Honors Thesis Program Handbook

The Honors Program in the Department of Screen Arts & Cultures is designed to provide highly motivated, academically talented majors the opportunity to enrich their education by writing a senior thesis or original screenplay, or by creating an original media production or integrated written/production project. In all cases, SAC Honors provides students the opportunity to tackle larger and more ambitious projects than are possible in classes. Students of promise and ability are encouraged to consider honors. Becoming a member of the Screen Arts & Cultures Honors Program means becoming part of a small, intensely committed group of teachers and students all working toward achieving excellence in the discipline.

Achieving honors in Screen Arts & Culture signals a sustained, outstanding achievement in the undergraduate concentration. For students with strong academic records, the Honors Program can serve as a capstone to their undergraduate studies, and as important preparation for graduate studies.

Initial Proposal for Faculty Advisor Approval
Third Monday in February

Final Proposal to Faculty Advisor and uploaded to Department site
Second Monday in March

Questions: 734-764-0147
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OVERVIEW AND ADMINISTRATION OF
THE SCREEN ARTS & CULTURES HONORS PROGRAM

The Screen Arts & Cultures Honors Program is a rigorous year-long experience devoted to research and writing, the production of an advanced video, film, digital, or television project, or the writing of an original feature-length screenplay or teleplay equivalent. It is open to Screen Arts & Cultures majors who meet application requirements and can include those students who have not been in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA) Honors Program in their freshman and sophomore years.

Honors is highly competitive and admission is based on a minimum GPA of 3.5 in the major and a 3.4 cumulative GPA. A highly rigorous and competitive review process takes into consideration the following:

- Performance in past courses
- Sample work from previous SAC courses
- Completion of specific coursework
- An impeccably written honors proposal
- Faculty recommendation(s).

Application to the SAC Honors Program is made in winter term of the junior year at a deadline typically in mid-March. Since Honors in Screenwriting depends on successful completion of SAC 410, screenwriting honors applications are due the last day of winter term.

Students accepted into the SAC Honors Program gain the opportunity to carry out the independent work required to complete an honors thesis project which can take the form of an academic written thesis, a screenplay, film, video, television, or digital media production.

Students are encouraged to consider a creative "linked" honors project that spans practice and theory, in the tradition of the liberal arts. This could involve a short film combined with a written component. Another possibility would be the new modes of writing made possible by digital technologies, from hypertext to the multimedia electronic book.

Students accepted into the SAC Honors Program also become members of the LSA Honors Program. As members of the LSA Honors Program, they gain access to a variety of special services such as possible financial support for their honors work. In addition, students may also apply for competitive scholarships administered by the Department of Screen Arts & Cultures to help with costs associated with honors projects.

Upon successful completion of the SAC Honors Program, students may graduate with Honors, High Honors or Highest Honors in Screen Arts & Cultures, depending on the evaluation of their thesis, screenplay, or project. These Honors designations appear on their diploma and transcript, along with any LSA College Honors designations they earn from their overall grade point average.
APPLICATION AND ADMISSION TO THE SAC HONORS THESIS PROGRAM

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR APPLYING TO SAC HONORS

To be considered for the SAC Honors Program, students must have a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 in the Screen Arts & Cultures major. Students are expected to maintain this GPA in the SAC major throughout their senior year in honors. According to rules established by the LSA Executive Committee, a student must have an overall GPA of at least 3.4 by the end of the academic career to graduate with Honors.

In addition to the minimum GPA noted, in order to prepare for advanced work in a particular subject area, students should have successfully completed certain courses to be eligible to apply.

- In order to undertake an honors thesis in the television area, the student should have successfully completed SAC 355 by the end of their junior year.
- To undertake an honors thesis in film, the student should have successfully completed the core film history requirement (SAC 352 or SAC 353) by the end of their junior year and the film theory requirement no later than fall of their senior year.
- In order to undertake a thesis in digital media, a student should have successfully completed New Media Theory by the end of their junior year.
- In order to produce an honors film, video, television or digital production project the student must have successfully completed a 400 level production elective by the end of their junior year.
- In order to write an honors screenplay, students must have successfully completed SAC 427 Screenwriting III AND have a letter of support for honors work from the Coordinator of Screenwriting. The student need not be a sub-major in screenwriting to apply for Honors.

Note: No exceptions are made for students electing to study abroad. These students should also arrange their schedules to allow them to complete the necessary requirements by the end of their junior year, and must apply according to honors deadlines. If a student is abroad during the second semester of his/her junior year, e-mailed proposals are acceptable.

CHOOSING A SAC HONORS THESIS RECOMMENDER AND ADVISOR

Students interested in honors should first identify and consult with a faculty recommender with whom they have worked and whose area of expertise makes the faculty member an appropriate sponsor for the proposed project or thesis. For honors in screenwriting, the faculty sponsor MUST be the Coordinator of Screenwriting. When the student is accepted into the SAC Honors Program, the faculty recommender becomes the primary honors advisor.

For thesis and production applicants, the student should also identify a secondary recommender at this time. If the thesis is a production project, the secondary recommender must be a studies faculty member; writing projects can draw on any faculty member for this role. This secondary recommender should be a member of the faculty who has a background in the student’s area of interest. This secondary recommender becomes the secondary honors advisor when the student is accepted into the SAC Honors Program. The secondary advisor provides additional feedback that supplements the instructions of the primary advisor. The honors student should keep in regular contact with their secondary advisor.
Students must seek feedback and advice from the faculty recommender(s) in preparing their application for honors, well in advance of the initial deadline. The first draft of the honors proposal must be turned in to the faculty recommender by the initial February deadline. The faculty recommender will then review the application and return it to the student with comments and suggestions for revision. The revised and final proposal must be uploaded to the Honors M+Box by the final March deadline. It is recommended that the student have the faculty recommender(s) review the final proposal before uploading it.

