Procedures for admission to the PWAD Honors Thesis program

Successfully completing an honors thesis in any discipline is a mark of high scholarly achievement. Standards and expectations are high, and it is not to be taken lightly. Before beginning the program students should already have had some experience researching and writing a substantial paper (20pp or more). Furthermore, a thesis is expected to 1. Utilize primary sources or some other form of original research, and 2. Present a unique and innovative argument based on that evidence and which contributes to advancing the discipline. An honors thesis is not a summary of a problem, or a synthesis of others’ arguments. It must be original and contributory. Enrollment in the program will be capped, and selection for admission will be competitive.

To aid students in preparing to write a thesis and to further clarify the Curriculum’s standards, as of Spring 2011, the following procedures must be followed by students seeking admission to the PWAD Honors Thesis program.

1. Eligibility: Majors must have at least a 3.3 grade point average in the major through their junior year. Interested students must also have taken a PWAD 690, a HIST 391-397, or a parallel course in another discipline providing an appropriate background in research design.

2. Application: By the end of the first week of March in the spring preceding their senior year, students must submit an application (by email is fine) to the chair of the Curriculum, containing the following information.
   A. Name
   B. Projected Thesis Title
   C. Current GPA and GPA in the major
   D. The course number, title, and semester taken of the course which fulfills the eligibility requirement above.
   E. The name and email address of their thesis advisor.
   F. An email or note from their thesis advisor indicating their willingness to serve in that capacity.
   G. Approximately ½ to 1 page discussion of the proposed topic, indicating the research question, the research methods, and the proposed sources. If travel is required, you should indicate how/when you would conduct that travel.

3. Courses: Students admitted to the program then enroll in PWAD 691H and 692H in consecutive semesters (usually the fall and spring). They should coordinate a schedule of turning in material (drafts, outlines, etc.) with their advisor, since a grade is required each semester. Students who do not demonstrate adequate progress in 691H will not be allowed to enroll in 692H.

4. Defense: The thesis must be defended orally before a committee of at least two faculty (one being their advisor). If appropriate, a third faculty reviewer can be added in order to confer “highest honors” on a particularly outstanding thesis.