



The University of Sydney

**Department of Spanish and Latin
American Studies**

Honours Handbook

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Honours in Spanish and Latin American Studies

The Honours year in Spanish and Latin American Studies is done over two semesters (full-time) or four semesters (part-time) and involves advanced coursework and research that culminates in a thesis on a Spanish or Latin America-related topic. It gives you the opportunity to explore in depth what interests you in Spanish and Latin American Studies. Normal undergraduate courses only give you a glimpse. If you desire to pursue an academic career, Honours is an essential step to Masters and PhD programs. Otherwise it serves usefully to distinguish your Bachelor degree from that of others in the workplace.

Students who have successfully completed and obtained a consistently high level in their Spanish and Latin American Studies major, and who would like to further hone their skills in research, writing and critical analysis will find Honours invaluable.

It is also possible for students to apply for enrolment in joint Honours courses with the special approval of the each department's Honours Coordinator/Chair of Department. The appropriate spread of coursework and thesis will need to be discussed with the Honours Coordinators of the disciplines concerned. In any arrangement, coursework makes up fifty percent of the final Honours mark and the thesis covers the remaining fifty percent.

Prerequisites

Candidates will have completed 48 credit points in Spanish (as a major) with a credit average or better and prior permission of the department. If you do not have the exact prerequisites, but can demonstrate equivalent knowledge and background, the credit point requirement can be waived in certain circumstances.

How to apply

- Look first at the research and supervision areas on the department's website to see what you might choose.
- Make an appointment with the Honours coordinator to discuss the topic.
- Formulate a 200 word outline of your topic/area of interest to submit to the Coordinator; submit in early December (for Semester 1 entry) or early May (for mid-year).
- Present evidence of 48 credit points in Spanish¹ or equivalent to the Coordinator and also the Faculty. Obtain application form from the Faculty.

¹ 36 pts in Spanish language (to advanced level) and 12 pts in Spanish and/or Latin American cultural units.

Important dates

You may begin Honours either at the start of the year in Semester 1 or mid-year in Semester 2. Applications for commencement in semester 1 close end of October the year before commencement. Mid-year applications open in early April and close end of June.

If you start in Semester 1, your thesis is due October 15st of the year you began. If you start in Semester 2, your thesis is due on June 15st of the year after you began.

Structure of the Honours Program

In Spanish and Latin American Studies, the Honours Program is a combined package of study that consists of three elements:

- A thesis of 12,000-15,000 words (excluding footnotes and bibliography) written in Spanish or English (must be written in English if part of a joint program with another department), worth 50 percent of the final Honours grade. The thesis is evaluated by one internal and one external examiner using these four criteria and the Faculty Honours Scale:
 - Overall command of the secondary literature in Spanish, English (and any other language) and demonstration of the ability to use this material to construct an original analysis of primary material in Spanish.
 - Command and analytical use made of a relevant body of primary material in Spanish or Catalan.
 - Command of a particular disciplinary or interdisciplinary approach.
 - Overall quality and originality of the thesis.
- Four semester-length seminar courses on different topics that relate to research and writing in Spanish and Latin American Studies, including the following:
 - Cultural and Critical Theory in Latin American Studies (1st semester, Vek Lewis)
In this course, students will be given an overview of the central paradigms and applications of cultural and critical theory as they have arisen in multiple locations such as Western Europe, North and Latin America. To achieve this, a range of readings of texts from the field will be engaged by students, who will be encouraged to think through socio-political inquiry and its objects of analysis, as well as their own position/s as users, practitioners and producers of the knowledge such inquiry generates.

- Applied Research Methodologies in Latin American/Latino Studies (1st semester, Vek Lewis)
This course exposes students to research methodologies and methodological issues central to socio-political inquiry into subjects and cultural phenomena pertaining to the Americas. Some of the models and approaches have arisen outside the Americas and some are particular to Latin(o) American contexts. The course takes an applied angle to some of the theoretical issues raised in the companion series, also taken in semester 1, Critical and Cultural Theory in Latin American Studies. Detailed exposition of applied methodologies in social and cultural research is undertaken, and in each session we examine articles or projects that have used these models, or a combination of them.

- Travel Writing Studies in the Latin American Context (2nd semester, Fernanda Peñaloza)
This unit of study will focus on the concept of cultural encounter and identity formation in the context of the theme of travel. Following a chronological order, we will explore notions of selfhood and otherness through the reading of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Latin American travel narratives on Africa, Europe and the US. We will examine not only how the travellers deal with the foreign, but also how the places and cultures portrayed in the texts enable them to express ideas about their personal and national identities. Thus, we will reflect on the political and cultural implications of these stories of contact raising questions on concepts such as gender, “race”, class, imperialism, colonialism and modernity.

