

Table 1. The senior thesis rubric				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Focal question or hypothesis	Not clearly stated	Stated but unfocused, too broad, or too simplistic	Clearly stated, at an appropriate level of complexity	Significant and/or creative focus
Rationale/ motivation	No clear rationale or a weak rationale for the project	Some rationale presented, begins to motivate the work	Rationale makes clear why topic is worth investigating	Persuasive and creative rationale
Approach/ methodology	Not clear what was done or why, or an inappropriate method	Approach is generally appropriate for the topic	Clearly described and justified, well-chosen and properly executed	Creative and sophisticated methods
Scholarly context	Author overrelies on too few sources, or refers to published work without citations	Author demonstrates some awareness of a range of relevant literature	Author demonstrates broad awareness of the literature, including works presenting other perspectives	Author situates own work in a way that makes a contribution or identifies a new direction for investigation
Position	Does not take a clear or defensible position	States and/or critiques a position that may already be in the literature	Effectively supports, tests, extends, or critiques a position that may already be in the literature	Develops a clear and defensible position of his/her own
Argument	Weak, invalid, or no argument, perhaps a simple assertion	Some arguments valid and well supported, some not	Main arguments valid, systematic, and well supported	Arguments both well supported and genuinely compared to conflicting explanations
Use of evidence	Mostly relies on assertions or opinions rather than evidence, or evidence not clearly presented	Some appropriate use of evidence but uneven	Feasible evidence appropriately selected and not over-interpreted	Fully exploits the richness of the data/ evidence/ideas, and is sufficiently persuasive
Analytical insight	Treats related ideas or data as unrelated, or draws weak or unfounded connections	Begins to establish connections and perceive implications of the material	Brings together related data or ideas in productive ways, discusses implications of material	Develops insightful connections and patterns that require intellectual creativity
Writing mechanics				
Grammar, spelling, usage	Significantly impairs readability	Frequent or serious errors	Some minor errors	Virtually no errors
Organization	Needs significant reorganization	Structure is of inconsistent quality, may have choppy transitions, redundancies, or discontinuities	Structure supports the argument, clearly ordered sections fit together well	Structure enhances the argument; strong sections, seamless flow
Clarity, style, readability	Gets in the way of reading for content	Style is inconsistent or uneven	Effective prose style, follows relevant scholarly conventions, emergence of voice	Mastery of the genre, including elegant style, established voice
If this were a thesis at my institution, I would give it a grade of: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, F				