

## HONORS in AFRICANA STUDIES

A student wishing to **graduate with honors in Africana Studies** must complete an “honors dossier” during the Winter Study period and subsequent Spring Semester of the student’s senior year. This dossier is comprised of several components linked by a single theme of a student’s choosing. The components are as follows:

- **Two substantially re-worked papers/projects** from Africana courses completed *before* the second semester of the student’s senior year. We expect considerable revision and expansion here. To receive honors the finished work must be intellectually and significantly distinct from the original work. (This is not merely about word choice, grammar, and the like. Students should do new research, read broadly, expand their knowledge, and incorporate relevant materials into the entire project.)
- **One new essay/project**, completed under the direction of a faculty member.
- **A substantive introduction that explains the theme (theoretical, geographic, chronological, for example) that connects the three pieces.** The introduction must address the significance of the theme to the interdisciplinary study of the peoples and cultures of the African diaspora. It should also explain the logic of the three papers/projects and how they work together.
- **A brief epilogue** that describes the impact of completing a dossier upon you, the candidate.

Dossiers will be due in mid-April (after Spring Break). At the Honors presentation in the spring, each Honors student will prepare for, and give an oral defense of, their dossier. During the defense, students will present the key points of their projects and field questions from the audience.

If you are interested in doing an honors dossier, you should:

- Begin thinking about the theme(s) that might connect your ideas and what sort of new essay/project you would like to create.
- Speak with potential advisors. Advisors are the moving pieces here. We will try to abide by preferences and intellectual affinities, but we may need to shift students away from their first choice advisor.
- Learn more about the process. A meeting is typically held in early October, and will be publicly announced.
- Review your eligibility. You must be: 1) a declared concentrator, and 2) have a GPA generally of at least 3.3 in Africana courses.
- Write an **honors dossier proposal (see below)**, which are typically due to our departmental administrative assistant in early November.
- Register for the Africana Honors seminar in the spring semester. (Keep in mind that the winter study and honors course and are *in addition to* the five courses required for the concentration).
- Faculty will meet to evaluate the proposals. You will receive word before the end of the fall semester about whether your proposal has been accepted.
- Oral presentations for Honors students are typically held in late April.

## HONORS DOSSIER PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

The **Honors Dossier Proposal** briefly outlines your proposed honors project. It is also a conceptual map that reminds you of your research objectives, and aids you in the ever-important process of keeping your project feasible for the scope of the proposed research period. The proposal should be 2-3 pages, *excluding* a Working Bibliography. As you begin crafting your proposal, you may find helpful the text *The Craft of Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition by Wayne C. Booth, *et al* (University of Chicago Press, 2008). Consultation with your potential advisor or the department chair in advance of your proposal submission is required.

The proposal should detail your ideas for a theme. We encourage you to think creatively about the theme you put forward. Your theme might have to do with a theoretical concept, a region, a category of analysis, or a chronological time period. All proposals should include the following:

- 1) **Research Question:** What is the primary question guiding your selection of the existing papers/projects that you will enhance, and your proposed new research? By design, the research question indicates what it is that you want to learn. It should not be confused with a hypothesis, which is your hunch or expectation about what you think is going to occur. The research question should be concise, and relatively narrow in scope: for example, “How do black, sophomore women at Williams practice religion on a daily basis? (Particularizing question) *versus* “Are black women at Williams religious?” (General question)
- 2) **Background and Significance:** Why are you choosing this project? Why is it important to you and what intellectual contribution will it make to the field of Africana Studies?
- 3) **Paper/Project Selection:** What existing two papers/projects are you going to use and *how* do you plan to revise/expand them? As you consider your revisions/expansions, include some thoughts on how you would like to revise. For example, when you review those papers/projects, what lingering questions do you have? What was left unfinished? How might the work be reorganized or fleshed out?
- 4) **Format:** What is the format of your proposed dossier? Will it be a multi-media project? A performance collection? An image portfolio? A traditional paper, etc.?
- 5) **Method(s):** What approach(es) are you going to use and why is it most appropriate for your proposed project? Are you using more than one method? If so, how are you putting them together?
- 6) **Bibliography (2 pages maximum):** Your bibliography should give a broad overview of the various sources that are relevant to your project, that you have used, and that you will use. Your bibliography should use *The Chicago Manual of Style* format. For examples see: <http://library.williams.edu/citing/>.
- 7) **Existing papers/projects:** Students must submit the original copies of the two existing papers /projects along with their proposals, and also indicate the courses in which the works were originally submitted. These items will be returned to candidates.

Stylistically, each proposal format may vary. You may, for example, begin with your research question or prefer to introduce the project by articulating its significance. Whatever style you choose be certain your proposal includes the above components, and that those components are clearly identified. As a reminder, it is a healthy part of the research process if your final dossier changes in scope and focus between the submission of your proposal and the end of your spring semester.