- TBA – A unit that focuses on aspects of Spain (2nd semester, appointee pending)

- An advanced language course, given by Fernanda Peñaloza, in which you will develop advanced reading, writing and speaking skills in Spanish. This will help you develop the specific target language areas to assist in your research and writing of the Honours thesis.

Attendance requirement

Students are required to attend at least 90% of all classes. If you cannot make a class, please endeavour to advise the tutor in advance. While there is no participation mark for the Honours seminars in which attendance would be counted, given the interactive/workshop nature of the seminars, missing more than 10% of classes would be disadvantageous to your success in the course.

Deadlines

These must be met. If an extension is necessary, this should be sought BEFORE the due date and with appropriate evidence supplied. Marks will be deducted from late work unless students are able to provide documentation of unforeseen circumstances for handing in work late. The standard departmental policy is that ten percentage points are deducted from the mark for every 7 days after the submission date. So, an essay handed in late without an agreed extension that would have received 70 if it had been handed in on time would get 60 if it was handed in between 1-7 days late, 50 for 8-14 days, 40 for 15-21 days, etc.

Academic honesty

Your work must be your own. If you quote from someone else, or paraphrase their argument or point of view, this must be correctly attributed to the original author(s). The department recommends the Harvard system. The University takes the issue of plagiarism very seriously, and has strict regulations with respect to plagiarism. See the following for more information: <http://policy.rms.usyd.edu.au/000003f.pdf>

What is a thesis?

A thesis is an independently written, extended piece of original analytical writing that clearly presents and convincingly supports an argument (the word 'thesis' actually refers to that argument). The 'thesis' must be positioned in a theoretical framework (in which the research question is addressed) and in an existing body of literature, which may be reviewed explicitly, and used as a background to the overall analysis. It may also draw on a significant body of empirical data (gathered from primary or secondary sources, or a combination thereof).

The text of a Spanish and Latin American Studies Honours thesis generally consists of an introduction, three substantive chapters, and a conclusion. However, there are a number of other parts to the thesis. The entire thesis consists of the following:

1. Title page
2. Declaration page
3. Contents page
4. Glossary (if required)
5. Acknowledgments
6. Introduction (between 1,000-2,000 words)
7. Chapter One (between 3,500-4,000 words)
8. Chapter Two (between 3,500-4,000 words)
9. Chapter Three (between 3,500-4,000 words)

10. Conclusion (between 500-1,000 words)
11. Bibliography
12. Appendices (if required)

Unlike an essay, thesis chapters use headings, and each chapter has an introduction and its own conclusion which sums up the argument made in that chapter and links it to the content of the next. Some theses have an entire first chapter devoted to their theoretical framework and/or literature review, while others develop their theoretical framework and/or review the literature in the Introduction.

The Introduction of a Spanish and Latin American Studies thesis has a very clear structure. It consists of

1. A background section, culminating in a statement of your research question/s and thesis statement.
2. A section in which your theoretical framework is developed.
3. A section in which you explain your methodology.
4. A thesis outline, which explains what you will do in each chapter and why.

The best way to get your head around the idea of a thesis is to read other completed examples. You should examine a number of sample theses before committing to the Honours program and again at key points during Honours. Sample theses are available from the Honours Coordinator.

Role of the supervisor

- Honours is different from other undergraduate level courses. It is not 'taught' as such. Supervisors (and tutors) act as guides and colleagues to help you through the program and introduce and discuss issues and concepts.
- Your supervisor, chosen because of her/his knowledge of your topic area, will have a strong interest in your research and development as a scholar.
- As such, she/he will establish a close and communicative working relationship with you.
- She/he will help you formulate your research topic, plan your research program, assist with the bibliography and structure of the argument.
- She/he is someone with whom you can brainstorm and test ideas.
- It will be important to recognise and strike a balance between the guidance of your supervisor and your own independence as a scholar who is developing original research. At the end of the day, the work is yours, not your supervisor's.

Role of the candidate

- To meet with your supervisor every two weeks at a mutually agreed time.
- To attend seminars and follow their research plan to the best of their ability.
- To advise the supervisor clearly and promptly of any issues they face in the Honours program, in order that these may be resolved.

Faculty of Arts' Interpretative Scale for Honours and Medals

The Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies follows the scale for Honours approved by the Faculty of Arts. It is important for students to realise that these Honours grades do NOT equate to the grades used to assess students' work for the Pass degree.

