Honors in Peace & Justice Studies

In order to pursue honors in the Peace & Justice Studies Program students complete two units of independent research (PEAC 360 and PEAC 370), culminating in an honors thesis.

Eligibility
In order to be able to participate in the honors program, students must have a 3.5 GPA in courses above the 100-level that are listed on their major declaration form. If the GPA falls between 3.0 and 3.5, the program may petition CCAP on the student’s behalf, if it supports the student’s honors work. In addition, students must have completed PEAC 104, PEAC 204, and PEAC 259 before the project commences. Students interested in pursuing honors should discuss their plans with one or more potential advisors and one of the directors of the Peace and Justice Studies program during the semester prior to the start of the project.

Senior Honors Thesis
Students pursuing departmental honors enroll in a full year sequence (PEAC 360/370) in which they write a senior thesis. The thesis offers the opportunity to refine the analytical skills developed as a Peace & Justice Studies major and apply them to an original set of questions, making a significant contribution to the field. Peace & Justice students seeking to undertake a thesis will work closely with a Peace & Justice faculty member throughout their thesis process. Thesis work is supervised by one or two faculty advisors (see below for specific criteria).

The following schedule is a guide to the thesis process

Spring Semester, Sophomore Year: Students planning to study abroad should discuss their interest in honors with a Peace & Justice Studies faculty member during their sophomore year, and submit their application in April of their junior year abroad as explained below.

Spring Semester, Junior Year: Early in the spring semester of their junior year potential honors thesis students will discuss their proposed thesis with one of the Peace & Justice Studies faculty members to explore topics and determine the scope of the proposed work. Together, students and the Peace & Justice Studies faculty will identify an advisor from the Peace and Justice Studies faculty or advisory board. Students and their thesis advisors may also select a second advisor from another department with expertise in the proposed topic. A commitment from a faculty advisor (and, if applicable, a second one) is a prerequisite for being considered for admission into the thesis program. Students and their advisor(s) should also discuss the possibility of summer funding options (described below) as these applications typically have early deadlines.

Following this meeting (or meetings) students will submit the following materials to the Program’s administrative assistant by the second Monday in April of their junior year:

- An independently drafted 3-5 page, double-spaced research prospectus that clearly explains the plans for the project, including the intellectual goals of the thesis, the key question(s) to investigate, and the methods of research, placing the proposed plan of study in a broader interdisciplinary Peace and Justice Studies context. For hints on writing this prospectus, see below.
- A preliminary 2-3 page bibliography listing both primary and secondary sources.
- A note from the advisor(s), confirming her/his approval of and commitment to this project.

Spring of junior year is also a good time for students and their advisor(s) to begin talking about the three-person honors committee, which includes the following: the advisor, the second advisor if there is one, an additional member of the Peace & Justice Studies faculty, and at least one faculty member outside the general disciplinary area of the thesis. Only if the Peace & Justice faculty so determine will the student be able to continue with the thesis process.

Summer Before Senior Year: If possible, students should begin reading and research for their proposed project. This should directly contribute to the development of the expanded thesis proposal and outline.
Students are encouraged to apply for on or off campus fellowships to support their summer research.

**Fall Semester, Senior Year:** During the first week of their senior year students will meet with their thesis advisor or advisors to discuss their proposal and evaluate the status of the project. At this time they also should submit a proposed timeline for the completion of the thesis. If the advisor(s) believe that the thesis should proceed, students may enroll in PEAC 360. For additional College Honors policies and procedures, click here. During the last week of the fall semester, students will submit a completed chapter of their thesis and meet with their advisor(s) to give a formal presentation and an update on the progress of their project. They should also be prepared to answer any concerns on the part of the faculty. Following this meeting, the advisor(s) will decide whether students may advance to PEAC 370. This is considered the halfway point of the thesis.

**Wintersession Senior Year:** Wintersession can be an important time for work on the thesis, though working on the thesis during wintersession is not required. Grants may be available through the Provost’s office for senior research.

**Spring Semester, Senior Year:** A list of approved PEAC 370 students will be sent to the registrar and the office will register them. The honors students and their advisor(s) should select their oral examination committee and issue invitations to those faculty members. The oral examination committee is composed of the honors advisors (one of whom must be a Peace & Justice Studies Program faculty member), a Peace and Justice Studies Program director (or a designated representative), and a non-voting representative of the CCAP.

