Honors Thesis in Environmental Science and Policy

Scope and Intent: Normally, an honors thesis in ES&P will consider both the scientific and political/policy aspects and implications of the project topic, using an analytic approach and illustrating competency in both (1) the scientific methods or information relevant to the topic and (2) the policy-making process and political implications for addressing the issue. The nature of the analysis will vary from discipline to discipline, but in all cases it should move beyond a merely descriptive approach to the topic. To demonstrate competency, you should be able to explain how a non-science topic relates to the relevant science or, alternatively, explain the policy/political implications of a science topic.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis, a thesis in ES&P has two co-advisers. Normally, one adviser will be a faculty member in the natural sciences and one will be a faculty member in the policy/social sciences/humanities.

Checklist

1. A minimum GPA of 3.2 is expected.

2. Starting by the beginning of February of your junior year, you should express preliminary intent to pursue an honors project, identify at least one adviser, and discuss the scope and focus of the thesis (including the balance of scientific and political/policy analysis and data collection) with that adviser. By the end of March of that year, you must submit a short proposal as a letter of intent to pursue honors to the ES&P Program Committee. The Committee will review the proposal, suggest revisions and, if not already done, identify a second adviser to supervise your honors thesis. The full proposal is to be submitted at the beginning of the Fall semester of your senior year, according to the deadlines set by the College’s Subcommittee on Honors and Independent Projects.

3. It is your job to make sure that you have the appropriate methodological training to successfully complete your proposed honors project. Be aware that different disciplines have different ways of thinking about evidence and analysis.

4. If human subjects are involved in your research, you must seek Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before data collection begins ([http://www.smith.edu/irb/](http://www.smith.edu/irb/)). If you are doing research involving vertebrate animals, you must seek approval from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. If you are working with hazardous chemicals, you must contact Margaret Rakas, Manager of Inventory and Regulatory Affairs, Clark Science Center.

5. You should plan to spend some time on your thesis the summer before your senior year. Tasks may include reviewing relevant literature, collecting data, acquiring
methodological skills or other tasks. Consult with your advisers on how best to use summer.

6. ES&P honors students are required to present an overview of their honors project at an ES&P lunchbag by the end of the fall semester of their senior year. Early in the fall semester, contact Anne Wibiralske (awibiralske@smith.edu) to set up a date and location.

7. Be aware of college-wide honors requirements and due dates, listed on the Class Deans website: https://www.smith.edu/about-smith/class-deans/honors