

Art History Guidelines for the Senior Honors Projects (as of 31 March 2011)

The senior honors project is a masters-level project taking place over the last three semesters of the student's undergraduate career. It is a capstone experience that is excellent preparation for graduate school and demonstrates independent work to prospective employers.

Students qualify for the senior honors project based on the threshold cumulative GPA set by the Honors Program. In addition, art history requires a minimum 3.5 GPA in the major.

Typically, students must begin the project three semesters before graduation, and all three semesters should be in residence in Harrisonburg unless otherwise agreed with the professors on the project committee. Students planning to pursue study abroad, internships, or other educational experiences away from Harrisonburg should plan accordingly.

Students must register for all three semesters of ARTH 499 as semester-long courses. ARTH 499a is a one-credit course in the first semester; ARTH 499b is a three-credit course in the second semester; ARTH 499c is a two-credit course in the third semester. Exceptions to this format must be approved by the area coordinator. Registration takes place with the art history area coordinator rather than through e-campus. The area coordinator approves registration for ARTH 499 only when the student has obtained a written agreement with the JMU art history or museum studies professor. The student should seek advice about who to recruit as committee members from professors within their major and the departmental honors liaison. The student should seek advice about the start and completion deadlines as well as format requirements of the final paper from the Honors Program's staff and webpage.

The length and structure of the final project, as well as research goals and the deadlines for drafts, and other scholarly expectations should be based on discussions with the primary advisor and the committee members and outlined in the proposal. Students should meet weekly with the primary advisor and consult regularly with the other two committee members. Recently completed projects may serve as models, subject to the recommendation of the advisor. All past senior projects are listed on the Honors Program webpage and circulate through the JMU library system. As of May 2010, all honors projects have been submitted in digital form. Students are encouraged to work on their projects during the summer between junior and senior year but should discuss expectations regarding research goals and communication with the primary advisor. Only under exceptional circumstances and only with the written permission of the area coordinator, project committee members and the Honors Program director may a student complete the project in the summer.

Final papers should demonstrate use and analysis of primary and secondary source materials. Students are encouraged to use archival materials at regional museums, libraries, and historic sites, where this is possible and subject to the advice of the advisor. Museum studies projects should demonstrate the student's work with a gallery, museum or exhibition site and may include a curatorial or support role in the production of an exhibition. Students are encouraged to present their senior projects at undergraduate and professional seminars, forum, and conferences, although this is not a requirement for completion.