The proposal will be turned in to the Honors Committee for adjudication. The Honors Committee ultimately decides which proposals will be approved for honors—not the faculty recommender. If more than one project is recommended by a single faculty member, the Honors Committee will determine the proposal the faculty member will advise; if the other proposal(s) is viable, the Committee may seek an alternative primary advisor. Students will be notified of the Honors Committee decision once it has been made, usually within three weeks of the application deadline.

**DEADLINES**

Students wishing to apply to the SAC Honors Program do so in the winter semester of their Junior year. For example, a student graduating at the end of Winter Term 2014 would need to apply by the application deadline in Winter Term of 2013. The student must submit an initial application to a potential faculty honors advisor by February of their Junior year. A revision integrating the faculty advisor’s input must be submitted by the March deadline (typically, the second Monday in March) and uploaded to the SAC Department M+Box site as described elsewhere in this booklet. Applications for written, creative, or linked honors projects must be submitted by the announced deadline. Since Screenwriting Honors depends on completion of SAC 410, Screenwriting honors applications are due the last day of winter term.

**THE HONORS SELECTION COMMITTEE CRITERIA AND PROCESS**

The Screen Arts & Cultures Honors Committee will review applications to the Honors Program. In evaluation the applications the Committee will consider:
- the quality and intellectual risk of the proposed project
- its feasibility
- the student's talent and ability as evidenced by past work
- the ability of the Department of Screen Arts & Cultures to provide adequate support for the successful completion of the project, including faculty mentoring and necessary equipment.

*Poorly written or conceptualized proposals do not meet the rigorous expectations of honors and will be automatically disqualified.*

Honors is highly competitive. The commitment to honors on the part of the faculty sponsor is time intensive and it is recommended that Screen Arts & Cultures faculty members oversee only one honors project per year. Due to equipment limitations, faculty sabbaticals, and other Department resources, not all projects, regardless of quality, can be supported.

Students will receive conditional approval following the Honors Committee’s decision within one week of their meeting. The student will receive official approval after grades have been posted for winter semester and meet the requirements for the Honors Program. The Committee's decision is final. There is no process of appeal.
DECLARING SAC HONORS AND REGISTERING FOR THE HONORS THESIS SEMINAR

OVERVIEW OF THE DECLARATION PROCESS

After his or her acceptance into Screen Arts & Cultures Honors, students must meet with their primary faculty honors advisor to officially declare SAC honors and must also register for SAC 495 – SAC Honors Thesis Seminar.

DECLARING HONORS WITH YOUR FACULTY ADVISOR

Once accepted into the SAC Honors Program the student must meet with the primary honors advisor to complete the paperwork necessary to declare honors. The advisor will complete a new declaration form with the student, indicating that they are adding SAC honors to their SAC major. A signed declaration form must be taken to the Student Services Coordinator Carrie Moore in the SAC office. (Honors students go to the LSA Honors office for all general LS&A advising and graduation paperwork.)

HONORS THESIS SEMINAR – SAC 495

In order to get credit for SAC honors, students must elect SAC 495, the Honors Thesis Seminar in the fall and winter semesters of their honors studies. SAC honors students will work primarily with their faculty honors advisor, however they are also required to register for and attend this seminar in order to receive credit and complete their honors thesis. This year-long seminar is taught by the Honors Seminar Professor. Registration must be for both fall and winter semesters, from 1-4 credits per semester. Credits for both semesters combined cannot exceed 6 credits total. For example, a student might elect SAC 495 for 3 credits for fall semester and for 3 credits in winter, or 1 credit in fall and 1 credit in winter depending on her/his credit load. Variable credit is designed to allow students some flexibility with their particular situation at registration (such as credits needed, tuition concerns, etc). Electing SAC 495 for only 1 credit should NOT be interpreted to mean the student intends to invest less effort in the seminar or on the honors thesis project.

- Registering for the Honors Thesis Seminar

To complete the process of declaring an SAC honor thesis all honors students must register for SAC 495, the honors course number. Students will arrange to have the honors seminar professor who teaches this seminar request an override from the SAC Student Affairs Coordinator.

- The Honors Thesis Seminar Description

SAC 495 meets irregularly throughout the year, and is taught by that year’s honors seminar professor. Most of these meetings occur at the beginning of fall semester and the end of winter semester. No other courses or meetings can be scheduled in conflict with the SAC 495 meeting time. The honors seminar professor is free to schedule meetings during this time slot.
This class will leverage the talents of all the students to peer-critique each stage of the writing or production process, and to also collaboratively work through problems that confront the various projects. Depending on the year, there may also be visitors to the class. The honors seminar professor holds regular office hours throughout the year, and it is expected that minor issues are brought here first before moving to the primary and secondary advisers.

- Honors Thesis Seminar Grading

A grade of “Y” will be reported by the honors seminar professor at the end of fall semester for SAC 495. “Y” means no grade recorded, and does not affect the GPA, but holds the credits in suspension for grading at the end of the winter term when both fall and winter term grades for SAC 495 will be reported. Final grades given for SAC 495 are dependent upon the honors defense committee’s recommendation following the students’ honors defense and will also take into account the students participation in the seminar as reported by the honors seminar professor.

 available resources for honors theses

Screen Arts & Cultures honors students are eligible to apply for grants to support their honors projects through both the Screen Arts & Cultures Department and through the Honors Program Office in LS&A. The LS&A Honors Program website includes helpful information about available grants. Students are encouraged to pursue funding through the LS&A Honors office.

As students of the Department of Screen Arts & Cultures, honors students may apply to the regular endowments, such as the Alice Webber-Glover Awards. In addition, honors students are also eligible to apply for a Garnett Garrison Scholarships for Honors, which are offered both fall and winter terms. Established in 1978 upon Professor Garrison’s retirement, the scholarship was the result of endowment gifts from his former students and colleagues at the University of Michigan. At the recommendation of Professor Garrison these awards are for SAC honors candidates to help defray the cost of preparing the honors thesis—either research costs or the costs of a creative production project or screenplay.

