This is a quick guide for Honors students who are interested in the Honors Thesis course or curious about what students can do in advance to prepare for the course. It is very helpful to understand the expectations and the process of the course in advance, and imagine what you might be able to do to effectively utilize this opportunity to ultimately enrich your academic career, professional experience, and/or personal interests, which means that you will need time to reflect on your academic path to date and explore your own ideas for the future. You will be spending two semesters of hard work, but you can produce something very special to you and others, thus it is worth thinking deeply about “what” you want to do for your Honors Thesis.

The following information was extracted mainly from the course syllabus to provide you with the basic course framework, objectives, and requirements. In addition, notes are included in red in some areas to point out some of the items you might be able to do (or think about at least) before starting the course.

We look forward to hearing about your thesis project!

I. The Culminating Honors Experience

The mission of the Honors College is to develop tomorrow's leaders by providing first-rate educational opportunities to the most highly motivated, intellectually curious, and academically accomplished students at USF. For this reason, the Honors College aims for you to develop an independent identity as a citizen scholar: a producer of knowledge with beneficial societal impact.

A key objective of the thesis experience is to expose you to the kind of mentoring relationship you might experience in graduate school. Thus, your most important activities will be the development and maintenance of a meaningful working relationship with your thesis chair.

II. University Course Description

The development of a thesis in the form of a creative, applied, or scholarly research project under the direction of a mentor. Course is taken for 2 semesters.

III. Course Purpose

Thesis Chair: You are expected to meet with your thesis chair throughout the thesis process. You are responsible for initiating, scheduling, and being prepared to discuss and update your chair on the thesis process. It is a good idea to keep a log of all meetings.

Since the focus of this course is on the process, you are expected to submit multiple drafts of your work to your thesis chair in order to receive appropriate feedback prior to submission of the final thesis. Make sure to set the schedule with your thesis chair at the very first meeting of the second semester of your thesis.
Semester One: The central focus should be on the relationship with your thesis chair. With them you will consequently hone the process, development, planning and commencement of your creative, applied, or scholarly research project. Regardless of format, the central aim is for you to practice the mechanics of moving from idea to active inquiry. It is precisely this craft that we want students to understand and experience in this first sequence of the 6 credits. Depending on the nature of the project, you might generate a research question, literature review, methodological approach and begin preliminary inquiry.

*As you can see above, one of the most critical items will be finding your thesis chair with whom you will want to build a good working relationship, which might take time. Thus, start looking for your prospective thesis chair early so that you can visit them and discuss research opportunities and their availability—legwork is very important at this stage and in-person meetings and interactions are more effective! It is also good to have a thesis committee who can give you additional mentorship, and more importantly, another perspective and feedback on your thesis. Therefore, you should meet with more than one faculty member. The College prefers that the second person is a faculty member, but we have allowed advanced doctoral candidates to serve on thesis committees.

Who/What is a thesis chair?
Your thesis chair is the faculty member who will mentor you through the thesis process. You will meet with this person on a regular basis to determine such things like the purpose of your research, methods of inquiry, developing a prospectus, developing a reading list, conducting your research/creating art, etc., writing your thesis paper, obstacles, questions, changes in direction, and more. This person will be with you from beginning to end. Thus, you should make sure to confirm that they will be available to work with you during the term when you will take IDH 4970 Thesis II (9 month faculty may not be available in the summer). Your thesis chair must have the following:

- Significant experience in the area of your investigation
- A terminal degree (PhD, M.D., J.D., MFA, MArch., etc.)
- Be a USF full-time faculty member (graduate students are not eligible to serve in the role of thesis chair).

Semester Two: Continue development of your project, the process of revising approaches (if necessary), responding to challenges, analysis of findings, and then articulation of the entire experience. This might include data collection, performance or product testing and development, as well as detailed written analysis of any of these. You will complete a final digital artifact that builds on work from the previous semester. This is a substantive and culminating reflection of your undergraduate Honors experiences and should thus be your absolute best work.

*It is important to consider what you want to investigate and what you want to produce at the end (e.g. traditional research paper, business plan, artistic visual work, performance, community engagement plans & actions, etc.)—do this BEFORE meeting with your prospective thesis chair(s). However, you do NOT need to have all of the answers. Use your meeting opportunities to brainstorm your ideas—be prepared for your meeting (know the faculty background and explore your research interests & project ideas) but be open-minded for new ideas!

IV. Course Objectives
- Conduct an original inquiry or investigation in the form of a creative, applied, or scholarly research project
- Use established disciplinary methods and frameworks to develop an approach to investigate
- Execute a project to completion captured in a digital artifact (written, audio, or video) appropriate to the disciplinary practice
- Establish meaningful relationship with thesis mentor to engage in writing and revision process (cumulative minimum of 4500 words)

V. Student Learning Outcomes
1. Students will engage in meaningful critical reflection in required coursework.
2. Under professional oversight, students will utilize contextually-appropriate behaviors, tools, techniques and/or dispositions.
3. Students will integrate discipline-specific knowledge into the contextualized experience.
4. Students will synthesize discipline-appropriate learning via a culminating assignment.