First Class Honours

A First Class Honours grade is awarded to students whose average mark in the Honours examination is between 80% and 100%. As the First Class range is a large one, it is important to be able to make distinctions within it, and these are expressed below:

80 – 82 Clear, but bare First Class quality, comprising general excellence in subject area without major error or naivete; breadth of knowledge of discipline; clear evidence of independence of thought in subject area. This judgement will be made against an assessment of the whole range of skills required within the subject area.

83 – 86 Good First Class quality (as defined above), but with greater evidence of intellectual independence and some originality of thought.

87 – 89 Excellent First Class quality, showing (in addition to the qualities defined above), a command of the field both broad and deep, independent intellectual argument and the presentation of original thought to a significant degree.

90 – 94 Outstanding First Class quality of University Medal standard, demonstrating independent thought throughout, a flair for the subject, and research achievement of a kind that produces at least some element(s) of PhD or potentially publishable standard in serious academic fora. (Not sufficient in itself for a medal.)

95 – 98 Range rarely used. Denotes work in top 1 – 2% of all candidates for Fourth Year Honours likely to have been encountered over an experienced academic's teaching career. All or most of the student's work is here of potentially publishable quality.

99 – 100 Denotes achievement as good as one could ever expect from a Fourth Year student, considered over the range of talent encountered during an experienced academic's career. It is to be expected that marks in this range are rarely awarded and may never be awarded during a teaching career, but it is important that the possibility of award at this level be there.

Second Class Honours Division I

A Second Class Honours Division I Honours degree is awarded to students whose average mark in the Honours examination is between 75% and 79%. The award of a Second Class Honours Division I degree expresses the assessors' confidence that the student has:

Demonstrated superior general knowledge of the subject through a study and reading of both primary and secondary material

- Produced written work that shows a reasonably complex understanding and original analysis of subject matter and its context, both empirical and theoretical, and sometimes shows evidence of independent interpretation
- Produced written work of a high standard of expression and documentation.

Second Class Honours Division II

A Second Class Honours Division II grade is awarded to students whose average mark in the Honours examination is between 70% and 74%. The award of a Second Class Honours Division II degree expresses the assessors' view that the student has:

- Demonstrated adequate general knowledge of the subject through study and reading of both primary and secondary material
- Produced written work that is clearly adequate at honours level in terms of expression and documentation, the assembly of relevant material, and the ability to exercise independent critical judgement of the material
- In addition, a student who gains Second Class Honours Division II may occasionally show evidence of original analysis and interpretation of subject matter.

Third Class Honours

A Third Class Honours grade is awarded to students whose average mark in the Honours examination is between 65% and 69%. The award of a Third Class Honours degree expresses the assessors' view that the student has

- Demonstrated a barely sufficient general knowledge of the subject through study and reading of both primary and secondary material

- Produced written work that is barely adequate at Honours level in terms of expression and documentation, the assembly of relevant material, and the ability to exercise independent critical judgement of the material.

Honours Not Awarded

The decision not to award Honours to a candidate in his or her Fourth Year (that is, to award a mark between 50% and 64%) is a difficult one and is likely to be based upon a combination of the following criteria:

- That the student has not attained a sufficient mastery of the subject in which Honours is sought at a level of depth and complexity beyond that appropriate to the Pass degree, as demonstrated through written work and oral examination.
- That attendance at classes and participation in Honours discussions has not been sufficient or sufficiently consistent to allow staff to gauge his or her level of achievement at an Honours standard.
- That the student's written and oral work in the Fourth Year has failed to attain an average of 65%.

In practice, a passing grade is rarely awarded.

Some resources

The following is a partial list of materials available in the Fisher library that will help you with your research and writing. Please note that Sydney Learning also offers practical workshop courses to help you with the same. You can find out about these courses and enrol on-line here: http://www.usyd.edu.au/stuserv/learning_centre/course.shtml

Anderson, Jonathan, and Millicent Poole (1998) *Assignment and Thesis Writing*. Brisbane: John Wiley & Sons.

Burton, Suzan, and Peter Steane, eds. (2004) *Surviving Your Thesis*. London; New York: Routledge.

Evans, David, and Paul Gruba (2002) *How to Write a Better Thesis*. 2nd ed. South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press.

Fitzpatrick, Jacqueline (1998) *Secrets for a Successful Dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Oliver, Paul (2004) *Writing Your Thesis*. London: SAGE.

Walliman, Nicholas S.R. (2004) *Your Undergraduate Dissertation: The Essential Guide for Success*. London: SAGE.