Applicants to the Garnett Garrison Scholarships are required to submit an application form, transcripts, and other materials appropriate to their particular project (such as treatments, proposals, budgets, etc.). Please consult the SAC Department website for deadlines and specifics about applying for the Garnett Garrison and other awards.

As part of the application process, all honors candidates should arrange to meet with appropriate SAC staff to discuss other resources relevant to research and production. For projects that require film or digital media equipment or North Quad studio resources, candidates must meet with SAC studio staff to discuss technical needs and appropriate protocol for booking. For any projects that require resources in the Donald Hall Collection, candidates should meet with Phil Hallman, Head of the Donald Hall Collection, to review screening lists, research plans, and to discuss loan policies.
**GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

Honors students are expected to be independent, resourceful, and self-directed, and students are expected to take primary responsibility for their educational experience in honors. It is intended to be an intensive experience in which students should devote a level of focus and engagement beyond the norm for undergraduate level work. Students should understand this and should not attempt to undertake honors concurrently with other intensive classes, particularly other upper-level production or writing courses in the same term(s). It is the Department’s experience that taking production classes concurrently with honors is a recipe for failure, and thus it is strongly discouraged. Students wanting to do this must discuss this plan with their primary honors advisor and acquire their approval.

During the academic year in which the student is completing the honors thesis, the student and primary faculty honors advisor are expected to meet often; many projects involve weekly meetings. It is expected that the honors seminar professor will attend to minor details, freeing the primary honors advisor to deal with intellectual and conceptual issues. In addition the student should consult with their secondary advisor for additional feedback. The student is expected to meet internal deadlines in the proposed time-line. If internal deadlines of the first semester are not met, the faculty sponsor may recommend that the student be withdrawn from the honors sequence.

Early in winter semester, the Chair of SAC will be invited to attend a session of the honors seminar. Students will give a short presentation on their in-progress thesis project, and have the opportunity to receive feedback on their work at this stage.

**THE HONORS DEFENSE AND PROCESS AND RATIONALE PAPER**

At the end of the SAC honors year, honors students will prepare a defense of their individual thesis before a faculty panel. As part of this defense students will write a short reflection on their thesis process.

**THE PROCESS AND RATIONALE PAPER FOR THE HONORS THESIS**

Every creative work results from a sustained analytical process that results from working through specific ideas of what a film, television show, new media work—whether fiction, non-fiction, experimental, etc—ought to be. Self-awareness about both the creative process and its underlying aesthetic and intellectual assumption and goals—what Latin rhetoricians used to refer to ars poetica—is a key and extremely productive component of art making.

All students who have been accepted into the Screen Arts and Cultures Departmental Honors Program are required to write a written reflection on their thesis process, outlining their aesthetic and intellectual
methods. This paper is an essential part of the evaluation process. It is also a valuable tool to organize the defense.

- Students undertaking production, screenwriting, and integrated honors theses are required to write a 10 page paper detailing the process and rationale for the thesis.
- Students undertaking written honors theses are required to write a 5 page paper detailing their process and rationale for the thesis.

The Process and Rationale Paper should summarize the thesis and should address the following:

a) Analytical
   A documented account of the process that led from the original conception of the work to its final realization. Which were its expected obstacles, and which the unexpected ones? Did they mainly have to do with logistical challenges or do they reveal your recasting of original aesthetic ambitions?

b) Critical
   An articulated reflection on your ars poetica, that is a discussion of the aesthetic and intellectual dimension of the thesis, its precedents or comparable works - whether in mainstream, independent, or experimental media. A productive aesthetic self-assessment of one’s work includes also an understanding of whether and how the creative process affected the genre and media as well as the student’s identity and aspirations as creative author.

THE HONORS PANEL

Final work in honors will be assessed by a panel of five faculty members, including the primary honors advisor, the secondary advisor, the Department Chair, the honors seminar professor, and one other faculty member chosen by the candidate in consultation with his or her primary advisor. All honors candidates are responsible for understanding and initiating the defense process. Please see the appropriate section of this booklet for specifics about this process.

In all cases, the final defense is rigorous, demanding, and intense. You should be prepared to discuss all aspects of your work including your working process, the choices in your work, historical influences, other relevant work, etc. You should be prepared to discuss the intellectual underpinnings of your work and to respond to faculty feedback, questions, and comments with clear and thoughtful responses. Your primary advisor can give you a sense of the kinds of issues that might be raised. This is the time for you to show your committee that you are indeed an honors-worthy filmmaker or writer and an articulate cultural producer, capable of intelligently explaining your creation. Your responses are taken into account in the panel’s evaluation and ranking.
HONORS ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Based on material presented in the thesis and on the student’s overall record, the honors panel may recommend the following:

- **Highest Honors**: Extraordinary thesis, screenplay or project
- **High Honors**: Superior thesis, screenplay or project
- **Honors**: Excellent thesis, screenplay or project

*Honors in Screen Arts & Cultures is an impressive achievement.* Only the most motivated students are allowed to attempt it. Only the most superb projects merit honors. It is, in a word, an honor. Highest Honors is reserved for singularly exceptional projects and is rarely proffered. As such, it requires a unanimous decision of the faculty panel.

The student will be notified verbally of their honors ranking following the formal screening, defense, or staged-reading, and a notation of such honors will be made on the student’s diploma and transcript.

Honors may be denied in the case of an unacceptable thesis, screenplay, or project. Honors may also be denied if the student fails to maintain an appropriate GPA (3.5 in the SAC major and 3.4 overall). A student denied honors may still receive credit for the honors class if a passing grade is awarded.

