

**UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
HONOURS PROGRAM**

Guidelines for the Honours Essay

Honours students are required to submit a graduating essay (ENSH 499). The essay is normally completed in a student's final term. ENSH 499 may be completed in the fall, spring, or summer terms, depending on supervisory availability. Honours Essays may cover topics in literature, theory, cultural studies, digital humanities, and other areas of English studies. All proposed topics are subject to approval by the supervisor and the Honours Adviser. Primary texts will normally be written in English, not in translation from another language.

Preparing for the Honours Essay

Preparation for ENSH 499 should include a broad context of primary and secondary readings. Students are advised to develop, with their prospective supervisor, a course of study that will familiarize them with current approaches to their field. More specifically, students should prepare for ENSH 499 by completing one of two options:

Option 1. A directed reading course (ENSH 490) with a faculty member (typically the 499 supervisor) whose research or teaching expertise can accommodate the student's project. Permission of the Honours Adviser and the approval of the Chair of the Department are required. With permission of the instructor and the Chair, qualifying students may take 490 in conjunction with a scheduled graduate course. Directed readings should not duplicate regular courses. Student work in 490 should be preparation for 499, but separate from the 499 project itself.

Option 2. A regular course (ideally 300-level or above) in the area of the 499 research topic. Students may take a relevant graduate course with permission of the course instructor, the Graduate Adviser, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

The 499 proposal should emerge from the work undertaken for either option.

ENSH 490: Honours Directed Reading

During the first week of term, students and their 490 supervisors must prepare a *pro forma* (available from the Undergraduate Secretary) and a syllabus specifying the title of the Directed Reading and listing week by week the required readings and the nature and weight of assignments. The Honours Adviser and the Chair will approve the *pro forma* and the syllabus. Completed forms should be submitted to the Undergraduate Secretary. Supervisors should meet with students for approximately one hour per week in the 490 term and work with students to shape their 499 proposals.

ENSH 499: Honours Essay

The Project

The Honours Essay should develop a topic limited in range yet rich in potential. The project should be scholarly (as opposed to a creative writing project). Its argument should demonstrate the student's critical ability and knowledge of a field of study. The 499 essay should also demonstrate the student's awareness of scholarship, criticism, and theoretical approaches relevant to the chosen topic.

The Proposal

The 499 proposal should include the following:

- Title
- Description of the project, including an indication of the primary works and an explanation of their significance to the project; a thesis statement; a description of the critical and/or theoretical approach to the topic; and an indication of where the proposed project sits in relation to previous studies of the topic
- Bibliography (MLA format) of up to five primary works and five secondary works that the student expects to draw upon
- Word count of the proposal (not to exceed 250 words).

In addition, students are strongly encouraged to submit an outline of the essay that shows how the argument will be established and supported. Students are further encouraged to work closely with their supervisors on the proposal and accompanying outline.

Sample Proposal

This paper will expand upon Eric Schmaltz's recent "Critical Introduction" to *I Want to Tell You Love* (1965), an unfinished poetic project by Canadian writers Milton Acorn and Bill Bissett. I will argue that Schmaltz's analysis does not pay due attention to the text's ecological concerns, which are just as radical as Acorn and Bissett's other political engagements, and which anticipate the positions forwarded in early Canadian ecocritical writings from subsequent decades, most notably Gabriele Helms's "Contemporary Canadian Poetry from the Edge: An Exploration of Literary Ecocriticism."

The new edition of *I Want to Tell You Love* is a recreation of Acorn and Bissett's original collaboration based on three extant copies of the typescript, and is introduced by Schmaltz. He contextualizes the collection within Vancouver's countercultural milieu of the 1960s before identifying the work's thematic resistance to hegemonic social structures (e.g., homophobia, capitalism) and arguing that Acorn and Bissett's style reflects an avant-garde, Romantic idealism emphasizing love's ability to alter radically the real world through poetry. But, in centring its Romantic idealism, Schmaltz ignores its Romantic environmentalism. I will argue for the latter's relevance through close reading and the invocation of Helms's essay alongside later works by both poets. As ecocriticism has developed into an active area of research in Canadian letters (cf. *Greening the Maple*), my essay will contribute to current discourse by clarifying this newly re-examined collection's radical environmentalism, rendering *I Want to Tell You Love* an ecocritical work *avant la lettre*.

Paper Length

The paper should be between 5,500 and 7,000 words, excluding notes and bibliography. Students must include the word count on the title page of the paper.

Paper Format

Papers should follow the current version of MLA style. Please use the attached sample title page.

Supervision

At the beginning of the 499 term, the student and supervisor should determine a schedule for the preparation of the essay such that departmental deadlines will be met. The supervisor's roles include: advising the student on changes to the 499 proposal as required by the Honours Adviser; meeting with the student to plan the project and to establish a schedule for completion; being available for consultation on research, planning, and drafts; providing timely feedback on drafts; being available for consultation on revision; helping the student to prepare for the final interview. Problems in supervision that cannot be resolved easily should be reported to the Honours Adviser.

The Examining Committee

The examining committee consists of the student's supervisor and second reader (appointed by the Honours Adviser) in addition to a chair, who is normally the Honours Adviser. The second reader receives and comments upon a draft of the essay; the Honours Adviser receives only the final copy.

Deadlines

Each term, the Department will provide deadlines for completion of drafts, submission of the essay to the second reader, and submission of the final copy. Except in circumstances recognized by the Honours Adviser as extraordinary, students who do not submit their essays to the Department by the final due date will be disqualified from the interview and ENSH 499.

The Interview

During the examination period, there will be a scheduled interview with the examining committee in which the student will be asked questions about the essay. The student will be invited by the chair to give a brief (10 minutes) introduction to the essay, after which questions will be asked by the second reader and supervisor, in that order. Normally two rounds of questions are asked. The chair may ask questions if time permits. Interviews are scheduled for 90 minutes.

To achieve an Honours degree with distinction, a student must earn a GPA in the top 20% of graduating English students. (This cohort includes Honours, Majors, and General students, but not Minors.) An Honours degree requires a grade of B- or above in ENSH 499 with a graduating GPA of at least 3.5. It is not possible for an Honours candidate to achieve an Honours degree with a grade of C+ or lower in 499.

The interview cannot negatively affect a student's 499 grade. Members of the committee meet immediately prior to the interview and decide on a preliminary grade. This grade is not revealed to the student. This grade will be recorded by the chair and as a consequence of the interview the grade may rise, but not fall. It may also stay the same. Immediately following the interview, the student will be asked to withdraw from the room while the committee determines the final grade. The student will be informed of the final grade by the Honours Adviser immediately after the interview. Official grades are submitted by the Honours Adviser when all 499 interviews have been completed.

Sample Title Page

Title

by

Student name

B.A., University of Victoria, 20**

Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS, HONOURS

in the Department of English

Word Count: XXXX

© [Student name] 20XX
University of Victoria

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