

## 499Y Honors Research: Contract and Semester Plan Instructions (Part I of Honors Thesis or Project)

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Each Honors Thesis or Honors Project must be six or more credits of sustained effort on a single topic. Typically completed in the senior year, this requirement offers students an opportunity to work closely with faculty members on advanced research topics or creative endeavors. A *thesis* involves investigating and responding to a research question, while a *project* involves an alternative academic enterprise of equivalent intensity and scope, e.g., creative work (artistic sculpture/paintings, theater production, musical score), engineering invention, case study, and so on.

Regardless of whether the intended result is a thesis or project, each begins with inquiry and systematic research, includes documentation of substantive scholarly effort, and culminates in an oral defense or other form of public presentation. Though smaller in scope, both Honors Theses and Honors Projects should be similar in quality to master's theses and projects from like disciplines. Further, Honors Projects must require the same amount of time and intellectual challenge as Honors Theses, and the individual portions of group Honors Projects must be equivalent to that of individual Honors Projects. Plan to spend a minimum of 130 hours on each 3-credit semester of your thesis or project (more in proportion to the number of credits registered). Your thesis or project Committee Chair will help you establish a timeline and due dates for the 499Y semester and completion of your 499T/P thesis or project (see Plan Instructions below).

*Note: There are two registration options for honors theses and honors projects: 1) **individually contracted** by the student and a faculty guidance committee using CHC 499Y/T/P contract forms and 2) special topic **seminars** taught by faculty -- advertised in the online Honors Course Guide and scheduled on SPIRE. Regardless of which option is selected, the expectations for intellectual effort and original scholarship or creative work are the same.*

### REGISTRATION

Fill out the 499Y Contract form thoroughly and legibly. Then

- **Attach a completed 499Y-Semester Plan** (see instructions on next page)
- Have the 499Y Contract with the attached 499Y-Semester Plan reviewed and signed by your Committee Chair, Honors Program Director (HPD) of the department in which the course is to be registered, and Honors Program Director (HPD) of your DH department if you are pursuing Departmental Honors
- Contact your Academic Dean to request any credit overrides so that your 499Y credits may be registered on SPIRE
- If necessary, check and remove any HOLDS on your SPIRE account which might hinder course registration
- Submit your 499Y Contract and 499Y-Semester Plan **with all approval signatures** to Room 201 Commonwealth Honors College
- Allow at least six business days for review by the CHC Academic Standards Committee and registration by CHC office

### DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF CONTRACT AND SEMESTER PLAN

Your 499Y Contract and 499Y-Semester Plan with all permission signatures should be submitted to 201 Commonwealth Honors College:

- **April or May** for fall semester registration
- **November or December** for spring semester registration

Your 499Y work should begin the first week of the 499Y semester. Therefore, 499Y Contracts with 499Y-Semester Plans that are received in CHC within the Add/Drop semester of 499Y work will be considered late. If these materials are received after the first week of the Add/Drop Period, registration may be delayed because 499Y-Semester Plans must be reviewed by the CHC Academic Standards Committee prior to registration.

## 499Y-SEMESTER PLAN INSTRUCTIONS

When attached to your fully approved 499Y Contract form, the 499Y-Semester Plan is a binding contract (similar to a course syllabus) for the 499Y semester of your Honors Thesis or Honors Project. This contract protects you and your committee from misunderstandings that might cause grading problems. If you and your committee mutually agree upon changes to the initial plan, please submit a revised 499Y-Semester Plan (with your Committee Chair's signature) to the CHC office for your own benefit.

Organize your 499Y-Semester Plan using the sub headers below. Consult your Honors Thesis or Project Committee Chair for guidance in writing your 499Y-Semester Plan. Your Committee Chair may request additional information or may adjust the headers with specific requirements that reflect the professional standards within the department.

### 1. STATEMENT REGARDING THE GOAL OF THE THESIS OR PROJECT

What do you intend to research and hope to discover or create during your Honors Thesis or Project experience?

### 2. KEY READINGS

List the key readings for the 499Y semester.

### 3. COMMUNICATION

- How often will you meet with your Committee Chair?
- What are your Committee Chair's expectations of such meetings?
- What time commitment is expected to be applied to your research between meetings with your Committee Chair? (For example, 10 hours of work per week.)

### 4. SPECIALIZED TRAINING

If work on your thesis or project should require specialized training (e.g., human/animal subjects testing, lab-safety instruction, survey technique), please specify the type of training required and when and from whom that training will be obtained.