VI. Major Topics
   - Research Methods
   - Writing and Revision
   - Literature Review

*You should look into the question of “what is research” and explore “how people actually conduct a research project” by reading books on Research Methodology. Various university libraries offer useful resources [e.g. http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/purpose](http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/purpose) and you can analyze multiple research articles from varying disciplines. What you look for is your “own way” of researching—some students may like more historical research while others may prefer interactions with people or creative processes.

VII. General Education Statement
This course is part of the University of South Florida's Enhanced General Education Curriculum. It is certified for Research. Students enrolled in this course will be asked to participate in the USF General Education assessment effort. This will involve submitting copies of writing assignments for review via Canvas.

VIII. Integration of This Course into Your Academic Experience
Skills and capacities developed in this course will be important for your first job, graduate school, or advanced education. The thesis process emphasizes developing independence in your inquiry as well as experiencing the kind of mentoring relationship you might get in graduate school. Being able to articulate what you did in your thesis project, particularly why and how, is an incredibly important form of storytelling about who you are and what skills you have; your story is especially relevant in medical school applications, graduate school application, or pursuing career opportunities in the workforce.

IX. Undergraduate Research Attribute
This course is attributed as an Undergraduate Research Course (UGR) for integrating the high-impact practice of research which has been found to benefit students from varied backgrounds (AAC&U LEAP). The Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) defines this as follows: an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline. In this course, you will conduct a project that enables you, individually or in groups, to pose or work from a defined research question, apply methods of inquiry to generate findings, and share the findings with others through presentation and/or publication.

Information about the Optional 0-Credit Research Course Associated with this Course
Students who participate in an UGR course may select to co-enroll in a 0-credit (S/U graded) research course to archive the research experience on the transcript. There is no cost associated with the course, and enrollment does not interfere with degree requirements. The 0-credit research course does not fulfill or contribute to the Enhanced General Education requirements of USF.

Interested in the 0-credit option? Here’s what you need to do:
1) Prior to the end of the first week of class inform your instructor that you would like to enroll in the 0-credit course.
2) You will be contacted by the OUR (via e-mail) with registration instructions. Please register as soon as you receive instructions and registration is time sensitive.
3) Check Oasis to confirm registration
4) Once you submit your final project, your instructor will assign your grade in Canvas.

*Tip! - You need to have your Thesis Chair to take the optional 0-credit course above. However, you can take the OUR Research Readiness Badging Course in advance. Although this is not required for your Honors Thesis, it might be helpful if you are not familiar with the concept of research. (Course Info: [https://www.usf.edu/undergrad/undergraduate-research/events-programs/canvascourse.aspx](https://www.usf.edu/undergrad/undergraduate-research/events-programs/canvascourse.aspx))
X. **Required Texts and/or Readings and Course Materials**
Provided online as needed through Canvas. *However, you are the one who is in charge of finding most of the readings for this course throughout the semester. Thus, it is helpful for you to start looking for articles and books related to your potential thesis topic(s)!*

XII. **Assignments & Schedule**

**SEMESTER 1**
- Week 1: First-Day Attendance (Quick Survey)
- Week 1: Identify Prospective Thesis Chair
- Week 2: Annotated Bibliography
- Week 3: Interview Prospective Thesis Chair
- Week 5: Confirm Thesis Chair
- Week 10: Draft Prospectus: Depending on the nature of the research question, the submission might include an abstract, literature review, methodology section, thesis outline, and timeline for completion of work.
- Week 12: Final Prospectus: Completing the final document, in which the student has taken into account feedback from their thesis mentor to improve the effectiveness of their written communication and research plan.

*As you can see from the schedule above, the first month is packed with quick activities. An Annotated Bibliography is something you can easily start in advance—this exercise will expose you to different types of research, current research trends, creative project ideas, historical information, statistics, etc. The harder you work in the first semester, the easier your life will be in the second semester—more time for analysis and writing!*

**SEMESTER 2**
Students continue to build on the work completed in Semester 1. Scaffolding assignments include:

- Week 1: First-Day Attendance (Quick Survey)
- Week 7: Draft Thesis: Depending on the nature of the research question, the submission might include an abstract, introduction, background, literature review, methodology section, analysis, expected outcomes, etc.
- Week 10: Final Thesis: It is the final and complete thesis itself, in which the student has taken into account feedback from their thesis mentor to improve the effectiveness of their written communication and demonstrates continued development of his/her project, the process of revising approaches (if necessary), responding to challenges, analysis of findings, and then articulation of the entire experience. This might include data collection, performance or product testing and development, as well as detailed written analysis of any of these. The student will submit a final digital artifact that builds on work from the previous semester. This is a substantive and culminating reflection of his/her undergraduate Honors experiences.

*Please note that the final submission is early in order for your thesis chair to carefully review your final thesis and grade it on time.*

XIII. **Assessment**
Grading for the Final Prospectus (section 001)/Final Thesis (section 002) is completed by the thesis mentor. The Thesis Course Director assigns complete/incomplete grades for all other assignments in the course. You will receive an individual grade (A+ to F) for each thesis course, determined by your thesis chair. You will earn Honors distinction if the grades from your two thesis semesters average a B- or above. A two-semester thesis average between a C+ and a D will earn credit for the courses, but will not fulfill the Honors College requirements.