



HONORS PROGRAM

Past Honors projects:

"Microfossils from Chert Nodules of the Onondaga Limestone: An example of Organic Fossil Preservation"
"Depressed Subjectivity and the Politics of Hope"
"The Effects of Macromolecular Crowding on Enzyme Kinetics"
"Hidden History: The Poetry of Transgender Experiences from Ancient to Modern Day"
"Emotewear: Garment Design for Emotional Support"
"Adolescent Sexual Education in the Highlands of Guatemala"



An Overview

The Honors Program makes possible the most sustained and sophisticated work available for juniors and seniors in the Colleges' curriculum. Typically, students undertake an Honors Project within a recognized major¹. Such majors include those in specific departmental disciplines as well as those of the Interdisciplinary Programs and Individual Majors. Students with a double major may pursue a joint Honors Project that bridges departments and/or Interdisciplinary Programs.

The Honors Program has maintained itself for 80 years with only minor adjustments despite curricular changes. The rationale behind this simple pattern is that sustained work on a project of a student's own choosing, in deep collaboration with a faculty adviser, offers educational benefits and personal gratifications that are uniquely defined in comparison with typical coursework. The provisions of the Honors Program are flexible but not shapeless; and its inclusion of outside examiners reinforces standards of academic professionalism.

Academic Requirements of the Honors Project

Candidates must complete three components to earn the academic distinction of Honors:

a) a **Written Honors Examination in the Honors Field**; b) an **Honors Project (research paper or its counterpart in the creative arts)**; and c) an **Oral Honors Examination that covers both the Honors Project and the Written Honors Examination**. The Honors Field is defined by a configuration of courses from within the candidate's major² which substantively or methodologically support the overall project to some degree. These courses are used as the basis for the formulation of the Written Honors Examination. (More information is available here: https://www.hws.edu/academics/curr_honors.aspx)

In traditional academic disciplines, scientific and non-scientific, the culmination of a research project is a written paper, typically ranging in length from 30 to 80 pages of text (exclusive of the bibliography, prefatory material, charts, endnotes, appendices, and so on). For those in fine and performing arts fields, the output of an Honors Project may be in forms such as poems, drama, fiction, or film scenarios. Candidates majoring in the languages may pursue original translations from a foreign language as an equivalent counterpart to a research paper. All projects should provide an informative and critical introduction of the research project. Honors candidates in Studio Art will have a public exhibition of their work. Each artist must supplement the exhibition with an essay, which places the Honors Project in its historical and theoretical context. This artist's statement also includes a discussion of the development of formal structures and expressive concerns during the course of the Honors Project.

Honors Faculty Adviser

Normally, the courses involving the Honors Project contribute to a student's Departmental, Interdisciplinary Program, or Individual Major. A student may have only one Honors Faculty Adviser, even if the student is undertaking a joint Honors Project or will have completed majors in two related disciplines. Normally this adviser will be on the faculty of the student's major Department, Interdisciplinary Program or be approved by the Committee on Individual Majors.

¹ Request for exceptions to this policy must be directed to the Chair of the Honors Committee.

² The Honors field may also include courses taken outside the major.

Past Honors projects:

“Discourses of Islamic Religious Authority and the American Context”
“Machine Learning For Phylogenomics: Improving Statistical Binning Techniques For Species Tree Reconstruction” “The Continued Normalization of Women’s Political Activism: A Look From the Revolutionary War Through the Antebellum Years” “(The) Missing Piece(s) - A Collection of Short Stories”

The Honors project requires completion of high quality, independent academic work within a span of two semester-long courses.

Learn more at
www.hws.edu/academics/curr_honors.aspx

Contact
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Honors Secretary
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8:30 a.m. - noon

Assessment of the Honors Project

Each component of the Honors Project is evaluated by the Honors Faculty Adviser as well as the **Individual Honors Examination Committee**. The Individual Honors Examination Committee determines whether a candidate earns the academic distinction of “Honors” whereas the Honors Faculty Adviser assigns grades for each semester of Honors coursework.

The Individual Honors Examination Committee consists of an **Outside Examiner** (not on the faculty at HWS), a **Field Examiner** and a **Faculty Examiner**. Each member of this committee evaluates the candidate’s Honors Project and written examination, participates in the oral examination and votes in the evaluation of Honors work. Ideally, in the case of Honors work in the fine or performing arts, the examiners attend the public exhibit or performance. The Outside Examiner is typically a scholar from another college or university, with expertise in the field of study that defines the Honors Project. The Field Examiner is a faculty member at the Colleges who teaches within the candidate’s major³. The Faculty Examiner is a member of the faculty of our Colleges who does not teach courses within the candidate’s Honors field and who is presumed to have no special competence in that field. This individual should NOT be a member of the DIVISION that includes the candidate’s major discipline. The divisions recognized for this purpose are: Humanities and Creative Arts, Social Sciences, and the Natural Sciences.

Student Admission into the Honors Program

Eligibility

Students in their third year or beyond are candidates for the Honors Program. Acceptance into the Honors Program depends on an estimate of the student’s motivation and ability to work well independently.

A student may begin this work in the first or second semester of their junior year, or in the first semester of their senior year. Careful planning is required for successful completion of an Honors Project. Honors Candidates and Faculty Advisers must consider the multitude of factors that can influence the long-term nature of the Honors work. (e.g. academic commitments for abroad study, faculty availability, etc.). Most commonly, students begin their projects in the first semester of their senior year. This allows for the completion of the maximum number of courses within the student’s Honors Field. However, students may also recognize the value of beginning a project in their junior year, in order that they may use the summer for research or because they intend to be off campus for some portion of their senior year. Each student will have individual needs and the decision about when to begin Honors should be made carefully in close consultation with the Faculty Adviser. An option too often overlooked is the provision that **courses creditable as Honors work need not be taken consecutively**. This provision accommodates especially students who are in Fall Semester courses abroad and students who engage in other off-campus programs (e.g., student teaching). Students with double majors might also find this option useful.

Course Enrollment

The Honors Project requires completion of high quality, independent academic work within a span of two semester-long courses (first semester “495” and second semester “496”). The critical first step is to identify a Faculty Adviser who is willing to oversee the Honors Project. Once this relationship has been established, a candidate may enroll in a course defined “495,” which indicates it is specific for the Honors Program. Enrollment requires approval by the Faculty Adviser.

Alternatively, a student may opt to enroll in a course defined as “450,” which is the designation for an independent research course (which also requires a faculty adviser). As the number indicates, the coursework of “450” though independent, is regarded as different in scope and depth as compared to courses designated as “495.” Superior work in a “450” course may be converted into one semester of “495,” provided that the student has taken coursework that establishes a sufficient Honors Field, that the subject and faculty adviser remain the same, and that the faculty is approved by the student’s major department. This conversion must be completed by the end of week 10 of the semester.

All students enrolled for “495” or “496” work may withdraw from the course at any time prior to the final due date of the Honors Project, upon the request of the candidate or the Faculty Adviser. In this circumstance, a “495” or “496” course may be converted to a “450” and the Faculty Adviser will assign a grade according to the department or program guidelines for this designation.

Students who successfully complete an Honors Project will receive Honors for their work⁴ and their achievement is recorded on their transcripts. Students earning Honors are listed in the Commence Program together with the Faculty Adviser and the title of the Honors Project.

³ Any exceptions must be approved by the Honors Committee.

⁴ Students may not earn the distinction of Honors but may earn course credit for their work as determined by the faculty adviser. Students may also withdraw from the program during either semester. In such circumstances, the “495” or “496” designation is converted to an “450” for independent study