THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
BA MAJOR IN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

GUIDELINES FOR THE BA THESIS PAPER

The BA thesis paper should demonstrate that the student has achieved the level of competence in his or her specialization that is expected of Bachelor’s degree candidates at the University of Chicago. The paper provides the opportunity to apply disciplined research skills and critical abilities to a piece of research on a topic of the student’s choice. The BA thesis should be more comprehensive in both information gathering and analysis than a general term paper.

The length of the BA thesis paper will vary according to the approach chosen and the subject matter involved. Most projects will be between 30-50 pages. The student is advised to consult and follow published style guides appropriate to a specific discipline.

The student is responsible for working out arrangements with the faculty adviser, including a schedule for the completion and evaluation of the paper, within the time frame set out by CLAS and the convocation deadlines.

BA thesis papers in Latin American Studies should fulfill criteria of excellence comparable to those employed in the evaluation of BA papers in other degree departments. Although BA theses are not formally graded, papers must be judged in an equivalent quality to earn a grade of B or higher in order to be acceptable.

The paper in its final form must be approved by the faculty sponsor and should be turned into CLAS by the assigned date. Papers should include a signed BA Paper Certification form with separate written comments. In the case of irreconcilable differences in questions of thesis acceptability and/or grade, the CLAS Director will select a second reader and make the final determination.

To be recommended for honors, a student must provide original research and/or new knowledge in the field of research. Faculty readers may recommend/decline to recommend a student for honors on the BA thesis approval form.

Theses should:

• Demonstrate a student’s ability to develop a good, original question;
• Demonstrate a student’s ability to utilize discipline-appropriate methodologies and conduct topic-appropriate research;
• Utilize both primary and secondary sources;
• Clearly articulate a scholarly article.

Questions for Evaluation:
• Does the thesis clearly articulate and explain the research question?
• Does the thesis formulate a coherent and developing argument?
• Does the thesis show evidence that appropriate scholarly analysis, criticism, and research/methodological texts relevant to the topic have been identified and relevant concepts understood?
• Does the student make appropriate use of citations?
• Does the thesis demonstrate competence in understanding and evaluating the material?
• Has there been a rigorous regard to accuracy and thoroughness?
• Has there been a rigorous regard for the ethical issues associated with this project (where relevant)?
• Does the thesis have a logical structure? Does its structure/imagery/graphs etc. support the overall development of the argument?