

Grading 2011- 12

The thesis receives a grade from two readers who are assigned by the Director(s) of Undergraduate Studies. The adviser and others who have given substantive feedback to the student's written work on the thesis topic **will not** grade the thesis. The grades range from Highest Honors to No Honors. The grading scale for a thesis differs from that of a seminar paper in that the higher end of the grading scale is much broader (i.e., A is the highest grade given on a seminar paper, while A++ represents the highest grade given a thesis).

Thesis Grade	English Equivalent	Points	Letter Grade Equivalent
Summa	Highest Honors	5.0	A++
<i>There is not a Summa + or Summa -</i>			
Magna Plus	High Honors	4.33	A+
Magna	High Honors	4.0	A
Magna Minus	High Honors	3.67	A-
Cum Plus	Honors	3.33	B+
Cum	Honors	3.0	B
Cum Minus	Honors	2.67	B-
C+	No Honors	2.33	C+
C	No Honors	2.0	C
C-	No Honors	1.67	C-
D+	No Honors	1.33	D+
D	No Honors	1.0	D
D-	No Honors	0.67	D-
E	Fail	---	E

A thesis found to contain an original contribution to knowledge of some significance may be awarded Summa (Highest Honors). This does not necessarily mean that it must explore a "few" or little-studied problem. An original contribution to knowledge can also result from a novel and perceptive reassessment of a familiar question. College-wide, fewer than 5% of all seniors receive Summa/Highest Honors.

A Magna (High Honors) thesis need not be an original contribution to knowledge, but it should show sound judgment, a substantial amount of work, clarity of thought and presentation, and some creativity. The research design should be sound and the data judiciously interpreted, although slight flaws in design or analysis may be allowed. Such flaws should not be substantial however; if they are, the thesis will receive Cum Laude/Honors designation. College-wide, about 29% of all seniors receive Magna/High Honors.

The Cum Laude (Honors) thesis differs from the High Honors thesis in the difficulty of the problem addressed, the amount of work shown by the student, the clarity of the presentation and the soundness of the conclusions reached. Cum Laude/Honors is a grade signifying a high quality but not particularly unusual piece of research.

Calculating Honors

In order to be considered for honors in Sociology a student must have written a senior thesis. In order to be recommended for honors, a student must receive **at least one** honors grade (cum- or higher) on their senior thesis. The final **departmental** recommendation for honors is based on the following formula:

1. For **straight concentrators**, an average of the student's best 8 letter grades (including 4 of the 5 individually required courses Intro level, SOC 128, SOC 97, SOC 156, SOC 98) out of the total 12 Sociology half-courses is calculated. The student's grade for SOC 99, graded SAT/UNS, and the student's final semester grades are not included in this calculation. This average counts for 60% of the student's honors calculation. (Note: If fewer than 8 letter grades are available, then all available grades will be used in the calculation.)

For **joint concentrators**, an average of the student's best 6 grades (including the 5 individually required courses Intro level, SOC 128, SOC 97, SOC 156, SOC 98) out of the total 9 Sociology half-courses is calculated. The student's grade for SOC 99, graded SAT/UNS, and the student's final semester grades are not included in this calculation. This average counts for **60%** of the student's honors calculation. (Note: If fewer than 6 letter grades are available, then all available grades will be used in the calculation.)

2. An average of the two thesis grades (using the numerical conversions shown on page 59) is calculated. The average then counts for **40%** of the student's honors calculation. If the two thesis evaluations are at least one full Latin grade apart (e.g., a magna-plus and a cum, or a cum and a C-), a third reader may review the thesis. If a third reader grades the thesis, the final thesis grade will be determined by taking the numerical average of all three grades. This average will still count for 40% of the student's honors calculation.

Honors recommendations are determined as follows:

HONORS	= 3.0	(overall) or greater
HIGH HONORS	= 3.5	(overall) or greater, with a minimum grade average of 3.67
HIGHEST HONORS	= 4.0	(overall) or greater. This requires at least one summa thesis grade and no thesis grade below magna-minus, with a minimum grade average of 3.67

It is important to note that grades are weighted more heavily than the thesis in the overall recommendation. Please also remember that the grades from spring semester senior year cannot be counted for the honors calculations. The requirements for honors are stringent, particularly for High Honors and Highest Honors. For High Honors you need to have an A- grade point

average as well as an outstanding thesis. For Highest Honors you need to have an A- grade point average, at least one thesis grade of Summa, and no thesis grades below Magna. Of those who write theses in our department, about half usually receive Cum Laude and half receive Magna designations. Summa is rare.

The faculty members of the Committee on Undergraduate Degrees (CUD) review the calculations, the thesis grades, and the thesis comments and prepare honors recommendations for each student. Honors recommendations are brought before the departmental faculty for a final vote and are subject to their revisions.

For joint concentrators, the honors recommendation of the Department of Sociology must be supported by the secondary concentration in order for the recommendation to be accepted by the Registrar's Office.

Final determination of honors is made by the College. Sociology recommendations and Harvard College recommendations do not always coincide. The faculty of Harvard College cannot raise a student's recommendation above that which is determined by the Committee on Undergraduate Degrees in Sociology, but it can lower the recommendation when the student fails to meet college-wide cut-offs. Starting in June 2005, Harvard College has limited the number of students graduating Summa Cum Laude and Magna Cum Laude together to 20% and students graduating Cum Laude to 30% of the student body.