



Overview

The Honors Program in International Relations offers outstanding IR concentrators the opportunity to undertake original research and to write a thesis on a pressing global problem as their capstone project. The Honors Program is for students with a passionate interest in an international issue who wish to take on the challenges of a senior thesis. Students work under the guidance of two faculty advisors while completing two thesis courses senior year.

Recommendation for Honors

The IR Honors Program is intellectually demanding and time-consuming; students should be willing to devote a substantial part of their senior year to the thesis. Honors applicants must have taken a thoughtful, challenging, sequence of IR courses and demonstrate sufficient background on the topic (through coursework or study abroad, for example). Students are required to demonstrate advanced capacity in a second language in their thesis, through interviews and use of scholarly journals or other original materials.

Honors is awarded by the College Curriculum Council based on a recommendation by the IR Advisory Committee. Honors is not awarded by the College retroactively. Students who fail to complete their thesis by the IR Program deadline will not receive honors, even if they complete all requirements at a later time. If a thesis is turned in late but before the end of the term, credit and a grade for the thesis work may still be granted; however, the student will not receive honors.

Completion of the thesis does not assure the granting of Honors. The IR Advisory Committee makes a recommendation on Honors, which is subject to approval from the College Curriculum Council and Brown Faculty vote.

Eligibility

1. Sixth semester IR concentrator (fifth semester for mid-year graduates).
2. Majority quality grades (As or an S with a Course Performance Report indicating a grade of A) in IR courses taken on the Brown campus (excluding language courses and study abroad), of which there must be at least six.
3. Completed POLS0400 or 200, two additional core courses, and the research methods course prior to senior year.
4. Majority quality grades in all coursework done for the B.A. at Brown.
5. Demonstrated preparation: completion of a challenging sequence of coursework on the topic, appropriate methods and second language skills, and writing preparation (WRIT courses and term papers).
6. Primary Faculty advisor must be **unequivocally** selected by application deadline. Application must be signed by the primary thesis advisor. Students are *strongly* encouraged to obtain the signature of the 2nd reader by this time. Students who do not have a 2nd reader by the middle of September, senior year, are unable to continue in the program.
7. Completed application submitted by the deadline. **Late applications are not accepted.**



*The honors seminar has been, without a doubt, the **most intellectually stimulating experience I have had at Brown.** I have learned about the conventions of scholarly research, improved my writing, and learned a host of new academic skills -- from how to conduct a Literature Review to how to craft a research design.*

*The course helped develop writing skills and taught the fundamentals of proposal writing. It illuminated the different facets of thesis writing but focused on advancing the legitimacy of the writer by improving the **quality of students' writing.** It was an incredible experience.*



Preparation

Qualified students should start thinking about their topic and thesis committee well before the application deadline—early in their junior year. Because the thesis is the student's individual research project and not one assigned by a faculty member for a course, students should spend some time formulating a research topic and research question prior to soliciting a thesis advisor. Interested students are also encouraged to discuss their ideas with the honors seminar instructor, the IR directors, and track advisors.

Preparing to write a thesis also includes good planning in terms of coursework. One should avoid leaving core courses to senior year and should seek seminars across the disciplines to fulfill or supplement IR requirements.

Seminars give you not only research and writing practice but also, in the case that a seminar covers a topic related to your thesis, advancement in your knowledge of the topic as well as faculty feedback. The faculty member teaching the class may be an ideal thesis advisor and, indeed, be more likely to so because he or she knows you and your work.

Other considerations come into play as well. Doing a double concentration, studying abroad for more than one semester, and extra-curricular activities can place limitations on your course schedule and planning. Under no circumstances should you write a thesis as a 5th class. Writing an honors-quality thesis typically requires a time commitment equivalent to 1-2 courses/semester.

Timeline

