

Program in Middle East and North African Studies
Honors Guidelines
2013-14

1. In order to be eligible for honors work in the MENA Program the student must have taken two quarters of MENA 301, and completed at least three courses past the first year in one of the approved languages for the MENA major. Students must have at least a 3.5 grade point average in courses counting toward the major at the time of the application for honors.
2. Students eligible for honors must consult with the MENA Director/Director of Undergraduate Studies and their proposed Senior Thesis advisor to discuss the possibility of writing an honors thesis no later than the beginning of the third week of the Spring Quarter of their Junior year. Students studying abroad during the spring of their junior year are required to contact the MENA Director about their intentions in writing (email is acceptable). The timing of this discussion is crucial in order that the process of securing a thesis advisor can begin. It is the student's responsibility to approach and secure a thesis Advisor (see below), but the Director will assist and advise in this process.
3. Students eligible for honors submit to the MENA Director an approximately 300 word Honors Thesis proposal describing the proposed project, plus an initial bibliography of approximately 5-10 titles, plus a letter of endorsement from their proposed Senior Thesis advisor stating that he or she is willing to supervise the student's work (an email to that effect is acceptable). This must be submitted by three weeks prior to the end of classes in the Spring Quarter of the student's junior year. This proposal will be approved, rejected, or sent back for revision by the MENA Director/DUS. Students may appeal rejected proposals to the MENA Program Committee.
4. Students who are accepted to undertake an honors thesis must enroll in 3 quarters of MENA 399, Independent Study, during their senior year. These courses will count toward the major requirements of the MENA major, and will be distributed evenly across each of the three disciplinary categories (i.e., 1 credit per each category).
5. Students are expected to conduct original and independent research for their honors project, involving fieldwork, surveys, archival, and/or library research. The student must define a research subject or question, determine what is known about the topic, design and carry out the collection of new and relevant material, and

present an original interpretation or synthesis of the material collected. Students may focus their theses around primary material—including archival material and/or original fieldwork—scholarly literature, or some combination of both. Since the MENA program encompasses multiple disciplinary approaches, the length and scope of theses should be adjusted to the norms of the discipline(s) in which it is written, in consultation with the student's advisor(s). The length of theses may vary and will ordinarily range between 25 and 40 double-spaced pages. Expectations about the length of the thesis and approval for theses outside of these guidelines should be discussed with the student's thesis advisor.

6. Translation projects are not acceptable as Honors Thesis projects. However, students may combine an original translation with an interpretative essay that places the work in its historical, sociocultural, and/or literary context, so long as the latter follows the guidelines outlined in number 5 above and is supervised by a member of the Core Faculty, as outlined in number 7 below.

7. Students will develop and undertake their honors projects in consultation with a faculty advisor. The student's advisor must be a member of the MENA Core Faculty, as posted on the MENA website. Students may have a co-advisor or a secondary advisor, who may be any member of the Northwestern faculty, including visiting faculty, continuing lecturer faculty, and postdoctoral fellows. (Graduate students, including those who may have served as teaching assistants, may not serve as primary or secondary advisors.) Students are expected to meet regularly with their advisors; interpretations of "regular meetings" may vary across faculty advisors, and should be established between student and advisor at the beginning of the thesis process, but meeting several times per quarter is expected. If the student does not keep regular contact with his/her advisor or if the student feels that his/her advisor is not properly supervising his/her work the student or advisor may discuss this issue with the Director/DUS who will make every effort to resolve this problem.

8. When the student's honors project is completed the research paper will be evaluated by the student's Advisor and one faculty member not specifically connected with the project. If the student has co-Advisors or a second advisor, both advisors will be asked to write an evaluation, and a third faculty member not connected formally to the project will also be asked to write an evaluation. Each reader will write a letter describing and evaluating the quality of the paper in terms of importance and originality of research questions, selection and use of appropriate methods, data, and/or archives for analysis, and presentation and interpretation of results.

9. The MENA Program Committee will review the following material in making recommendations for honors:

a) the student's transcript (3.5 grade point average in major core courses is required and appropriate independent study and/or graduate level seminar must have been taken)

b) the student's overall GPA for their junior and senior years must be 3.5;

c) letters written by two faculty readers (student's advisor and a second reader) (if there is a division of opinion the paper will be read by a third faculty reader).

10. The Program Committee will vote on each candidate for honors. This vote will be recorded. The Director/DUS will retain the advisor's letter as well as the second reader's letter and forward the recommendation of the Program Committee to the Weinberg College Committee on Undergraduate Academic Excellence.

11. All students will receive an email notifying them of the Program Committee's decision about whether to recommend the student for honors. If a student is not recommended for honors and wishes to appeal the decision of the Program Committee then he/she may petition the Director of the MENA Program who, at his/her discretion, will convene an ad hoc committee to review the case.

Approved by MENA Program Committee (Brian Edwards, Chair; Uri Horesh, Rebecca Johnson, Hamid Naficy, Jessica Winegar), December 2013.

Approved by the WCAS Committee on Undergraduate Academic Excellence, December 2013.