

How to apply to write a GWS Honors Thesis

If you are a junior interested in writing a GWS BA thesis, here are the steps you should take to apply to the GWS Honors program:

I. Write a proposal describing your planned research for your honors thesis. The proposal should include:

- Your research topic (in general terms)
- Your research question or focus (what specifically you intend to focus on)
- A statement about why this question is important (to you, and/or to the field of GWS)
- A statement of how this thesis project is appropriate to the Gender and Women's Studies major
- Your proposed methodology for researching this topic (what original research you intend to do) with a justification: why this methodology?
- An annotated bibliography with at least 5 academic sources (academic journal articles, books, or book chapters) you have read which will begin to inform you about the topic

Proposals should be between 2 and 5 pages, exclusive of the bibliography. If you wrote a research proposal in GWS 101 that reflects your actual goals for your thesis, you may submit that.

II. Find a faculty member who agrees to be your thesis advisor

Ideally, a thesis advisor would be a member of the GWS faculty with an interest in your topic. The department faculty can be found on our department website: [Department Faculty](#). It is often productive to approach a professor who has had you as a student in a class already. You may also ask Continuing Lecturers in the department. If you cannot find a professor in the department who can work with you, you may ask faculty who are core affiliates of the department. The list of affiliated faculty is also on our department website: [Affiliated Faculty | Department of Gender and Women's Studies](#). The instructor of GWS 101 (if you are enrolled in the class) and the Department Chair (if you are not) are available for consultation if you need advice about whom to approach.

When approaching a potential faculty advisor, you should give them your proposal, discuss your idea with them, and tell them why you have chosen them as a potential advisor. You should let them know that the thesis is a full year commitment. You will start the fall working on the research itself, and in the spring you will focus on the writing. While the GWS department Chair will be in charge of convening the GWS H195A and GWS H195B courses, your advisor will be your main academic mentor for the project, will meet regularly with you over the course of the year, and will have primary responsibility for

evaluating the work and final grade, in consultation with the Chair convening GWSH195A/B.

III. If you are enrolled in GWS 101, notify the instructor that you are applying to do an Honors Thesis. If you took GWS 101 before this year, notify the GWS Chair. The proposal should be sent to both of them by email.

If possible, your application should include the proposal and the name of the faculty advisor who has agreed to serve as your thesis advisor. The GWS Honors Committee (composed of the faculty teaching GWS 101 and the GWS department chair who will be running GWS H195 next year) will evaluate your proposal to determine whether this is a viable project for the honors program. **This application is due by the last day of the Spring semester .**

IV. Enroll in GWS 195 for the fall, in case your proposal for the Honors Program is not accepted. You can change your enrollment to GWS H195A when you are notified of admission to the Honors Program.

All GWS majors need to complete *either* GWS 195 *or* GWS H195 A & B. Until you receive approval to enroll in GWS H195A, you should plan on taking the GWS 195 seminar. When you receive approval for honors, you can change your enrollment to GWS H195A. If you are accepted into the Honors program, you will still be able to enroll in GWS 195 in addition as an upper level elective if you wish.

FAQ:

Q: When should I apply for the GWS Honors program?

A: You should apply for the GWS Honors program at the end of the year before your final year at Cal. Please email your proposal to the current instructor of GWS 101 and to the GWS department chair.

Q: What GPA do I need to qualify for the GWS Honors program?

A: You need to have an overall 3.3 GPA, and 3.5 GPA in the major to be admitted into the honors track. The student must receive a minimum of an A- in both GWS H195A and GWS H195B.

Q: What else do I need to qualify for the GWS Honors program?

A: You need to submit the proposal described above. The GWS Honors Committee (composed of the faculty teaching GWS 101 and the GWS department chair who will be running GWS H195 next year) will make the final decision on the proposal.

Q: What if I can't find a thesis advisor?

A: If you have asked at least two members of the GWS faculty and have not been able to secure an advisor for your thesis project, please contact the department Chair.

Q: When will I know if I am admitted to the GWS Honors program?

A: If you hand in your proposal by the end of the Spring semester, and have a faculty member who has agreed to be your advisor, you should be notified by June 15.

Q: What if I can't get my application materials in by the end of the Spring semester?

A: You may ask for permission from the GWS 101 instructor to submit your proposal later than the end of the Spring semester. If the GWS 101 instructor allows this, you should be forewarned that you may find it difficult to secure an advisor if you do not start the process during the academic year (i.e. before mid-May) in the semester before your final year.

Q: How is GWS H195 organized? What are the course expectations?

A: GWS H195 is convened by the department chair but organized and managed by the honors students as a group. The Chair is available for consultation, but the primary work is independent, with advising by a formal advisor and support by the other Honors students. The expectation is that Honors students will dedicate a minimum of 10 hours a week to the thesis, and are sufficiently self-motivated to stay on track without a formal course framework.

Q: What time does GWS H195A meet? I need to plan my schedule.

A: Most of your work for GWS H195 A will be independent, or one-on-one meetings with your advisor scheduled at times that work for both of you. The GWS department Chair will convene the Honors Thesis writers, and they will attempt to retain the times already posted on the course schedule, but the timing of those meetings will ultimately be arranged in consultation with the group of Honors students.

Q: Is this the only way to receive Honors at UC Berkeley?

A: No. The UCB campus [allocates honors](#) based on GPA apart from the major. All graduating students are eligible for campus honors based on their GPA, whether or not they write a thesis. However additional honors in the department reflects the decision to carry out original research and intervene in the field of gender and sexuality studies as a participant in a scholarly conversation.

Q: Is there any funding available to fund my Honors research?

A: Yes. Honors thesis writers are eligible to apply to GWS for up to \$300 to fund thesis research. Applications should be sent to the Department Chair and include a 1-2-page description of the activities to be funded and a budget and will be accepted on a rolling basis.