SENIOR AUDITS FOR HONORS STUDENTS

During the first term of your final year (or the term before the term you intend to graduate) you must meet with a SAC adviser to complete your SAC major audit and complete the required on-line (WOLV Access) application for graduation.

HONORS CEREMONIES

The Screen Arts & Cultures Department sponsors an end of term reception at which time honors recipients are announced. All graduating students and their families are encouraged to attend this event. Details will be announced each term.

The LSA Honors Office also sponsors a special honors reception on the Friday morning of graduation weekend. At this reception, each honors student will be acknowledged and announcements will be made of the recipients of honors prizes and awards, including the Goldstein Prizes such as the Arthur Miller Creative Arts Award. Please contact the LS&A Honors Office for more information: http://www.lsa.umich.edu/honors/
WRITTEN HONORS THESES

THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR HONORS THESES

Applications should include:

1. The application form which includes
   a. A 100-word abstract that succinctly describes the thesis.
   b. The names of the primary faculty advisor and secondary advisor.

2. A three to four page, double-spaced proposal.

3. A preliminary bibliography of appropriate length, in Chicago Style.

4. A timeline for its execution and completion.

In judging one’s ability to carry out an honors thesis, the SAC Honors Selection Committee pays close attention to the quality of writing in this proposal. It should be a strong document, crafted with precision and the utmost care. The writing should be clear, concise, and employ correct style, spelling and grammar. Proposals that fail to meet these expectations will not be considered. Beyond this, the Committee considers feasibility and whether the proposal presents a cohesive and compelling idea.

In addition to the primary advisor each student should choose a secondary advisor in consultation with his or her primary advisor. This secondary advisor will likely be a member of the faculty who has a background in the student’s area of interest. It is important that students seek feedback throughout the process of their honors thesis, but particularly in the formative stages of the project. This secondary advisor should provide additional feedback that supplements the instructions of the primary advisor.

Submit an initial draft of your proposal to your primary advisor no later than the third Monday in February. After faculty comments and input, students will then submit a revised application to the faculty advisor prior to the March application deadline. To officially apply to honors, applicants will complete the online application and create a folder in the SAC Honors M+Box to upload application materials. Save all the application documents in a single PDF file named: YOURLASTNAME_HonorsApplication.pdf. Upload all application materials to your folder in the SAC Honors M+Box folder by the March deadline. It is a good idea to have the faculty advisor review your application before submitting it.

The faculty recommender and the SAC Honors Selection Committee will then access the applicant’s material in the M-Box honors folder. Please contact the SAC office if you need help with uploading your application to the SAC Honors M+Box folder.

DECLARING SAC HONORS

Once accepted into the SAC Honors Program the student must meet with the primary honors advisor to complete the paperwork necessary to declare honors. The advisor will complete a new declaration form with the student, indicating that they are adding SAC honors to their SAC major. A signed declaration form must be taken to the Student Services Coordinator Carrie Moore in the SAC office. (Honors students go to the LSA Honors office for all general LS&A advising and graduation paperwork.)
EXPECTATIONS FOR THE WRITTEN HONORS THESSES

An honors thesis consists of original work in a student's field of concentration. A thesis is an independent endeavor. You are expected to cultivate the necessary discipline and organizational skills on your own. SAC 495 is a workshop; while the honors seminar professor is your first stop for advice, honors students are expected to work independently. The primary and secondary advisors will meet with the student periodically throughout the semester as arranged by the student; the timing and pacing of these meetings will generally be set by the primary adviser.

Along with the honors seminar professor, your primary and secondary advisers can and will give you practical advice on research techniques and direction; but they are not expected to serve as one's primary editor, proofreader, or cheerleader. It is the student's responsibility to keep a reasonable schedule for the project for research and writing, and to arrange any meetings with the adviser and other relevant faculty members. The honors advisor supports the student and his or her thesis project in many ways through a close and consistent mentoring relationship with the student but the student is ultimately responsible for the content, form, and quality of the project.

Following acceptance into the Honors Program in the Department of Screen Arts & Cultures, the student should meet with his or her primary adviser during the final weeks of the winter term of the student's junior year. At this time, the advisor and student will develop a research plan and reading list that the student can begin during the summer months and work on independently in preparation for the thesis project.

During the summer after acceptance into honors and the first term of the thesis project, students should read widely in the areas relevant to the thesis and develop a deep understanding of the origins and permutations of the research plan formed in concert with the faculty adviser. This substantial research should include both primary and secondary sources that provide interpretive histories and critical analyses, while also including relevant film and media texts.

The thesis should have an academic tone and use appropriate language, avoiding excessive jargon, personal, or journalistic overtones. When writing the thesis itself, a student should situate his or her project historically, institutionally, or aesthetically in ways that shed light on the central problems of the subject. Students should expect to produce several drafts of the thesis for feedback during the writing process consistent with the timeline agreed upon at the beginning of the year. It is the responsibility of the faculty advisors to provide appropriate and timely feedback to the student.

At the end of the fall semester the student will briefly present a reformulated project prospectus or abstract and project outline - both to the project adviser and to the honors seminar professor, within the seminar, as requested. The document should constitute an updated, detailed independent research plan that reflects changes in the project since its approval and includes a work schedule through the completion of the project. This presentation will enable the student to gain insight into the rigorous nature of the honors process and learn how his or her project needs to be further refined in the coming months.

The length of the thesis should be between 50-60 pages. Each thesis should include a brief abstract, table of contents and an acknowledgements page that includes recognition of any funding or awards. Theses should be formatted with appropriate citations and bibliographic information according to the current edition of the Modern Languages Association (MLA) Style Manual.
**REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF WRITTEN HONORS THESSES**

Honors theses are reviewed by a five-member faculty panel consisting of the student’s primary and secondary advisers; the Department Chair, the honors seminar professor, and one additional faculty member (who will be chosen in consultation with the advisors). Each student will submit his or her thesis (five copies—one for each reader) to the panel *one month prior to the end of classes* during the winter term. This will allow the panelists adequate time to carefully read and evaluate the thesis. No late theses will be accepted and no extensions to this deadline will be granted. Once the student has submitted the thesis, he or she should meet with the primary adviser in preparation for the rigor of the panel review.

