

How Do I?

Once you have decided to pursue honors and have filled out the form to add the honors block to your DegreeWorks, it is time to get started! Please note the following:

- Students should not wait until their senior year to decide if they would like to graduate with honors. It is not required for students to complete honors courses before enrolling in PS 4509/4510; HOWEVER, it is strongly recommended to do so to ensure that students are aware of the extra work required to graduate with honors.
- Ideally, students should enroll in honors courses during their junior year. PS or CJ 4509 (Thesis Prep) should be completed in your first semester of your senior year, with PS or CJ 4510 (Thesis) completed in your second semester of your senior year.

How do I take honors courses?

- When it is time to begin taking honors classes, the schedule of classes provides information about which classes are designated as honors. There are a limited number of department honors classes taught every semester (and usually none in the summer semester), so students need to register for their honors classes according to the timeline above. You simply register for the courses as you would any other course.
- In some instances, students may not be able to take the listed honors courses in a semester; this is due to schedule conflicts with another course OR the student has taken the honors class already, but in a non-honors format. If this is the case, students may utilize an [honors contract](#) that enables them to work with a faculty member in a scheduled non-honors course, but completing honors-level work in that course. Please contact the Honors Program Director for more information about this option.
- The thesis prep and honors thesis 'courses' are independent study projects with a specific professor. You will not find them listed on the schedule of classes for registration. Once you have determined who your thesis advisor is (see below), then you will register for the course using a special course form.

How do I start thinking about my thesis?

- You should begin exploring issues and subjects to research for their thesis long before graduation. Careful advanced planning is necessary so that internships, other coursework, or study abroad opportunities do not conflict with your ability to complete the thesis. Students should also seize opportunities to get to know their professors and discuss potential thesis topics, or even work with faculty in their own research areas. This will help you gain insight regarding what topic you choose for your thesis, as well making it easier to select your thesis chair and second reader.
- Start thinking about what topics really interest you in your field of study. It can be anything that you covered in a class that you would like to develop a greater understanding about, or something that interests you relevant to your field that wasn't covered. After you've chosen your topic, do a little investigating on the Department of Government and Justice Studies website into the [research interests of faculty](#) you might want to serve as your thesis advisor to see if their area

of specialization is a good match for your project. The decision to approach a particular professor to chair your committee is ultimately yours but try to choose a person who is likely to have expertise in your area.

- You select your own thesis advisor, who will guide you in the research and writing process and assign the final grade. The advisor must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member in either Political Science or Criminal Justice, depending on your major. Rare exceptions to this requirement can be made only with the permission of the Honors Director. In addition to a thesis advisor, you will also select a second reader, who will provide insights from another perspective. Your thesis director can be of assistance in choosing a second reader if you don't have someone in mind.
- The second reader should be given the courtesy to comment on your draft(s), and you can plan for this with your second reader; ideally, he or she is given the final draft at least a week or two before the thesis defense is scheduled. Together, the thesis advisor and second reader will form your thesis committee.

How and when do I sign up for 4509 (Thesis Prep) and 4510 (Thesis)?

The thesis is a two-semester process, so you'll need to take the PS/CJ 4509 thesis prep course (1 credit) the semester before you complete your PS/CJ 4510 honors thesis (3 credits).

- You will register for your thesis prep using a [special course approval form](#). You complete this form after you have chosen your thesis advisor, as their name will appear as the instructor on the form. This form should be completed in the semester PRIOR to the semester for which you are enrolling for 4509 (ideally, when you are registering for classes for the subsequent semester). The 4509 class is graded as S/U. Complete this form and email to your thesis advisor, the chair of the department, and to the honors director.
- Toward the end of your 4509 semester, you need to complete the [honors thesis application form](#) and prospectus. You complete this form after you have completed your thesis prep (4509). The 4510 class is graded as A-F.