

FAQ—Honours program in East Asian Studies

January 2011

The Honours concentration in East Asian Studies is designed to provide an opportunity for advanced language training and seminar-level work, directed toward an independent research paper that you, the student, pursue on a specific topic.

This handout addresses frequently asked questions (FAQs) and spells out requirements and deadlines for the thesis-writing component).

What are the requirements for an honours degree?

A total of 60 credits is required. The breakdown is as follows:

Required Course (6 credits): EAST 498 D1/D2: Honours Thesis: East Asian Studies, a 2-semester course typically taken in your last year at McGill

Complementary Courses (54 credits):

- **24 credits of an East Asian language course:**
- **30 credits from East Asian Culture, Literature and Society Courses.**

This section has 2 parts:

- 1) **6 credits** of introductory courses, two of EAST 211, EAST 212, or EAST 213.
- 2) **24 credits** chosen from the following courses. Of these, 6 credits must be at the 400-level or above, and 3 credits must be a 400-level or above class taken **BEFORE** you start writing your thesis. We recommend that you take this 400-level or above course with your prospective supervisor.

F=Fall semester; W=Winter semester.

When can I sign up for honours?

You can sign up on Minerva when you begin at McGill. The basic rule is that Minerva will bump you from the Honours program to the regular Major if your GPA falls below 3.0. Minerva is essentially a computer-style bouncer. If, the following semester, your GPA again clears 3.0, you will be able to re-register yourself in the Honours program.

Why should I pursue an honours degree?

An honours degree distinguishes you as someone who has done outstanding work, and mastered a number of difficult skills—language training, writing, and research. Needless to say, it is shorthand for a high GPA and consistently outstanding work. Over and above this distinction, an honours project can be a chance to work closely with a faculty member in a field s/he knows intimately, as well as a chance to explore in depth an area of research that intrigues you. In practical terms, many students who complete the Honours program continue eventually to graduate school. They continue their work not only in the disciplines allied with EAS (history, political science, art history, literature, public policy, business, etc.), but in related scholarly and professional fields, such as law, school-teaching, academia, NGO work, and civil service. Any career in which independent work is highly valued, and “project-based” work is key, will benefit from the work you do in the honours program—conceiving a project, researching it, organising a body of materials, consulting with experts (both on paper and in person), and reporting on it.

What does joint honours mean? What is the “joint” part?

In the joint honours program, you essentially complete honours-level requirements in two departments within the Arts faculty. For instance, East Asian Studies (EAS) and Art History. Or EAS and Religious Studies. The “joint” part means that you have two supervisors during your program and, most importantly, for your thesis—one from each department. However, one will be your primary supervisor. This means that while both supervisors will give you guidance on your project, you will ultimately receive one grade from one person.

What are the requirements for the thesis?

The Honours thesis has a text of about 40 to 60 pages (at about 220-250 words per page), with an absolute minimum of 40 pages exclusive of illustrations and bibliography, and with accurate footnoting and bibliography. Students may use either footnotes or endnotes in a manner consistent with the guidelines set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style* or the PMLA style sheet. Readers are not expected to impose penalties for the length of the thesis unless it adversely affects the quality of the work. Advisors should make clear the standards they expect in the thesis prepared under their supervision. While the writer should demonstrate familiarity with scholarly methods in the use of sources, this should not be the sole criterion for evaluation. Of great importance is the central argument and significance of interpretation. A thesis may entail research on a little-studied problem or a reassessment of a familiar problem. Although it is not required that the thesis involve original research with primary materials in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean language, it is highly recommended that the work draw, if possible, on at least some secondary material in one of these languages.

If the thesis is a translation, only the supervisor is expected to evaluate the accuracy of the translation. All translations must, however, have a substantial introduction in which the translated work is placed within its intellectual or historical context (or both). The introduction should not be a summary of the contents of the translation.

What are the deadlines for the thesis?

The deadlines are as follows:

TIMETABLE:

Winter Semester of year *prior* to Thesis year. During the Winter semester of your second to last year, you should decide on a general topic for your thesis. You should then discuss the topic with faculty member you would like to work with, and get their consent to serve as your supervisor.

Part of the thesis preparation process is built into the Honours requirements. Which is to say, **3 of the 6 credits of 400-level classes** that are required for the degree HAVE to be taken before you actually start the two semesters of thesis writing. This means that you will have already taken a class in which you write a long research paper, and do in-depth analysis of a particular topic that you choose. You may want to do this with the person you want to be your supervisor. Or you may want to extend a paper from that class into your thesis.

The deadlines for the Honours and Joint Honours Seminars are listed below. Make sure to enroll in EAST-498D1&D2 (for Honours) or EAST-495D1&D2 (for Joint Honours) at the start of your final year. You will need permission from your thesis supervisor to get a number allowing you to enroll in the thesis course through Minerva.

n.b. Note that these deadlines are written for students graduating at the end of the Winter term.

PERMISSION: Permission to Enroll form (available in Room 202, 3434 McTavish) must be signed by the student and your thesis supervisor by the end of the **second week** of classes of the Fall term (or the second week of classes of the Winter term if you intend to start work on your thesis in the Winter)

PROPOSAL: By **mid-September**, the student should have submitted a brief proposal of at least 5 pages, with an overview of the topic and a bibliography of sources on your thesis topic. This proposal should be submitted to both your thesis supervisor and the Honours Advisor.

PROGRESS REPORT: By **November 1**, a full outline (or some equivalent, such as a 10-15 page draft) and an annotated bibliography should be submitted to both your supervisor and Honours Advisor.

FIRST HALF OF THESIS OR TWO CHAPTERS. Due on the **last day of classes of the Fall term**. This should comprise roughly 50% to 60% of the thesis.

FIRST COMPLETE DRAFT: Due on the **Friday before Reading Week in February**. This will give your thesis supervisor time to make final corrections and comments.

FINAL THESIS: due on the last day of classes of the Winter term. Both your supervisor and the East Asian Studies Honours Advisor read the final thesis. In general, the faculty member or members who directed the thesis will determine the final grade, and this is reported to the Honours Advisor. TWO copies of the final, bound thesis should be prepared: one for the supervisor and one for the Honours Advisor (the latter is kept in the Department of East Asian Studies). Since the grades for graduating students must be submitted early upon the end of classes, and the supervisor requires sufficient time to read the thesis, **late submission will not be accepted.**