

Junior Guide for Senior Thesis

2022-2023 Academic Year Edition

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The Senior Thesis:

The senior thesis is a capstone project consisting of a 15-page paper organized around a central thesis that is based on two books, one from the curriculum and one from outside the curriculum. The students will be evaluated on their understanding of the books, their ability to put them in conversation with each other, and the organization of the paper around their thesis. Their curiosity and engagement over the year will also be considered. The project will conclude with a public defense of their paper to a panel of three faculty members in the fourth quarter. The defense and the paper will be graded by the panel and given an overall final grade.

FAQ

Does this really matter?

YES! The Senior Thesis is a graduation requirement that goes on the transcript. Students who do not successfully complete the Senior Thesis do not graduate.

What will happen this year?

In May, after the completion of this year's defenses, a faculty member will be assigned to each junior as an advisor. Students must meet with their advisor at least once before the spring semester ends.

Juniors will also be expected to select the two books that will serve as the basis for their thesis, although at this point the selections are preliminary. A guide to book selection is below. Advisors should be consulted during this process, and the Thesis Director can help, too!

What can I do to get started?

This project is much easier if the topic and books selected are enjoyable. So, a good way to start is for the students to consider books or topics that were of interest to them during their academic career, and consider those for study. When in doubt, pick a favorite!

When should I start reading?

Right away! The summer holidays are an excellent time to get a jump on reading. This allows potential topics to grow, develop, and evolve. Also, ideas will come to mind during reading that can be helpful later in the process; thus, keeping a notebook or journal can be valuable.

Can I choose my own advisor?

No. Requests for a particular faculty advisor will be received, but are rarely granted.

What can parents do to help?

Parents can offer tremendous support to their scholars in this process. They can serve as a sounding board for ideas; they can edit the paper at various stages; they can even read their student's text choices along with them and seminar over topics! And as always, encouragement and motivation are invaluable.

Thesis Books Selection Criteria

1. Books read for senior year Humane Letters may not be selected.
 - The Bible, for the purposes of book selection should be done on a book by book basis.
2. Curricular books may be selected anywhere from the 7-12 grade Great Hearts Preparatory curriculum.
 - The actual list of books in the curriculum does vary, so some accommodation may be made on a book by book basis.
3. The books should be time-tested classics squarely within the Western tradition. In general, books from the middle of the 20th century on are less likely to be permitted. Reach out to the Thesis Director if there are questions as to what qualifies.
4. The books need to be works of fiction or philosophy in a primary sense, not biographies, commentaries, or critical works.
5. It is recommended, but not required, that one book be fiction and the other one be philosophy.