou.edu/advising/absence. This form allows the Student Success and Advising office to relay the information regarding your absence to faculty members in a timely manner. The notification sent to your faculty will serve as a courtesy notice and does not excuse your absence. It will still be your responsibility to communicate with your instructor to discuss any work missed during your absence. Information submitted through the Student Absence Notification System must be truthful, in accordance with the Student Code of Responsibility.

What to do if you are contacted by a contact tracer?

Contact tracers call people who may have had contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. We want everyone to feel safe answering the call from a contact tracer.

First, you should know your information is strictly confidential and will be treated as a confidential public health record. Your information will not be shared with other agencies, including immigration officials.

If a contact tracer is unable to reach you, they will leave a voicemail and request that you call back. The voicemail will not contain any health information.

If a contact tracer calls you, here's what ***they will ask***:

- Your name, date of birth and where you live
- If you need an interpreter in a language other than English
- Your race, ethnicity, language and disability information
- If you have any symptoms of COVID-19
- If you need a place to stay, or if you have other needs to help you stay at home
- If they can contact you daily to monitor your symptoms and needs
- If you have been vaccinated or tested

Contact tracers ***will not ask for*** the following information. If anyone calls you requesting the information below, hang up, as they are not part of local or state contact tracing efforts:

- Social security number
- Immigration status
- Credit card number, bank account or billing information

Visit Oregon Health Authority's contact tracing website to learn more about this important public health strategy to slow the spread of COVID-19: <https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-Contact-Collaborative>

What to do if you test positive for COVID-19?

If you test positive for COVID-19, please call the Student Health and Counseling Center (SHCC; 503-838-8313) to inform them of your positive test. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is important for WOU to know about positive tests in our community.

What to do if you are feeling sick?

If you are feeling ill, stay home and do not go to class or work. Please call the WOU Student Health and Counseling Center (SHCC; 503-838-8313), or your preferred health care provider if you experience COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, cough or shortness of breath. Your questions will be answered by phone and if necessary you will be directed to

the best medical option, which might be an in-office visit, telemedicine, or a referral to urgent care. ***It is important that you call first*** as the SHCC will be working with students who have prior appointments and you may unnecessarily expose other students—or yourself be exposed—to COVID-19.

Your health care provider will also determine whether COVID-19 testing is appropriate based on symptoms and test availability in their area. The Oregon Health Authority has published a COVID-19 test site locator to help people in Oregon find testing sites in their community. The interactive

map is available on pages in both English and Spanish and can be toggled into multiple other languages:

healthoregon.org/covid19testing (English)
healthoregon.org/pruebasdecovid19 (Spanish)

You may also call the SHCC if you just have questions about possible exposure to COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19. Any student eligible for services can call the SHCC whether they live on or off campus.

Any student enrolled in one or more credits for in-person or hybrid courses is automatically assessed the SHCC health fee and is eligible to receive care on campus. Students enrolled only in online classes are not assessed the fee and are therefore not eligible for care; however, if you are in Oregon, you can choose to pay the fee to access SHCC services. The fee is \$150 per term. If you are currently out of state, please call the SHCC to see if you are eligible for services because counselors face restrictions on practicing across state borders. Medical providers can only practice in Oregon.

Student Health and Counseling Center

WOU students taking all online classes must opt into the \$150 health service fee to access medical and counseling services at WOU's Student Health and Counseling Center (SHCC). Students taking in-person or hybrid classes will be automatically assessed the above fee and will gain access to SHCC services. For more information, please go to <https://wou.edu/health/> or call the SHCC at (503) 838-8313.

Mental Health Statement

If you experience overwhelming academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings of anxiety or depression, I strongly encourage you to seek support. Remember that getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do – for yourself, for those you care about, and for those who care about you.

- Student Health and Counseling Center (wou.edu/health). Counseling services are free for all WOU students taking at least 1 on-campus credit.
- WOU's Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion program (wou.edu/mental-health).
- For life threatening situations, call 911 or Campus Public Safety (wou.edu/safety) at (503) 838-9000.

Additionally, if a faculty or staff member has concerns about your mental health, they may contact the WOU CARE Team (<https://wou.edu/student/care-team/care-team-information/>) and ask them to reach out to you. The CARE team specializes in helping students who are dealing with issues of bias, trauma, situations involving medical or psychological concerns, and campus emergency situations that directly affect the well-being of students and the campus community at large.

Honors Committee Requirements & Evaluation

Below are the required components of the Honors Thesis Proposal. Depending on your subject and discipline, it is likely that your Methods/Process section (esp. in the sciences) or your Larger Context section (for social sciences and humanities, among others) will be the longest and most important section.

- Working Title
- Advisor Name & Department
- Student Pronouns
- Abstract
- Personal Interest
- Larger Context
- Methods/Process
- Working Bibliography, with Select Annotations (8 sources, 4 annotated)

Evaluation Process

1. All proposals come before the committee anonymously but with advisor names identified. Nearly all theses are evaluated in January and February.
2. The proposal sections are scrutinized by the committee, which determines whether a proposal is rated *acceptable*, *pass with concerns*, or *unacceptable*.
3. The committee's evaluation of the proposal will be paraphrased for you and your advisor.
4. If the committee has significant reservations about your proposal, additional revisions could be required, so please put significant effort into the document.

Explanation & Definition of Sections:

The purpose of a thesis is to articulate and investigate a question that is both personally stimulating, useful to others, and presented in discipline-specific ways. It is a culmination of the student's unbiased research and balanced analysis, sensitive to the arguments on both sides of the rhetorical equation. Students should start not with a presumption but with an observation, then devise a way to seek explanations for that observation. These are the components of a thesis proposal:

Abstract: a thumbnail sketch of the proposal: What questions will you explore? A summary of the main point(s) of each major section of the proposal; not an introduction but rather a synopsis of the project.

Personal Interest: discuss any relevant connections between your project and such things as courses taken, personal or work experiences, hobbies, volunteerism, study abroad, etc.

Larger Context: the "so what" & "who cares" section. When completing this section, it will help to address some of the following questions: Who is the audience? Why is this work important to them? How could your results/project contribute to the discipline? References to two scholarly sources are required in this section.

Methods/Process: What are you doing? How – specifically! – will you do it? Do you have sufficient resources? What will be the end-result? Make sure to define any discipline-specific terminology.