As part of the honors process, students undertaking written honors theses must also submit the previously described 5-page *Process and Rationale Paper for Honors Thesis*.

At the end of the winter term, usually during finals week, the honors student will participate in a one-hour discussion with the faculty panel, at which time the panelists may pose questions about the project’s argument, methods, research, and relevant issues or concerns within the field. *It is the student’s responsibility to schedule this meeting.*

At the end of the discussion the panelists will decide if the project merits honors and, if so, what level of honors. There are three levels of honors that a student may attain: Honors, High Honors or Highest Honors. High Honors designates truly superb work, both in ambition and accomplishment; as such it is relatively rare. Highest Honors is reserved for extraordinary accomplishment, require a unanimous decision by the panel members, and as such is rarely given. The panel’s evaluation will primarily be based upon the written thesis itself but may be informed by the panel discussion with the student. To merit honors, the thesis must be exceptional undergraduate research and writing. In the event that a student’s thesis does not merit honors he or she will still receive credit and a letter grade for each term of the SAC 495 seminar.

The student will provide the Department of Screen Arts & Cultures Donald Hall Library with a copy of the written thesis for the Department’s archives. The student may wish to incorporate the panel’s feedback into this archive copy before submitting it by June 1st at the latest.
THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR CREATIVE HONORS THESSES

Applications should include all of the following:

1. The application form which includes:
   a. The names of the primary faculty advisor and secondary advisor.
   b. A 100-word abstract that succinctly describes the creative thesis.

2. A description of up to three pages describing the proposed project which includes:
   a. Genre, running time of the finished project, format of origination, and the format of presentation
   b. A detailed description of the topic, issue, or story.
   c. An outline of the project’s form or structure.
   d. The stylistic approach, influences, and antecedents.
   e. The intended audience.
   f. A statement of feasibility.
   g. A statement of the project’s importance and uniqueness that places it within an historical context of other film, video, television, or digital work, including the student’s past work. Depending on genre and theme, it may be wise to situate the work vis-à-vis work in other media (e.g. literature) and/or historical or theoretical issues in Screen Arts & Cultures.
   h. If applicable and if it may strengthen your proposal, attach any additional materials such as a script, treatment, or research material to the application. Consult your faculty sponsor for advice on these attachments.

3. A proposed timeline for pre-production, production, and post-production of the project.

4. A list of major equipment and facilities needed for the project along with a rough budget.

5. A reel or work sample of up to three examples of the applicant's best work. Include a description page that includes information about each piece (length, format, and applicant's role on the project). The sample description should also explain for the committee the strengths and weaknesses of the examples as they relate to your proposed project. These should be .mp4 files and must be uploaded to the SAC Honors M+Box site.

Keep in mind that in judging one’s ability to carry out an honors thesis the Honors Selection Committee pays close attention to the quality of writing in this proposal. It should be a strong document, crafted with precision and the utmost care. The writing should be clear, concise, and employ correct style, spelling, and grammar. Proposals that fail to meet these expectations will not be accepted. Beyond this, the Committee considers feasibility and whether the proposal presents a cohesive and compelling idea.
In consultation with the primary advisor, the student will select a secondary advisor—presumably a SAC faculty member with expertise in the student’s area of interest. It is important that students seek feedback throughout the process of their honors thesis, but particularly in the formative stages of the project. This secondary advisor should provide additional feedback that supplements the instructions of the primary advisor.

Submit an initial draft of your proposal to your primary advisor no later than the third Monday in February. After faculty comments and input, students will then submit a revised application to the faculty advisor prior to the March application deadline. To officially apply to honors, applicants will complete the online application and create a folder in the SAC Honors M+Box to upload application materials. Save all the application documents in a single PDF file named: YOUR_LASTNAME_HonorsApplication.pdf. Upload all application materials to your folder in the SAC Honors M+Box folder by the March deadline. It is a good idea to have your honors application sponsor review the final revision of your honors proposal before submitting it.

The faculty recommender and the SAC Honors Selection Committee will then access the applicant’s material in the M+Box honors folder. Please contact the SAC office if you need help with uploading your application to the SAC Honors M+Box folder.

DECLARING CREATIVE HONORS

After the student has been accepted into Screen Arts & Cultures Honors, he/she must meet with the primary faculty advisor to complete registration paperwork and must register for SAC 495 – SAC Honors Thesis Seminar. See Declaring SAC Honors and Registering for the SAC Honors Seminar.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE CREATIVE HONORS THESES

Production honors projects are of no set length, style, or content. However, the project should be regarded as the culmination of the student's education and training in Screen Arts & Cultures. Students undertaking a creative honors thesis should be able to discuss their production work within the historical context of other works and to explain how their project reflects aspects of style appropriate to the project's content. The project should demonstrate a strong command of organizational, technical, and creative skills such as scriptwriting, cinematography, lighting, direction, audio design, and editing.

Students undertaking a creative honors thesis are expected to function with a high degree of self-sufficiency through the stages of pre-production, production, and post-production. Where applicable, students are expected to assemble their own crew and cast for their production, book facilities and equipment with staff, and take responsibility for financing their own projects through grants or other means.

Following acceptance into the Honors Program in the Department of Screen Arts & Cultures, the student should meet with his or her primary adviser during the final weeks of the winter term of the student's junior year. At this time, the advisor and student will develop a plan, a reading list, and screening list that the student can begin during the summer months and work on independently in preparation for the thesis project.

