

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS  
GENDER, SEXUALITY & WOMEN'S STUDIES HONORS PROGRAM

Application materials are available from the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Department at [gsws.ucdavis.edu](http://gsws.ucdavis.edu).

### Introduction

The Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program invites all majors who are juniors/ seniors and have a GSW G.P.A. of at least 3.5 (3.2 overall) to consider applying to the Honors Program. This program has proved especially effective for students who plan to go on to a graduate school. It is also an excellent opportunity to develop research and writing skills for work in a wide variety of fields and careers, from business and politics, to law and journalism. The main purpose of the honors program is to give you an opportunity to carry out original research and writing on a topic of your own choosing, with close faculty supervision, over the course of one academic year.

*To join the program, you must:*

- a) Choose a general area of research and provide a preliminary outline of your topic.
- b) Secure an honors advisor from among the GSW Program faculty who is knowledgeable about your research area, and who will commit to working with you for the upcoming academic year.
- c) Submit a formal application, including a thesis statement approved in advance by your advisor.

### Structure of the Program

The Honors program is designed as a three-quarter sequence, beginning in the fall and ending in the Spring. In the fall, students enroll in one unit of GSW 199, with their thesis adviser. Students need to complete and submit a learning contract to obtain the CRN for this course. This independent study provides students with the opportunity to refine their proposed topic, map out their primary and secondary sources, and learn valuable research skills. In the winter quarter, students work with their individual honors advisors doing intensive research, outlining both arguments and organization, and writing a substantial portion of their first draft (GSW 194HA). Finally, in the spring quarter, students work with their advisors to produce the final, polished version of the thesis itself (GSW 194HB), producing a document that is typically about 25-50 pages long. The final version of the thesis is due in mid to late-May. It is evaluated by the honors advisor and/or by an annually rotating group of faculty members who make up the department's Honors Committee.

Students that are not able to follow the three-quarter sequence may complete their thesis over a two-quarter sequence with approval from their thesis advisor. Creative projects are also accepted for the honors program. Creative project parameters are to be determined by supervising faculty.

### **Grades and Unit Credit for GSW 194HA/HB**

GSW 194HA/HB may not be substituted for any two upper-division courses in any of your fields in the major.

You will receive a grade of “in progress” (IP) for your work during the first quarter of 194 enrollment. When the thesis is completed in spring quarter, the honors advisor assigns a letter grade for both GSW 194HA and 194HB.

Withdrawal from the program: If you decide to drop out of the honors program, you must provide written notice to the honors supervisor.

### **GSW Program Honors**

GSW Program Honors are awarded only to students who have completed all the coursework for the degree, plus the requirements of the GSW honors program. However, completion of the two-quarter or three-quarter sequence of coursework does not guarantee an award of honors from the program.

The GSW Program offers Honors, High Honors and Highest Honors. *The only way in which a GSW major can obtain these honors is to do all of the following:*

- a) *Graduate* with an overall G.P.A. that qualifies the student for UC Davis Honors in the College of Letters and Science
- b) *Complete* the GSW Department honors program by writing an honors thesis or completing a creative project;
- c) *Receive* an award of Honors, High Honors or Highest Honors for the thesis from the GSW Department's Honors Committee.
- d) *Receipt* of UC Davis Honors will be noted on the student's transcript and diploma.

It is up to the Program's Honors Committee/Faculty to decide whether Honors will be awarded to students that have completed the program. The committee awards three types of honors: *Honors*, *High Honors*, and *Highest Honors*. Here are the criteria for determining whether a thesis merits honors, and if so, which rank:

*Honors* are awarded to students who have demonstrated an ability to bring together multiple primary and secondary sources into a coherent, fluid essay, with a strong and concise argument. Students must show that they have worked with these sources directly, rather than reworking or restating already published arguments.

*High Honors* are awarded to students who – in addition to meeting the above criteria – write a thesis that is distinctively impressive in one (though not necessarily all) of the following areas: lucidity, thoroughness, originality or ambitiousness. These theses stand out as being carefully and competently argued and executed.

*Highest Honors* represents truly outstanding work in terms of creativity, argument, writing,

organization, as well as the use and analysis of diverse primary and secondary sources. A thesis of this kind resembles graduate-level work in its sophistication and clarity.

### **Some Tips for Applying**

a. *Find a topic that interests you.* To get some ideas, review your lecture notes, papers, exams, and readings from classes you liked. What story, issue, question, or problem excited you, and why? What would you want to know more about? Even if a particular topic doesn't jump right out at you, think about an era and a place that captured your imagination. What is it about this time and place that you find most interesting? Is it a particular group of people (women, soldiers, children, migrant workers, artists)? Or is it something that seems to change the world (an epidemic, battle, election, publication, riot, law)? Allow yourself to be curious. Think about what holds your interest and why.

b. Once you've isolated an area of interest, *find an advisor among the GSW program faculty who is willing to endorse your project and serve as your mentor.* It's important that the professor you choose will be around and available to advise you. Choose a professor whose own research or teaching interests overlap with your own and visit them in office hours to discuss your project. You'll be more likely to win the professor over to your cause if you come in with some concrete ideas that show you've been thinking about a topic. Even if you aren't really sure what you'll be writing about, at least try to suggest a particular time period, place, and a particular problem or issue.

c. Once a faculty member has agreed to work with you, write up a proposal describing your project. It should be approximately 2-3 typed, double-spaced pages. It should lay out the issue or problem, and the approach you plan to take. The definition of your topic is likely to change a great deal over the next few months. Nonetheless, it's important to start out with a clear plan that both you and your faculty advisor agree is feasible. This statement will form a key part of your application and will set you on the path of research.

### **Answers to Some Frequently Asked Questions**

Q: How will my G.P.A. be calculated for entering the Honors Program if I'm a transfer student?

A: We base it only on courses taken at U.C. Davis.

Q: What if my GSW G.P.A. makes me eligible for GSW Honors but my cumulative G.P.A. does not?

A: The overall (cumulative) G.P.A. determines if honors is conveyed on your diploma or not.

Q: Is there any way for me to get a sense of what is expected in an honors thesis?

A: Examples of honors theses from past years are available for you to read. (You will need to reach out to the GSW SAO at [gsw-advising@ucdavis.edu](mailto:gsw-advising@ucdavis.edu)). It's also a good idea to talk with students presently enrolled in the honors program to hear their stories.

Q: What if I really want to work with a professor and they turn me down?

A: Let us know. Consult the Undergraduate Advisor, and the Chair of the Program for advice. We may be able to help you find alternate arrangements.

Q: What if the professor I want to work with is going to be on leave for part of the year?

A: This can easily happen, which is why it makes sense to inquire about faculty availability early on. While this is not an ideal situation, in some cases, alternative arrangements can be made to include your chosen professor as an informal member of your team. Meanwhile, you will need to find a second faculty member in your field who can sign on to be your official advisor.

Q: What if my GPA is below the required minimum for applying to this program? Can I apply anyway?

A: If you have a solid project in mind, as well as a faculty advisor who can support you, we encourage you to apply even if your GPA dips below the requirement. The committee/faculty evaluating your proposal will try to take into account any extenuating circumstances.