

## Honors in the Major

Interested in pursuing original research in Classics and graduating “With Honors”?

Classics majors with a minimum of a 3.200 GPA overall (both FSU and Cumulative, not rounded to the third decimal place), a 3.400 in coursework in the major, 60 hours of college credit, and at least two semesters remaining before graduation are eligible to write an honors thesis and receive honors in the major at FSU. Honors in the Major is open to all major tracks in the Classics Department.

[Perdomo pic with name, title linked to abstract]

[Robbins pic with name, title linked to abstract]

Consult <https://honors.fsu.edu/honors-major> for the most up-to-date and complete information about the Honors in the Major program.

For more information about Honors in the Major in the Classics Department, review these [Guidelines and Best Practices](#), or contact the Classics Faculty Liaison to the program, Dr. Jessica Clark ([jhclark@fsu.edu](mailto:jhclark@fsu.edu); 850-644-1535).

An acceptable length for honors theses for all of the majors in the Classics department will be 7000-10,000 words/20-30 pages excluding notes, appendices, maps, images, and bibliography. You should defend your thesis **one full month** before graduation (*note that this is earlier than the University’s deadline*), and you must agree in writing to a series of deadlines, in which written work is submitted regularly throughout both terms of course credit. Two missed deadlines will place you on probation, and the third disqualifies you from completing an honors thesis in the department. Theses should be of a high quality, both in terms of the writing and in terms of the argument. It might be helpful to think of your honors thesis as something you would submit as a writing sample to apply to graduate school, or as the expanded version of an article you would submit to [The Owl](#), Florida State’s [Undergraduate Research Journal](#).

In order to write an honors thesis, you will register for two terms of Honors Work with a supervising professor (usually CLA 4909). **Before your first of these two terms**, you will choose a topic and work out a timeline with an advisor. These deadlines are departmental, and are earlier than the deadlines set by the Honors in the Major program. You are responsible for meeting the University’s deadlines as well.

Supposing a spring graduation, the process would look like this:

January of junior year: Interested and eligible students begin to think about topics

February-March of junior year: Student contacts supervisory faculty members and develops topic; student puts together committee, which approves a **300-500-word outline**

This corresponds to the HITM “[Application Semester](#)” [*note required forms and deadlines there*]

April-May of junior year: Faculty supervisor and student create a **detailed timeline** for research and writing

Summer after junior year: Student begins preliminary research independently

Fall of senior year: Student registers for three hours of Honors Work in Classics (CLA 4909), submits formal proposal and begins writing thesis

This corresponds to the HITM “[Prospectus Semester](#)” [*note requirements and deadlines there*]

Spring of senior year: Student registers for three hours of Honors Work in

Spring Semester, Classics registrar for three hours of honors work in Classics (CLA 4909), writes, edits and defends thesis.

This corresponds to the HITM “[Defense Semester](#)” [*note requirements and deadlines there*]

**Choosing a topic:** One of the daunting things about working in Classics is that much of the material we study is very old, and this means it has been thought about by a lot of people before you. So the *goal* is to develop an argument which is original as well as plausible, but that may not be wholly possible in the time you have. As you start thinking of topics, begin with something that interests you. Before you begin the process, do a little preliminary research on the topic you’re interested in (feel free to ask faculty for some reading suggestions). What kind of scholarship is being done on coinage in the colonies or provinces? What do scholars think about the relationship between Seneca’s philosophy and his tragedies? Your very first ideas are likely to be obvious, and probably well-treated, but that doesn’t mean they are unacceptable; it merely means you need to keep thinking about how you might approach the problem or question differently from what has been done before.

It is very likely that your first ideas will also be too big; this is natural because you are probably not familiar with the vast body of scholarship in a particular area. Narrow your topic down, more than you think you should – not “gods in epic” but two or three gods in one epic; not “statues of women” but statues of one dynasty’s empresses, in one geographical area; not “Alexander’s foreign policy” but how Alexander dealt with taxes in two or three regions – the more you learn about a topic, the more you will see that specifics are the way to make your argument persuasive.

**Choosing a director:** Choose by your Thesis Director not by their reputation or the reputation of their students, but by a close match of your and their research interests, working methods, and/or expertise. If there is a faculty member with whom you wish to work, but you are not sure if your and their areas of experience will overlap, talk to them about it and consider asking them to serve as a committee member, but not as a director. [More information is available here.](#)

**Soliciting a committee:** There is nothing wrong with asking faculty for advice about topics you are considering, especially as you are narrowing them down. But when the time comes to present your final topic and ask a faculty member to be on your committee, remember that faculty have limited time available. Aim to “pitch” your topic in the most complete and sophisticated form you can manage. You might even develop a short oral presentation (but it should under no circumstances be longer than five minutes). Specificity at this point will help faculty to see whether your topic is viable, and if they are suitable for your committee.

**Writing the thesis:** The earlier you begin writing, the better: revision is absolutely central to the process of engaging in scholarly research. But honesty is also necessary – do yourself the courtesy of evaluating your arguments as objectively as you can, and be ready to remove those which are not persuasive. This part of the process will develop through communication with your advisor and your committee; be sure to consult the Department’s **Best Practices for an Honors Thesis in Classics** (LINK TO PAGE) for more information.