The Peace & Justice Studies Program asks that honors thesis students apply to present their research at the Ruhlman Conference as part of their honors work.

Students will submit a complete draft of their thesis to their advisors by two weeks before the deadline for submitting the thesis to the Registrar. After this draft is submitted, students will consult with their advisors to schedule the one-hour thesis oral exam during reading period. For further instructions, click here. We encourage students to examine previous theses, which are available in the College Library.

During reading period, students will complete the pre-arranged oral exam/defense of thesis. In Peace & Justice Studies, this is meant to be a conversation among scholars about the themes raised in the thesis. The examination should be approximately one hour in length. After the defense the committee and the student will determine the date when the final thesis with cosmetic revisions (the only mode of revision allowed) is to be handed in. Submission of the revised thesis usually occurs within 10 days of the defense, and no later than commencement. If revisions to the thesis are suggested or required at the conclusion of the oral examination, the student is responsible for submitting the corrected copy of the thesis to the Office of the Registrar prior to graduation.

**Resources**

**Thesis**
First and foremost, think about why you are interested in a thesis. "Getting honors" is probably not enough to sustain you in thesis writing. You should have a topic you want to research, and enough interest in that topic to underpin a year of writing. There are different ways in which to prepare for the thesis:

1. **Course background matter.** You should make sure you have the course background to write on the topic. Substantively, you need to take, if not exhaust, courses in your specific research area. You may also want to consider taking a research methods course in a department relevant to your chosen topic to learn how to construct a research design. You should note that the Peace and Justice Studies Program will evaluate your course background when it evaluates your course proposal.

2. **Researching "how to write a thesis."** As a guide to writing the prospectus, we have prepared a brief overview (below) You might also want to consult the following texts on research design and thesis writing:
Prospectus

A prospectus for honors work in Peace and Justice Studies should define a topic for investigation, briefly discuss its relevance for the field and its research viability, demonstrate the availability of primary or secondary source material to be used, and discuss the student’s intellectual preparation for the thesis work. A prospectus need not be long—roughly three-to-five pages will suffice.

The thesis prospectus has three primary purposes:
1. it notifies us, the Peace and Justice Studies Program, of your intention to write a thesis;
2. it gets you to organize and clarify your ideas for a thesis;
3. it identifies a set of goals and target dates for reaching those goals.

Your thesis prospectus should consist of the following sections:

1. Research topic: This section of your prospectus should state your proposed research topic and your primary research question. You will likely want to identify additional secondary research questions, but do so sparingly because too many research questions can undermine clarity and focus. Guard against research topics that are overly general or overly narrow.

2. Relevance for Peace and Justice Studies: This section needs to make a case for the significance of your proposed research for the field of Peace and Justice Studies. What will we learn that we do not already know? What misconceptions might your research correct? How could your project contribute to policymaking in your chosen field? To help make a case for the relevance of your topic and how it is related to previous research on the subject, your prospectus should show at least some knowledge of relevant theoretical and/or empirical literature. You do not need a long literature review at this point—this will take shape over time—but your prospectus should give us some idea that you are familiar with a relevant body of literature.

3. Methodology and data: The prospectus needs to identify the primary data sources that will be used in the conduct of your research, how you will collect the data, and how you plan to analyze the data. The prospectus should also address the availability of these data sources, specifying how the student will gain access to them if they are not available at Wellesley College.

4. Student preparation: The prospectus should indicate the student’s previous experience (e.g., course work, private readings, etc.) that has provided adequate background for the research to be done. It should also address the issue of the student’s facility in foreign languages, quantitative methods (e.g., survey research), qualitative methods (e.g., content analysis, in-depth interviewing, participant observation), and/or other methodologies when relevant for the proposed research.

5. Timeline of project: The prospectus should provide a tentative timeline with deadlines for data collection and analysis. Of particular interest to the Peace and Justice Studies Program and your faculty advisors will be your timeline and research goals for the summer preceding your senior year.

6. Bibliography: The prospectus should include a short (2-3 pages) bibliography. The bibliography should differentiate between primary and secondary sources. Secondary source listings should be limited to the most central and relevant materials. The prospectus should observe the appropriate citation procedures (e.g. APA, ASA, MLA, Chicago).