



## **CGSC 498, Honors Thesis**

**Units: 4**

**Location:**

**Instructor:**

**Office:**

**Office Hours:**

**Contact Info:**

### **Course Description**

This course provides a framework to support honors students writing their honors theses. The honors thesis should be based on an original research question and represent the culmination of the student's work to address the question. The research itself can take the form of experiments, theoretical analyses and critiques of the existing literature, or a combination of methods. The research plan will be developed under the guidance of the faculty thesis advisor, but students are expected to generate the general research question independently. Students are encouraged to plan ahead, and to consider taking CGSC 490x, directed research, either prior to or concurrently with GCSC 498, although this is not required.

### **Learning Objectives**

At the end of this course, the student will have demonstrated the ability to identify a gap in knowledge or understanding in an area of cognitive science, develop a research question that addresses the gap, and formulate a research plan to address the question. In planning and executing the research, student will learn to appraise and critique prior research in the scientific literature, which might involve arguing for or against theoretical proposals. In some cases, student will learn to design and implement one or more experiments, and analyze the results. The student will author a written thesis that will relate the student's research findings to prior theoretical views, and will defend a theoretical position pertaining to the original question.

**Recommended Preparation:** Students should identify a thesis advisor before registering for the course. Students should consider enrolling in CGSC 490x, Directed Research, prior to or concurrent with the Honors Thesis course, especially if the thesis involves collecting data through experiments. Since the director of the cognitive science major and the faculty advisor must approve of the research plan (see *Course Notes*), the student is advised to discuss research plans with the advisor before the start of the semester in which CGSC 498 will be taken.

### **Course Notes**

The project must be approved by both the faculty advisor and the director of the cognitive science major, using the "CGSC 498, Honors Thesis Plan Approval Form," located at the end of this syllabus. The faculty advisor can be from any department related to cognitive science, but should have expertise related to the proposed thesis. Approval of the faculty advisor will be based on their judgement of the feasibility of the thesis, and of their ability to be an efficacious mentor. Approval of the the director of the cognitive science major will be based on their judgement of the relationship of the proposed thesis to cognitive science.

The student and faculty advisor should agree on a timeline for regular meetings, and methods for communicating about the advancement of the research and writing of the thesis. The student is expected to devote on average 12 hours per week on the course.

## **Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

TBD with faculty advisor.

## **Description and Assessment of Assignments**

The primary product that will be evaluated is the written thesis, which will be assessed by the faculty advisor. Since the quality of the thesis is tied to the quality of the research, the assessment will be based in part on the degree to which the student carried out the research according to the plan. This includes the time and effort devoted to the research, adhering to the research plan, and promptly communicating with the faculty advisor if problems or unexpected circumstances arise with respect to the research. Regular checkins between the student and faculty advisor are therefore essential (see *Course Notes*), as revisions to the research plan may become necessary. The thesis itself will broadly be assessed on the motivation of the research question, the accurate description of the research methods, the analysis of the research results, and the theoretical discussion of the implications. Further specific details about the requirements of the written work should be communicated to the student by the faculty advisor.

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

### Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](http://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

### Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086*  
[eeotix.usc.edu](http://eeotix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*  
[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776*  
[osas.usc.edu](http://osas.usc.edu)

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*

[ombuds.usc.edu](http://ombuds.usc.edu)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

*Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-3340 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)*

[chan.usc.edu/otfp](http://chan.usc.edu/otfp)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

**CGSC 498, Honors Thesis Plan Approval Form**

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's USC ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Advisor(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of thesis topic (provided by student):

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Faculty Advisor Approval:

As the faculty advisor, I agree to oversee the research, preparation, and evaluation of this student's honors thesis. We have discussed the expectations for the thesis, we have developed a research and writing plan, and we have agreed on a schedule of regular meetings or check-ins.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of the CGSC major (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date