



Senior Thesis and Defense at Scottsdale Prep

Faculty Perspective

The senior thesis represents one of the summits of academic achievement at Scottsdale Prep. At the point the seniors defend their written thesis, they have spent meaningful time analyzing texts, synthesizing arguments, and exploring some of the most difficult questions regarding who we are as humans and how we should direct our ends. It is a pleasure and a privilege to be part of this process and watch these young men and women rise to the occasion and speak eloquently and thoughtfully about such important and demanding ideas.

Mrs. Christine Stamate
SPA Senior Thesis Coordinator
10th & 12th grade Humane Letters

Alumni Perspective

I thoroughly enjoyed writing and defending my senior thesis! It allowed me to dive into some phenomenal texts and really develop my own sense of personal philosophy. Through both the rigorous writing process and the defense in front of faculty, I learned how to not only form strong and unique arguments, but challenge them and form even better ideas. In college, this has translated to easily expressing and defending ideas in both discussions and in my writing. In fact, a lot of my friends at school wish they had an opportunity to write a senior thesis! Overall, I loved the senior thesis project, as because of it I have developed a love of moral philosophy and have grown as not only a scholar, but as an individual.

Shayna Cohen
SPA Class of 2018
University of Chicago

Parent Perspective

When our twins completed eighth grade, we faced many good choices for high school. I called the admissions people at my two alma maters – Claremont McKenna and Harvard – for their opinions about Phoenix metro area high schools. Claremont was very familiar with the Great Hearts education model and liked it. Harvard did not know very much about the senior thesis at that time and asked me to summarize the program. As I described it, I heard “Wow” on the phone. The fact is the senior thesis is an earmark of rigor and achievement that is beyond the norm. It puts Great Hearts graduates in the spotlight for college applications. I sat through the defenses of both Shayna and Jordan. I admit that I consider myself to be well educated, but I was totally awed by their defenses.

In his Philosophy class at Fordham, my son Jordan (SPA Class of 2018) mentioned something from Hegel’s work during class discussion. The professor called him aside after class and asked about his knowledge of the German philosophers, since they are not part of the agenda for the class. One thing led to another and Jordan mentioned his thesis on Kant’s work. It just so happened that the professor was a Kant scholar himself. He asked Jordan for a summary presentation of Jordan’s thesis, which they then discussed. Once again – the senior thesis experience provided a spotlight.

Mr. Jon Cohen
Parent of SPA Alumni Shayna and Jordan Cohen