

FTT Senior Thesis Program and Honors

The FTT Senior Thesis Program enables students to undertake a capstone passion project of their choice while working closely with expert professors across the course of their final academic year. Students can write critical analysis or history of film, TV, or theatre; produce a viable short film; undertake a screenwriting or playwriting project; invent a digital media resource; or explore other high-level FTT projects.

FTT majors are invited to apply in *spring of their junior year to complete the two-semester thesis project during their senior year*. Upon completion of the thesis project and all requirements in their senior year, students will be eligible to receive the Honors designation upon graduation, provided their project is approved for that designation by the FTT Thesis & Honors Committee.

In lieu of a thesis, in certain exceptional cases, students enrolled in Documentary Production or Advanced Production in their senior year who did not apply for the Senior Thesis program but have completed extraordinary work may be invited to submit their film for Honors consideration. Students may only submit one film for such consideration.

General Guidelines

- All FTT juniors are eligible to apply for the Senior Thesis Program. However, it is expected that only those students who are capable of completing an intensive research project of high quality across their senior year will apply. Also, we strongly discourage students who plan to complete a Senior Thesis in another department or program from applying.
- The proposed thesis can be either a critical studies written project or a creative production project in film, television, or theatre. Though the exact length of the project will be determined in consultation with FTT advisors, the critical studies project (*i.e.* history, theory, dramaturgy, analysis) will likely consist of a 50-page research paper, and the production project will likely consist of a viable creative product (*i.e.* script, film production, video essay, video or web production, theatrical production) accompanied by a 10-15 page research paper that explicates relevant intellectual concepts underlying the creative project.
- For any proposed project, it is expected that the student will by the start of his/her senior year have exhausted all course offerings related to the thesis topic or project. In other words, you cannot write a play without first taking all possible playwriting courses; you cannot make a documentary unless you have taken relevant courses. This means that if you want to do a thesis, you should focus your courses as much as possible toward that goal.

Prerequisites for thesis film production projects are especially stringent.

Application Details

● The deadline to submit a Senior Thesis application for the 2023-24 program is April 2. All materials should be emailed to the Thesis & Honors Committee director, Olivier Morel (omorel@nd.edu).

● For students undertaking a project other than a film production, the Senior Thesis application should consist of the following:

- 1) A 1-2 page cover letter explaining why the opportunity to complete a thesis project is of value to the student and why the student believes s/he is capable of completing the project;
- 2) A list of all FTT courses the student has taken and with which faculty members;
- 3) A 1-2 page proposal for the planned thesis project topic, including a description of the research or creative plan the student expects to undertake and a preliminary bibliography with a minimum of five sources;
- 4) A letter of support from an FTT faculty member; (this can be emailed to Prof. Morel by the recommender rather than included with the proposal); this letter should mention the name, or any suggestion on who might serve as a secondary advisor;
- 5) One sample of previous work that indicates the student's potential to complete the proposed thesis project, such as a course paper, a screenplay, a portfolio, etc.

● For students intending to produce a narrative or documentary short film, the Senior Thesis application should consist of the following:

- 1) A 1-2 page cover letter explaining why the opportunity to realistically complete a short film is of value to the student and why the student believes s/he is capable of completing the project and a brief summary of a project idea. It is critical that this document addresses the possible technical, financial, and physical limitations that might affect the viability of the project (for ex., travel constraints, crew, skills and training, size of the project...); those limitations should be very carefully addressed by the student in conversation with their advisors.
- 2) A list of all FTT courses the student has taken and with which faculty members;
- 3) A letter of support from an FTT faculty member; (this can be emailed to Prof. Morel by the recommender rather than included with the proposal); this letter should mention or suggest a secondary advisor.
- 4) A portfolio that indicates the student's potential to complete an advanced film production project: a screenplay, short film, storyboards, etc.

● Senior Thesis applications will be reviewed by the Thesis & Honors Committee. Acceptance will be primarily based on the viability and value of the proposed project, the level of faculty support for the student and the project, the committee's judgment of the student's ability to realistically complete the project, and the student's academic standing within FTT and the university. (Note: In applying for the Thesis program, you tacitly offer permission for the Thesis Committee to check your GPA.) Students will be informed of the approval decision in time for Fall registration. A student enrolled in the program may not subsequently change a thesis topic without approval from the advisor and the Thesis Committee; if an initially approved topic turns out to be untenable, the student will likely be dropped from the program.

Project Schedule and Requirements

- By the time of registration for senior-year fall courses, accepted students will confirm one faculty member to act as advisor for the Senior Thesis and another to serve as secondary reader/advisor; and will enroll in courses required by the advisor. Those required courses will include a one-credit thesis workshop in the Fall, in which enrollees will meet with FTT faculty on a regular basis to discuss project-completion strategies and to share work in progress, and either a three-credit Thesis & Undergrad Research course with their advisor or a course in the semester curriculum dictated by the advisor in Fall and Spring. (Note: Only one Thesis & Undergrad course will count as an upper-level elective toward the standard FTT major requirements.) The workload for the thesis each semester should not be significantly less nor significantly more than is expected of a student enrolled in a three-credit upper-level course.
- Permission to proceed (end of Fall semester of the Senior Year): near the end of the Fall semester, Senior Thesis students will submit a progress report to their advisors and the Thesis & Honors Committee. If the project is deemed by the thesis advisor and the committee to be progressing at an acceptable rate and quality level, the student will be graded appropriately in their thesis-related course for their work and approved to enroll in the Thesis & Undergrad Research courses for the spring. Those students not deemed to be progressing at an acceptable rate and quality level will be graded appropriately for their work in the Fall course of study and will not continue on with the Senior Thesis program.
- Throughout their time in the Thesis program, students must maintain solid academic standing within FTT and the university. Any student whose department or university GPA drops below a 3.0 can be dropped from the program, and individual grade deficiencies in FTT courses may result in the student being dropped from the program. (Note: In being part of the Thesis program, you tacitly offer permission for the Thesis Committee to check your GPA and course grades as necessary to determine your academic standing.)
- In late spring of their senior year (typically around mid-April), Senior Thesis program students will submit a completed draft of their thesis project. Students will defend their projects in front of faculty and peers on the Friday morning of the last week of class (typically in early May). The Committee will then determine if the project will be designated as a Senior Thesis or a Senior Thesis with Honors.

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