During the summer after acceptance into honors students are expected to do preparatory work for the project: reading, viewing relevant media works, and writing script drafts.

- Scheduling meetings with faculty honors advisors.

Production honors students should expect to meet with their faculty advisors often during the duration of their honors work and to undertake many revisions of their script and proposal prior to embarking upon
production. At the beginning of the fall term students will meet with the faculty advisors and create a calendar of meetings for the term. It is important that the student meet the deadlines proposed in their timeline for the project, and that they communicate with their faculty sponsor if it is not possible for these proposed deadlines to be met. *It is the student’s responsibility to contact the faculty advisor to schedule meetings rather than relying on the faculty sponsor to schedule meetings.*

- **Preproduction**
  Typically students write a full draft of their treatment, outline, script and/or storyboard during the summer following their acceptance to the Screen Arts & Cultures Honors Program and present it to their faculty advisors by the second week of the fall semester. Prospectus revisions are expected during September and October in consultation with their advisor. In November and December, the student should finalize the preproduction and begin production, at the latest, by the first week of January.

  Early in winter semester, the Chair of SAC will be invited to attend a session of the honors seminar. Students will briefly present a reformulated project prospectus or abstract and project outline for feedback. The document should constitute an updated, detailed independent research plan that reflects changes in the project since its approval and includes a work schedule through the completion of the project. Rough footage or a work in progress might also be screened and feedback given. This presentation will enable the student to gain insight into the rigorous nature of the honors process and learn how his or her project needs to be further refined in the coming months.

- **Production Process**
  Production typically begins in late fall and continues into January. By February, the student typically enters the post-production stages of his/her honors project and is able to present a rough cut to the faculty sponsor by early March. March and April are spent revising editing and fine-cutting, and work-shopping scenes or whole cuts in SAC 495.

- **The Production Book**
  All creative honors thesis students must keep a production book in which all copies and revisions of paper work are maintained. The production book can take the form of a 3-ring binder and should reflect all of the planning and production work done. This production book will form the basis of the required 10-page Process and Rationale Paper for the Honors Thesis. This production book will be handed in to the honors seminar professor who will share it with the committee at the honors defense.

- **The Process and Rationale for the Honors Thesis**
  Throughout the creative honors project, candidates are required to keep a written journal of their decision making processes as this will provide a foundation for the Process and Rationale Paper for the Honors Thesis, the 10 page essay that must accompany creative honors theses projects. The student should also provide a annotated screening/reading list of works that have informed the project. Along with the project, this paper and screening list should be made available to the screening committee a week prior to the formal screening date. This paper will be submitted their M+Box folder along with the completed creative thesis project a week prior to the last day of classes. See [Process and Rationale Paper for the Honors Thesis](#).
REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF CREATIVE HONORS THESIS

Students undertaking a creative honors thesis present their finished work in a formal screening (with the student in attendance). In most cases, the screening panel will consist of the faculty sponsor, the Chair of the Department of Screen Arts & Cultures, the secondary adviser, the honors seminar professor, and a fifth faculty reviewer chosen in consultation with the advisors.

This formal screening/assessment of the finished project (including retrospective paper) will take place in the last week of classes or during the study days of winter term. The student is responsible for organizing and scheduling this formal screening (date, time, room, projection, etc). After reviewing the details of organizing this screening with the honors advisor, the student contacts the SAC office to reserve a screening room and projection facilities.

A week prior to the formal screening, the student should present a copy of the project to the members of the committee for preview (by uploading a file to their honors M+Box folder). At this time, the student should also present the committee with their retrospective Process and Rationale Paper for the Honors Thesis (as described above). Once the student has submitted the project, he or she should meet with the primary adviser in preparation for the rigor of the formal screening.

At the formal screening, the student will be asked to briefly introduce the work, then to screen it for those in attendance. After the screening, the student can expect questions and reactions from the screening committee. Students must be prepared to discuss the choices made in the work, as well as its stylistic influences and antecedents. As described earlier in this booklet, this discussion is a rigorous process.

At the end of the discussion the panelists will decide if the project merits honors and, if so, what level of honors. There are three levels of honors that a student may attain: Honors, High Honors or Highest Honors. High Honors designates truly superb work, both in ambition and accomplishment; as such it is relatively rare. Highest Honors is reserved for extraordinary accomplishment, require a unanimous decision by the panel members, and as such is rarely given. The panel’s evaluation will primarily be based upon the production itself but may be informed by the panel discussion with the student as well as the depth and gravity of the student’s retrospective Process and Rationale Paper for the Honors Thesis. The student will return to the screening room and be informed of the committee's decision about Honors and level of Honors.

In the event that a student’s production project does not merit honors, he or she will still receive credit and a letter grade for each term of SAC 495.

Following the formal screening, students undertaking a production project must submit a DVD or Blu-ray copy of the project to the Donald Hall Library for the Screen Arts & Cultures archive. The student may wish to incorporate the panel's feedback into this archive copy before submitting it by June 1st at the latest.
There is an ongoing conversation in academia regarding the future of the thesis in the age of digital media. This debate was particularly stimulated by UM’s Sidonie Smith, who used her position as president of the MLA to argue for an openness to new forms of writing. In an open letter to the organization, she wrote,

Digital media and computational technologies are radically transforming how knowledge is produced, communicated, and evaluated. The digitalization of scholarly work in the humanities brings new modes of research; new formats of presentation; new networks for communication; and new platforms for organizing knowledge, orchestrating argument, and visualizing intellectual exchange. Doctoral students in the modern languages will increasingly create and use digital archives and invent multimodal forms of scholarly presentation and communication into he next decade. Why should the dissertation remain inflexibly wedded to traditional book-culture formats?¹

While she is talking about graduate education, we believe it equally applies to undergraduate writing and research. Students in Screen Arts & Cultures are uniquely positioned to take up Smith’s call for exploration. Not only do they study production, theory and history in an integrated manner, but their production experience has afforded them the technical skills to imagine new forms of writing and accomplish them with the deep resources of the Department. Honors students for the Department of Screen Arts & Cultures are invited to propose an integrated thesis along these lines.

