ENVS HONORS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS & GUIDELINES
AY 2026-2027

ENVS Honors Coordinator: Dr. Anthony J. Martin, geoam@emory.edu

The Department of Environmental Sciences requirements complement those of the College. These requirements are intended to support your Honors thesis experience. Students should work with their faculty advisor to plan for and execute a plan for research, writing, establishing a committee and defending their thesis.

1. GPA AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students must be a senior, in their last two semesters at Emory, maintain a 3.7 or higher GPA in both the ENVS major and overall (cumulative) during their last two semesters at Emory. Students participating in the ENVS Honors Program are required to take two semesters of ENVS495:

- ENVS495A is taken in the first semester, for 4 credit hours. This class can also count as an advanced elective for students' ENVS degrees.
- Students should take ENVS495BW in the second semester, also for four credits. ENVS495BW will also fulfill a writing requirement for the college GERs.
- Students who plan to graduate in a Fall semester should have registered for ENVS495A in the Spring semester prior to their graduation semester and ENVS495BW in the Fall/graduation semester.

2. GRADUATE COURSE REQUIREMENT

Students must enroll in and pass (C or higher) a graduate-level (500 level or higher) course that is related to their Honors research project.

- A two-credit hour course will only fulfill the Honors requirement.
- A three or more credit hour course will fulfill the Honors requirement and may fulfill one ENVS major elective with the approval of the student's ENVS advisor.
- The graduate course must be taken for letter grade; talk with the instructor about the syllabus, course requirements, etc.
- To enroll in a graduate-level course, students will need to obtain written permission (e-mail is fine) from the course instructor. Once permission is received, please provide Leah Thomas (leah.thomas@emory.edu) with the approval e-mail and she will add you to the class during the add/drop/swap period.
- Students will also need to contact Leah Thomas (leah.thomas@emory.edu) to request a permission number for ENVS495A in the Fall semester and for ENVS495BW in the Spring semester. Fall semester graduates must take 495A the spring prior to their graduating semester, and 495BW in the graduating fall semester. Permission numbers will also be needed for enrollment.

3. HONORS COMMITTEE SELECTION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students must select a committee and e-mail the names to the College Honors Coordinator and to the ENVS Honors Coordinator by the College's early-bird committee selection deadline of **October 16, 2026** (final deadline **October 23, 2026**). The committee must include at least three faculty members employed at Emory University:

- one of whom must be the research advisor/mentor.
- at least one of whom must be in the Emory College Environmental Sciences Department.

- students are encouraged, but not required to include at least one member outside of the Environmental Sciences Department.

If a student would like to include someone who is an adjunct, visiting, emeritus faculty, or a post-doctoral fellow on their thesis committee the Department must petition the College Honors Committee for approval. This form should be filled out by the ENVS Honors Coordinator.

The Honors Committee mentors, facilitates, and monitors student progress. Specifically, committee members:

- read and evaluate student written and oral progress reports.
- attend a meeting in the student's first semester in the Honors program to provide feedback on their research plans.
- read and comment on the student thesis.
- evaluate the student thesis (written and oral), attend the oral defense, and assign the level of honors (as elaborated in the Thesis section).

4. RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND COMMITTEE APPROVAL

To stay on track, you must provide your committee members with a short research proposal (1-2 pages) describing your Honors project *before* Thanksgiving break. The proposal should:

- introduce the research area,
- state core research questions and/or hypotheses to be tested,
- describe any data to be collected or used to support your thesis,
- describe the methods to be used,
- discuss expected results,
- include a detailed timeline for thesis completion including target dates for key deliverables.

You must schedule a meeting with your full committee before Winter Break to discuss these plans. At this meeting, your committee will approve your proposal, discuss your work to date, and endorse continuation in the program in the following semester. NOTE: faculty members are often very busy at this time of year, so be sure to schedule this meeting early in the semester.

5. WRITTEN THESIS

Your final thesis should be a publication-quality piece of work that positions your project in a larger body of research, describes data and methodologies used in the work, clearly describes results, and discusses the implications of your findings. You can find examples of successful Honors theses on the ENVS Canvas page or by contacting the ENVS librarian Kristan Majors (kmajors@emory.edu). Under no circumstances should a student submit a thesis to their committee without their research advisor having read, revised, and approved the document.

6. ORAL DEFENSE

Present a 30-minute Oral Defense to your Honors Committee at least one week prior to the final written College thesis deadline (**April 7th, 2027**). This will be followed by general questions from the audience. Friends and family are welcome to attend but will be asked to leave after the general Q&A so that the committee can ask questions and make comments. Students will need to reserve an ENVS Department conference room in which to present their respective Oral Defense. Contact Leah Thomas (leah.thomas@emory.edu) to reserve a room.

