Demystifying the Honors Thesis

This document explains six common chapters for an honors thesis. Although some theses may diverge from this format, most in the College of IST will contain the components listed below.

**Introduction/Problem Statement**
What makes you think this is a problem worth researching?
Describe reported experiences; prevalence; concerns of professional groups, government, or educational associations; and begin to outline the problem as you will study it.

**Literature Review**
What do other researchers know about the problem—and related issues?
Summarize research studies that contribute to what is known about your chosen topic, as well as studies that contribute to what is known about important related ideas.

**Methodology**
How are you going to carry out your study?
Describe research methods that you use in your study. Cite standard processes or procedures that you use.

**Findings**
What did you find?
Report the results of your study. See other studies that used your research methods for examples of how to write results.

**Discussion**
What does it mean?
Interpret the meaning of your results. Numbers, statistics, and/or themes that are reported in your findings section should be put into context and interpreted in the discussion section. This is where you start to make sense of the research findings for the reader.

**Conclusion/Summary/Directions for Future Research**
What are the overall contribution and/or future directions for research?
Summarize the main points (big ideas) from your study—these points often appear in an abstract for the thesis, which summarizes the whole study. You may also consider what scholars might do next to extend the ideas and findings from your study. (This latter part is often optional.)
An Example…

**Topic**
Sleeping with Mac

**Introduction/Problem Statement**
Describe personal knowledge of those who sleep with Mac computers, document prevalence of this behavior in high school and college-age students, cite reports of parents’ concern, and begin to formulate clear statement that defines the problem and proposes questions about it.

**Literature Review**
Summarize studies of fan responses to new technologies, descriptions of technology integration into people’s lives, affects of other tech-personal integration, and any other studies that have also looked into people’s unusual behaviors with new technologies.

**Methodology**
Describe methods to be used in this study; for example, surveys of high school and college Mac users and interviews with select group of students who sleep with Macs.

**Findings**
Summarize the data collected; for example, what was the range of reported experiences and of perceptions of these experiences? What were common themes?

**Discussion**
Make sense of the data reported in the previous chapter. Explain the results, based on other findings in the literature review or theories of technology use. For example,

- What are the underlying ideas that tie together the common themes expressed by users?
- How “invasive” or “integrated” is the technology perceived by users?
- What does sleeping with computers mean for individuals and for society?
- What does this mean regarding blurred lines between work and relaxation?
- What does this mean regarding 24-7, on-demand social connections?

**Conclusion/Summary/Directions for Future Research**
Summarize the main points from this research, and consider what scholars might do next to extend the ideas and findings from this study; for example, how would future research based on this study contribute to understanding the pervasiveness of technology in other aspects of our personal lives?