### 5. METHODOLOGY

- If you have already begun or will start your actual research early in the 499Y semester, then your 499Y-Semester Plan must include a description of the methodology that you and your Committee Chair have agreed upon.
- If your research will begin later in the 499Y semester, then your 499Y-Semester Plan must include a deadline date by which you and your Chair will have agreed upon your methodology. This agreement must precede the onset of your research, and the methodology must then be described in your proposal for the 499T/499P semester.

### 6. TIMELINE

Include deadline dates and specific expectations for:

- An assignment due before the end of the "Withdrawal Period" (see UMass Academic Calendar). E.g., a summary of the initially assigned readings, a draft of one or more sections of your Thesis or Project Proposal, or even a first draft of a chapter of your Thesis/Project
- Any other first-semester assignments (weekly lab reports, annotated bibliography, other benchmark) specified by your Committee Chair
- Selection of second committee member
- Submission of the "499T/P Honors Thesis/Project Contract" form with affiliated Honors Thesis or Project Proposal. (*This deadline should be prior to the end of the 499Y semester.*)

## 499Y GRADING

499Y "Honors Research" may be graded with an "A through F" grade or a "Y" grade (a non-penalty INC) until the final semester of research is complete. If the instructor prefers to submit a "Y" grade, s/he must enter a revised final grade on SPIRE when the final 499T or 499P grade is submitted.

*Please complete and submit the form on the following page.*

# COMMONWEALTH HONORS COLLEGE

201 Commonwealth Honors College  
University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst, Massachusetts 01003  
413.545.2483 [info@honors.umass.edu](mailto:info@honors.umass.edu) [www.honors.umass.edu](http://www.honors.umass.edu)

## CHC Approval & Registration Authorization

Office use only

CHC Faculty Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Admin Review: \_\_\_\_\_

SPIRE: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: \_\_\_\_\_

## 499Y Honors Research: Contract and Registration Form (Part I of Honors Thesis or Project)

Contract submission deadline dates: April/May for fall semester registration; November/December for spring semester registration.

### STUDENT SECTION

Last Name, First:		Grad Year:	Spire ID:
Phone:	Email Address: @umass.edu		
Primary Major:	Secondary Major:		
I am a member of Commonwealth Honors College: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	(If applicable) I am pursuing Departmental Honors in:		
This is a (check one): <input type="checkbox"/> Thesis <input type="checkbox"/> Project	<input type="checkbox"/> I need these credits to reach 12 credits for fulltime status for my 499Y semester.	<input type="checkbox"/> If necessary, I have obtained overload permission from my Academic Dean so these credits can be added to my SPIRE schedule.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I have read and followed the instructions from the section of this form titled "499Y-SEMESTER PLAN INSTRUCTIONS"			
<input type="checkbox"/> I understand that the attached plan is binding and part of my permanent UMass record; it may be shown to graduate schools upon request.			
Student's Signature:		Date:	

### FACULTY SECTION - REVIEW and APPROVAL of 499Y-SEMESTER PLAN and COURSE REGISTRATION REQUEST

*The UMass credit norm is 3 hours of student work per credit per week;  
For example: 3 credits = 9 or more hours of work per week for 13 weeks; 6 credits = 18 or more hours of work per week for 13 weeks*

**COMMITTEE CHAIR:** *I have reviewed and I approve the student's Honors Research Plan (attached), number of credits requested and department for course registration. As Chair, I will take responsibility for guiding lab safety, human subject testing, and/or proprietary issues so that the resultant manuscript may be made public through the Du Bois Library archives.*  
↓ **Info and Approval**

Part I: 499Y Research: <input type="checkbox"/> 3cr <input type="checkbox"/> 4cr	Committee Chair must provide justification via email to <a href="mailto:signatures@honors.umass.edu">signatures@honors.umass.edu</a> for: <input type="checkbox"/> 5cr <input type="checkbox"/> 6cr	
499Y Registration Department/SPIRE Subject Area (e.g., ENGLISH, KIN, M&I-ENG):	499Y Registration Semester and Year:	
Chair's Name (please print):	Dept:	
Dept Address:	Phone:	Email:
Chair's Signature:		Date:

*For DH Students only:*  
**HONORS PROGRAM DIRECTOR of DH department; approval as DH requirement:** *The credits and course registration department requested above are appropriate to the 499Y-Semester Plan attached, and acceptable for the DH 499Y Part I requirement in my department.*

HPD Name (please print):	HPD Signature:	Date:
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**HONORS PROGRAM DIRECTOR of department in which the course is to be registered (as noted above):** *The expectations outlined in the attached proposal do or do not meet the standards of my department. This 499 coursework:*  
 may  may not be registered in my department.

HPD Name (please print):	HPD Signature:	Date:
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