Guidelines for working with me as your honors thesis advisor:

Application Phase:
If you are eligible for the Honors Program in Psychology, would like to apply, and would like to have me as your advisor, please email me to set up an appointment to discuss your idea no later than the beginning of your junior year. Applications for the honors program are due during the fall semester of your junior year, so you need to contact me early to talk about being your advisor. Please see this webpage for more information regarding requirements: http://www.clarku.edu/departments/psychology/undergrad/research.cfm#honors

In order for me to serve as your advisor, I require three things:

1. **That you come to me with an idea.** This idea needs to be specific enough that we can begin a discussion of how to carry it out. You need to know your specific topic area. For example, “I’m interested in criminal behavior,” is not specific enough. Criminal behavior is an entire field of study that you can spend a lifetime on. What about criminal behavior are you interested in? What theory would you like to test? What age group are you interested in? What type of crime? Please make sure you have thought through an idea before approaching me to be your advisor.

2. **That your idea relates to my area of work**, which is violent behavior and family violence in general. I’m better versed in some specific topics in this general field than others, but it would need to be in this general area.

3. **That you propose to use quantitative methods (i.e., statistics) to analyze your data.** I do not have the expertise to supervise a qualitative study.

If I agree to serve as your advisor, you will need to submit to me a one-page summary of your thesis idea by the end of the fall semester. You are not locked into this idea; you may want to change some specifics about your idea as you progress through the spring semester, but I need to know that you are actively thinking about your idea. Please note that if your idea changes and #2 or #3 no longer apply, I can no longer be your thesis advisor. You will have to find another faculty member whose work matches your idea.

Spring Semester of Junior Year:
During the spring semester of your junior year, you should be actively researching and refining your idea. This will typically be done in conjunction with your honors seminar group. We can set up periodic meetings to discuss your progress in refining your idea, which should ultimately end with a proposal to the IRB at the end of the Spring semester to actually conduct your study. As your advisor, I will need to see and approve this proposal in order for it to be submitted to the IRB. You should submit your IRB proposal no later than the last deadline of the Spring semester. IRB deadlines can be found here: http://www.clarku.edu/offices/research/. All changes that the IRB requests as a result of their review should be completed and approved by the time you return to campus for the fall semester of your senior year.

Fall Semester of Senior Year: Evidence of Progress in Research and Writing
During the fall semester, you should show substantial progress in your writing and research. Data collection for your project should be completed by the end of the fall semester. Also by the *last day of classes* of the fall semester, your Introduction and Methods section should be
completed, along with a completed Reference section. I expect to see a rough draft of each of those sections by mid-semester, with final drafts of each submitted by the last day of classes. Please adhere to all guidelines for the writing of these sections that appear in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Edition.

Based on your progress during the fall semester and the quality of the final drafts that you hand in, I will determine whether you have a reasonable prospect of completing the thesis during the Spring semester. If I recommend continuation, you will receive an In Progress (IP) grade for the fall, and you can register for Honors again in the spring. You will receive a letter grade for both semesters upon completion of the Honors project in the Spring.

Spring Semester of Senior Year: Completion and Evaluation of Thesis

By the end of January of your senior year, you will need to submit to me an analysis plan – i.e., what statistics and variables you will be using to test your hypotheses. We will set up a meeting during the first week of February to discuss whether your plan is appropriate and make any necessary changes. In the meantime, you should be preparing your dataset for analysis.

By the end of February, you need to have all of your statistical analyses completed and a draft of your Results section submitted to me. Results sections are difficult to write, but two things can help: (1) Read the APA Publication Manual for guidance on how to write a Results section, and (2) Look at how other researchers have written their results sections; use their work as a guide. You need to write your Results section so that it is clear what you have done, but don’t be too boring in how you express it. Also, use tables to show your results (see below for a book you should purchase for creating tables). Results sections need to be precise and exact.

By the end of Spring Break, you should have submitted to me a revised Results section and a draft of your Discussion section. I typically do not read the Discussion section until the Results section is clear and correct, so we might have to go back and forth a few times at this point. Be prepared for this. Please note that this is a point where students have faltered in the past and may not be allowed to proceed. If I have read four or more drafts of your Results section and I feel that you are not understanding the statistics, what they mean, and what they imply for interpreting your hypotheses, I will not allow you to continue any further as an Honors student. At that point, we will tell Kelly Boulay that you will not be defending, and you will not get an Honors designation at graduation. However, you will receive a grade and capstone credit for your work, and you still must complete your full thesis for that credit.

A final draft of the thesis must be completed and approved by me at least two weeks before the deadline for Honors defenses. Failure to meet this deadline means that you forfeit the opportunity to receive Honors, but you must still complete an extensive written project in order to receive course credit and a grade.

Once I’ve approved your thesis, you can send it out to your committee and begin working on your defense presentation (typically a 20-minute or so power point presentation). You and I will meet to discuss the presentation itself and how it looks, and you are free to send me a draft of your presentation for review, but give me several days to provide feedback.
Kelly Boulay will send you additional information on when and how to choose your committee members. You should usually have this completed by the end of March. The committee will meet to hear an Oral Defense of your thesis by the defense deadline. You will be responsible for scheduling that hearing: Don’t wait until the last minute to schedule it because it is very difficult to merge the busy schedules of three faculty members along with your schedule at a time when about 15 other students are trying to schedule their defenses. The Thesis Committee will make the final determination of the awarding of Honors. The committee may grant honors, high honors, and highest honors, or may decide not to award honors.

Immediately after the hearing, you will be told whether you passed or not, and several days later, your designation will be emailed to you by Kelly Boulay after the rest of the faculty have approved the designations.

Other requirements:

- You must purchase *Presenting your findings: A practical guide for creating tables*, also published by the American Psychological Association.
- You must reread the sections of your Statistics book from PSYC105 that relate to the analyses that you will need to do to test your hypotheses. *This should be done no later than when you are developing your analysis plan.*
- You may need to teach yourself additional statistical tests if your hypotheses require them. I will provide you with those resources and invite you to come to classes in the coming weeks that I may be teaching that relate to that statistical test; however, the burden of learning that test is on you.

Other things you should know:

- The Psychology Department will make resources available to support your research and thesis preparation. You may apply for funding support. Kelly Boulay will email this information to you towards the end of your Junior year. Please feel free to ask any questions about funding at that time.
- You are invited, but not required, to present your honors thesis as a poster or oral presentation at Academic Spree Day. This would not be your formal defense, as Academic Spree Day tends to occur after the deadline, but will be another opportunity to showcase your hard work!