

HONORS STANDARDS INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PROGRAM

Requirements: Students must take 4800 prior to the semesters they want to orally defend.

An honors thesis done in International Affairs has certain qualities that make it unique among the social sciences that make up the degree. This document is meant to clarify the necessary elements of an IA thesis as well as outline the expectations specific to a Summa, Magna and Cum Laude award.

General Guidelines

Students writing an IA thesis are expected to come up with a question that has contemporary international implications. While it is expected that each student will have a particular disciplinary focus for their research - some students will primarily use an economic lens while others may use an historical lens, and the primary advisor often plays a key role in determining that lens - in both the sources consulted and the analysis that follows, IAFS students are expected to be interdisciplinary in their approach. The more disciplines they can utilize in a legitimate way, the better. At the same time, we do not want students needlessly consulting sources that do not make sense for their study.

Once an appropriate question has been determined, the student is expected to examine a broad range of existing literature related their topic. They should thoroughly understand the basis for further study and plan to add to the existing academic conversation around their project.

Finally, once the student has figured out the kernel of the thesis and mastered the appropriate literature, we expect her to show how her project relates to IA theory and/or contemporary global issues. Obviously, this goal is a fairly abstract one and some theses lend themselves more easily to this type of analysis. Ideally, however, all students will be able to connect their particular topic to the realm of international affairs. In this way, the project will distinguish itself from a similar project rooted in a single discipline.

Specific Latin Designations

A degree awarded **summa cum laude** should represent outstanding work. To that end, IA requires the following standards for awarding the designation of **summa cum laude**.

In order to be considered for **summa cum laude**, the student must have an excellent GPA (preferably above 3.8).

1. The thesis must break new ground in the field; it must say something original that goes beyond the existing literature. This may or may not mean it is publishable, but this should be a possibility (with revisions, for example).

2. It must be extremely well-written, showing mastery of English grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. It should be well-organized, well-argued, and analytic.
3. The research needs to be exhaustive.
 - A. The student must have covered everything in the related fields of study. This also may mean that the student goes beyond normal library research in published material. The thesis may include work in unpublished documents gathered from a variety of sources, such as archives, organizations, or individuals. Other aspects of original research may include interviews with participants in events or various experts in the field.
 - B. Alternatively, students should demonstrate exemplary mastery of rigorous quantitative methods of inquiry applied to the statistical analysis of systematically collected data sets, or the construction of theoretical or computer simulation models.

A **magna cum laude** designation should be awarded for excellent work. A student must obtain a good GPA (preferably above 3.5), have an excellent defense, and write an excellent thesis. To be considered for a **magna cum laude** designation:

1. The thesis must demonstrate mastery of the literature in the field and say something that adds to the literature.
2. The thesis must be very well-written and grammatically correct. It should be organized, with a clear argument.
3. The thesis must cover the related fields of study. This may mean that the student goes beyond normal library research to include work in unpublished documents. The student may also conduct other original research such as interviews, surveys, or quantitative methods of inquiry applied to the statistical analysis of data sets, or the construction of theoretical or computer simulation models.

A **cum laude** designation should be awarded for good work. In order to be considered for **cum laude**, a student must maintain a GPA of at least 3.3, have a solid defense, and write a thesis that meets the following criteria:

1. The thesis must present a clear argument.
2. The thesis must be well-written and grammatically correct.
3. The research needs to cover the related fields of study and address the body of literature in those fields.

No honors will be recommended if the criteria for a **cum laude** thesis are not met.