Should I Write an Honors Thesis?

Writing an Honors Thesis is just one of several possible options for PNP majors. All PNP majors must complete a capstone sequence in the last semesters of their undergraduate career. The capstone options are:

1. PNP 390: PNP Reading Group (2 unit) PLUS PNP 495: PNP Seminar (3 units)
2. PNP 390: PNP Reading Group (2 unit) PLUS 3 units of PNP 500 Independent Work or the equivalent course in an affiliated discipline (PNP 500, Psych 500, etc.) (Note that independent studies must be approved in advance. Please see Independent Study in PNP for details.)
3. PNP 499: Study for Honors (6 units).

Many considerations should factor into your decision as to whether or not to write an honors thesis in PNP. First, consult the Checklist of steps you will need to take in order to successfully complete an Honors Thesis, as well the deadlines by which each of these steps needs to be taken. Then, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you enjoy reading—a lot?
- Do you like to write?
- Is there a faculty member whom you know, or whose research you are very familiar with, and whom you would like to work with and who you have reason to believe would like to work with you?
- Are you good at long-term planning? (Or are you up to the challenge of becoming good at this, right away?)
- Are you a self-starter? Your advisors won’t reach out to remind you of every deadline; if anything, you’ll be reaching out to them to get signatures from them, when needed. The PNP Honors Coordinator will also not reach out to remind you of every deadline. You would be responsible for these yourself!
- Would writing an honors thesis be of some instrumental value to you—e.g., are you applying to a graduate program that looks very favorably upon students who have completed such projects, or would it not mean much to them?
- Is there a topic or problem you’ve been wanting to work on for some time now but without having had the opportunity to do so? Honors theses are long and the process of writing one can be frustrating. True passion helps sustain you.
- Do you have the time? The most common alternative to an Honors Thesis is to take two courses, the PNP Seminar and the PNP Reading Class. In the PNP Seminar you will also write a major research paper. It's a big deal. You can anticipate putting in, say, 8 hours a week, on average, over the course of the semester. That's 112 hours. The Reading Class is say, maybe, 5 hours a week. That's 70 hours. Writing an Honors Thesis is supposed to be more work than that. Do you have >180 hours to spend on your capstone experience?
- Can you think of an interdisciplinary thesis topic? A PNP honors thesis must integrate at least two of the following disciplines:
  - philosophy
  - neuroscience
  - psychology
  - The only exception to this rule is for honors theses that integrates one of the disciplines above with one of the following disciplines:
    - computer science
    - linguistics
    - anthropology