The writing could range from theoretical/historical academic writing to creative writing such as screenplays, and take the form of anything from a website to an Ebook. The production component could be a short film, TV production, or multimedia elements. Examples might include a hypertextual website that launches a theoretical argument, or a documentary that weaves written text and moving images on the platform of the Internet. It could be an Ebook with photo galleries or film clips built in—images taken from the texts under analysis or those produced by the student. In an integrated thesis, students are encouraged to develop ideas that illuminate the connections between media studies and creative practice, doing the laboratory work for new forms of academic writing that are still difficult to accomplish in conventional coursework.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR INTEGRATED THESIS

Students undertaking an integrated project should plan to scale both the thesis and production work appropriately. If the writing is extensive and challenging, any production work should be of moderate length and complexity of execution—and vice versa. To undertake an integrated honors project the student should have completed the appropriate kinds and levels of prior coursework. The SAC Honors Selection Committee will be looking especially carefully at the issue of feasibility.

The application for integrated honors should include the appropriate required materials as described earlier in this booklet in both the written thesis and production sections. The student will determine which materials are appropriate in discussions with their primary advisor.

Applications should include:

1. The application form which includes
   a. A 100-word abstract that succinctly describes the thesis.
   b. The names of the primary faculty advisor and secondary advisor.
2. A three to four page, double-spaced proposal.
3. A preliminary bibliography of appropriate length, in Chicago Style.
4. A timeline for its execution and completion.

In addition to the primary advisor each student should choose a secondary advisor in consultation with his or her primary advisor. This secondary advisor will probably be a member of the faculty who has a background in the student’s area of interest. It is important that students seek feedback throughout the process of their honors project, but particularly in the formative stages of the project. This secondary advisor should provide additional feedback that supplements the instructions of the primary advisor.

Submit an initial draft of your proposal to your primary advisor no later than the third Monday in February. After faculty comments and input, students will then submit a revised application to the faculty advisor prior to the March application deadline. To officially apply to honors, applicants will complete the online application and create a folder in the SAC Honors M+Box to upload application materials. Save all the application documents in a single PDF file named: YOURLASTNAME_HonorsApplication.pdf. Upload all application materials to your folder in the SAC Honors M+Box folder by the March deadline. It is a good idea to have the faculty advisor review your application before submitting it.

The faculty recommender and the SAC Honors Selection Committee will then access the applicant’s material in the M+Box honors folder. Please contact the SAC office if you need help with uploading your application to the SAC honors M+Box folder.

**DECLARING SAC HONORS**

After the student has been accepted into Screen Arts & Cultures Honors, he/she must meet with the primary faculty advisor to complete registration paperwork and must register for SAC 495 – SAC Honors Thesis Seminar. See Declaring SAC Honors and Registering for the SAC Honors Seminar.

**EXPECTATIONS FOR INTEGRATED THESIS AND PRODUCTION PROJECTS**

Students should carefully read the sections in this booklet detailing expectations for both thesis and production projects.

Following acceptance into the Honors Program in the Department of Screen Arts & Cultures, the student should meet with his or her primary adviser during the final weeks of the winter term of the student's junior
year. At this time, the advisor and student will develop a plan and timeline for the project, a reading list, and screening list that the student can begin during the summer months and work on independently in preparation for the thesis project.

*During the summer* after acceptance into honors students are expected to do preparatory work for the project: reading, viewing relevant media works, and writing script drafts.

Where projects require image production, students should plan to have this work underway by the December break so that the winter term may be used to focus on writing and revision of the thesis and on post-production or programming of the project. Throughout their process, students should pay attention to the evolution and development of their work, particularly as related to the integrated approach and should be prepared to comment on this aspect of their work.

Early in winter semester, the Chair of SAC will be invited to attend a session of the honors seminar at which the student will give a short presentation about their project. Students should be prepared to discuss the project and a work schedule through the completion of the project. This presentation will enable the student to gain insight into the rigorous nature of the honors process and learn how his or her project needs to be further refined in the remaining months.

### REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF INTEGRATED PROJECTS

In the case of integrated projects, the student's review committee will consist of the primary advisor, secondary advisor, the Chair of the SAC Department, the honors seminar professor, and a fifth reviewer chosen for their expertise in the area of the thesis or production. All panel members will read the thesis and attend the final defense. Some forms of writing—for example, something in hypertext—may require a presentation at the defense where the student walks the panel through the project.

Students should read the sections in this booklet on review and evaluation of both thesis and production projects for details about the panel make-up, timing and due dates for both the thesis and production, and the protocols for setting up the final screening/defense.

If the thesis involves production work designed for viewing on a screen, the defense will include a screening. The student will be asked to briefly introduce the thesis and production work, then to screen the production for those in attendance. After the screening, the student can expect questions and reactions from the screening committee. Be prepared to discuss the choices made in the work, as well as its stylistic influences and antecedents. Students should also be prepared to discuss, at some length, the written portion of the thesis and how both written and visual components inform one another. This discussion should be expected to be a rigorous process.

At the end of the discussion the panelists will decide if the project merits honors and, if so, what level of honors. There are three levels of honors that a student may attain: Honors, High Honors or Highest Honors. High Honors designates truly superb work, both in ambition and accomplishment; as such it is relatively rare. Highest Honors is reserved for extraordinary accomplishment, require a unanimous decision by the panel members, and as such is rarely given.