The Honors Thesis Approval Form designating this approval must be submitted to the College along with the final, updated Honors Thesis on or before the same date that the ETD thesis submission is due (**April 7th, 2027**). The Honors Thesis Approval Form will also be the cover sheet for the student's thesis when presented to their respective committee.

NOTE: Some faculty are out of town in mid to late March/early April. Be certain to determine that the entire committee can be present during this time.

7. LEVELS OF HONORS

Once the final thesis is submitted and the oral presentation is complete, the Honors committee meets to determine a level of the honors award. Three levels of honors can be awarded by the committee.

- **HONORS:** the student has performed excellent work and demonstrates their understanding through the written thesis and by an oral presentation to both an expert and a general audience.
- **HIGH HONORS:** the student has performed excellent work and demonstrates their understanding through the written thesis and by an oral presentation to both an expert and a general audience. The quality of the work is sufficient to be presented (or has already been presented) at a regional or national meeting/conference.
- **HIGHEST HONORS:** the student has performed excellent work and demonstrates their understanding through the written thesis and by an oral presentation to both an expert and a general audience. For highest honors, the thesis is of publishable quality in a peer-reviewed journal. The work may have been published prior to the honors award, or the committee deems that the work could be published in the future.

ENVS HONORS PROGRAM CHECKLIST

____ **ASAP:** Students using human participants in their research must have IRB approval (http://www.emory.edu/IRB/). Approval to begin such research can take weeks or months; discuss this with the research advisor as soon as possible. If your research will involve vertebrate animals, discuss with your advisor and make sure that all approvals and protocols are in place before you begin. If you begin vertebrate animal or human subjects work without institutional approvals, we are required by departmental policy to remove you from the Honors program.

____ **ASAP:** Consider applying for a Lester or Turner grant to support your research efforts. More information can be found here: https://envs.emory.edu/undergraduate/scholarships-awards-grants/lester-turner-grants.html.

____ **September 2026 (to be determined):** Attend mandatory ENVS Honors Information session with the ENVS Honors Coordinator. The meeting day/time/location will be provided to candidates.

____ **September 11, 2026** – Honors roster deadline (from ENVS).

_____ **October 2, 2026**: Deadline for completing the mandatory Honors Orientation/ Copyright/ETD Module in Canvas as required by the College. The module will open to students on September 16th.

_____ **October 16, 2025:** "Early Bird" submission of ENVS Honors Thesis Committee Roster.

_____ **October 23, 2026:** Submit Honors Thesis Committee Roster form to ec.honorsprogram@emory.edu and CC ENVS Honors Coordinator. Note that this is the *required* date of submission for your committee member roster.

_____ **Before Thanksgiving Break:** Provide your committee members with a short research proposal (1-2 pages) describing your Honors project. The proposal should introduce the research area, core research questions and/or hypotheses to be tested, the methods to be used, and expected results. If you are working with human subjects or vertebrate animals, be sure to describe your plans to secure institutional support.

_____ **Before Winter Break:** Present a 15-minute Oral Progress Report to your Honors Committee prior to this date.

_____ **January 15th, 2027:** Final College deadline for submission of Honors Thesis Committee Roster for Spring grads. Note that ENVS students are subject to the earlier deadline in October.

_____ **March 2027:** Submit a publication-quality thesis to each committee member *at least two weeks prior to the final written thesis College deadline of April 7th, 2027*. The Honors Thesis Approval Form (thesis cover sheet) must be signed by your advisor before the thesis is provided to the committee members.

_____ **March 31, 2027: Oral Defense deadline!** You must schedule your oral defense *before this date.*

_____ **Mid-March-March 31, 2027:** Present a 30-minute oral defense/thesis to your Honors Committee *at least one week prior to the final written thesis deadline* (April 7th, 2027). This will give you the opportunity to integrate the committee's comments as appropriate. Once you have scheduled your defense date, book a room with Leah Thomas (leah.thomas@emory.edu) and email the ENVS Honors Coordinator with the details so they can advertise the defense to the Department.

_____ **April 7th, 2027, at noon**: **Written Thesis deadline!** Honors Thesis Form (Cover Sheet), Honors Thesis, and ETD Submission Deadline. This is the day you'll need to submit *the final written thesis and required forms* to the College. See the Honors Canvas page for more information.

_____ **May 2th, 2027:** Attend the College Honors Graduation Ceremony.

_____ **May 2027:** Attend the ENVS Honors Lunch to celebrate your accomplishments! The ENVS Honors Coordinator will send more information about the date/time/location closer to May.

_____ **May 10, 2027:** 🎉 Commencement, graduate with Honors! 🎉