The student will return to the room and be informed of the committee's decision about honors and level of honors. Integrated projects are assessed with equal emphasis on both the production and written components. Honors and the level of honors is only awarded if the committee determines that both aspects of the project are successful. In the event that a student's work does not merit honors, he or she will still receive credit and a letter grade for each term of SAC 495, the honors seminar.
Following the formal defense and screening, students must submit a DVD or Blu-ray copy (or an appropriate archival form suitable to the project) of the production project and a written copy of the thesis to the Donald Hall Library for the Screen Arts & Cultures archive. The student may wish to incorporate the panel’s feedback into the archive copy of the production and/or thesis before submitting it by June 1st at the latest.

HONORS IN SCREENWRITING

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCREENWRITING HONORS

Students undertaking honors in screenwriting are expected to write and rewrite a full-length (90-110 pages) original feature film screenplay. A prerequisite to entering screenwriting honors is the successful completion of SAC 410 and SAC 427 by the Junior year. For this practical reason, screenwriting honors projects are relatively rare. Before embarking on a proposal, the student must consult with the Director of Screenwriting.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR SCREENWRITING HONORS

Applications should include:

1. A 100-word abstract that succinctly describes the thesis.
2. The names of the primary faculty advisor and secondary advisor.
3. A three to four page, double-spaced proposal.
4. A timeline for its execution and completion.

In judging one’s ability to carry out an honors thesis, the SAC Honors Selection Committee pays close attention to the quality of writing in this proposal. It should be a strong document, crafted with precision and the utmost care. The writing should be clear, concise, and employ correct style, spelling and grammar. Proposals that fail to meet these expectations will fail. Beyond this, the Committee considers feasibility and whether the proposal presents a cohesive and compelling idea.

In addition to the primary advisor each student should choose a secondary advisor in consultation with his or her primary advisor. This secondary advisor will probably be a member of the faculty who has a background in the student’s area of interest. It is important that students seek feedback throughout the process of their honors thesis, but particularly in the formative stages of the project. This secondary advisor should provide additional feedback that supplements the instructions of the primary advisor.

Submit an initial draft of your proposal to your primary advisor no later than the third Monday in February. After faculty comments and input, students will then submit a revised application to the faculty advisor.
To officially apply to Honors, applicants will complete the online application and create a folder in the SAC Honors M+Box to upload application materials. Save all the application documents in a single PDF file named: YOURLASTNAME_HonorsApplication.pdf. Upload all application materials to your folder in the SAC Honors M+Box folder. It is a good idea to have the faculty advisor review your application before submitting it. Since Honors in Screenwriting depends on successful completion of SAC 410 and SAC 427, screenwriting honors applications are due the last day of winter term.

The faculty recommender and the SAC Honors Selection Committee will then access the applicant’s material in the M+Box honors folder. Please contact the SAC office if you need help with uploading your application to the SAC Honors M+Box folder.

During fall term, students accepted for Honors in screenwriting take SAC 495 and complete the first draft of their screenplay. Students will also have access to the Gindin visiting screenwriters and are expected to participate fully in scheduled meetings with the Gindin visitors. Winter term will be spent writing a complete second draft revision of the full-length script.

Early in winter semester, the Chair of SAC will be invited to a session of the Honors seminar at which students can expect to briefly present their project and progress. This presentation will enable the student to gain insight into the rigorous nature of the honors process and learn how his or her project needs to be further refined in the coming months.

**REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF SCREENWRITING HONORS**

Students undertaking a screenwriting thesis will present their finished work in a formal session with a faculty panel. Final assessment of honors screenplays will be made by a panel of four or five SAC faculty members: the primary and secondary advisors, the Chair of the Department, the Coordinator of Screenwriting (if the Coordinator is not one of the two advisors), the honors seminar professor, and a fifth reviewer chosen for their expertise. The student can recommend to his/her faculty advisor other faculty who would be appropriate members of the review committee but it is the primary adviser who will finalize the panel make-up.

The finished script (a copy for each reader) will be *due three weeks before the last day of class*. This will allow the panelists adequate time to carefully read and evaluate the project. No late scripts will be accepted and no extensions to this deadline will be granted. Once the student has submitted the script, he or she should meet with the primary adviser in preparation for the rigor of the panel review.

For screenplay projects, a staged table-reading of their final script will be required, open to an invited audience of SAC faculty and students. *It is the student's responsibility, in consultation with the faculty advisor, to cast the readers and to make the arrangements for scheduling this reading with the SAC office.* This session will take place in the last week of classes or during the study days of winter term.

Following the staged reading, the honors student will participate in a discussion with the faculty panel (actors and audience are not present at this discussion), at which time the panelists may pose questions about the project’s style, structure, methods, research, and relevant issues or concerns within the field. At the end of the discussion, the student will be asked to leave the room. The panelists will then decide if the project merits honors and, if so, what level of honors. There are three levels of honors that a student may attain: Honors, High Honors or Highest Honors. High Honors designates truly superb work, both in
ambition and accomplishment; as such it is relatively rare. Highest Honors is reserved for extraordinary accomplishment, require a unanimous decision by the panel members, and as such is rarely given. The panel’s evaluation will primarily be based upon the quality of the script itself but may be informed by the defense. The student will return to the room and be informed of the committee's decision about honors and level of honors.

In the event that a student’s completed screenplay does not merit honors he or she will still receive credit and a letter grade for both semesters of SAC 495.

Students are expected to provide the SAC Department Donald Hall Library with a final copy of their finished screenplay for the Screen Arts & Cultures archive by June 1st.

Links to LS&A Honors and Other Useful Resources

The LS&A Honors website (http://www.lsa.umich.edu/honors/current/index.htm) contains a wealth of information for honors students, including information about scholarships and awards for which honors students are eligible. Students should visit the Pearlman Honors Commons in Mason Hall (the intellectual hub of the Honors Program) and become familiar with the programs and resources available through the College Honors Program. Other resources of note:

Sweetland Writing Center
Phil Hallman - Donald Hall Collection
Askwith Video Library
Instructional Support Services