RSP 104

Handbook for Students and Faculty

**Honors at Creighton**

There is no universal model for honors college education. Some schools focus honors education on the Great Books tradition, others integrate honors with service learning, while still others build honors around a theme, such as good citizenship. Because Creighton, as a Jesuit university, already emphasizes service, community, and a rigorous liberal arts education, our Honors Program builds on that solid foundation to develop its own distinctive approach to learning.

It is experiential learning and strong community that characterize the Creighton Honors Program. Experiential learning includes lab work, field work, directed research, internships, study abroad, and service learning. However, the Honors classroom is also designed to give students experience by enabling them to ask probing questions, integrate what they’ve learned with other knowledge, approach it from various perspectives, and think about it creatively.

The communal nature of Honors reinforces its commitment to experiential learning. Honors students form close bonds with each other in a strong, trusting community where students are free to express themselves. In this environment, students work together to reflect on course work, master material, and create projects. Honors students share authority in the classroom with their professors. The strong communal bonds within the Honors Program create a culture of collaborative learning and mutual support.

**The Honors Curriculum**

The Honors Program curriculum is designed to provide students with a high-quality Honors education in the Ignatian tradition. Honors courses do not simply ask students to do more work. They ask students to take charge of their education, to be deeply invested in it, to ask more challenging questions and draw incisive and creative connections, and to do so with the help and challenge of the Honors community.

Honors offers three sorts of classes: Foundational Sequence courses, upper level Sources and Methods classes, and independent studies/directed research.

The three Foundational Sequence courses steep students in the background to, the flourishing of, and challenges to the Catholic and Jesuit intellectual tradition.

The first, Honors 100, explores the ways in which Greek and Roman thought (literature, history, philosophy, science) unfolds with a view to its influence on the western religious tradition. The sometimes blissful, sometimes uneasy marriage of Jewish and Christian thought with this ancient intellectual tradition both preserves and transforms ancient thought, creating new intellectual perspectives and raising new problems.

The second, Honors 101, covers the period from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance. The great philosophical theologians—Augustine, Anselm, Avicenna, Maimonides, Aquinas, Scotus—drew on ancient philosophical sources to develop the innovative philosophy and theology that still animates the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic intellectual tradition, while writers such as Boethius and Chaucer show us the value of debate and multiple perspectives. The rise of cities and the founding of the first universities, the development of the modern banking industry and international trade, the idea that political power rests with those who are governed, agricultural advances and the accurate calculation of the size of the earth are examples of medieval innovations.

The final Foundational Series course, Honors 200, works from the Renaissance into the 20th century, the period in which we find the rise of the nation state, the scientific revolution, the Protestant Reformation, the waning power of religious authority, and an increased emphasis on the individual. This period offers new challenges to the Jesuit and Catholic intellectual traditions (as we find, for example, in the emergence of mechanistic conceptions of nature), but also new opportunities for that tradition (which has served as a means for offering a critique of modernity).

Each of these foundational sequence courses will accustom students to the distinctive Honors pedagogy at Creighton. Students will not simply digest the professor’s lectures, but will consider course material from multiple perspectives, will work together to interpret texts and determine their significance, and will develop an understanding of the distinctive methods of the professor’s discipline.

In addition to the three Foundational Sequence courses, Honors students take five upper-level Sources and Methods courses. A Sources and Methods (SAM) class is a high-level (300 level+) introduction to the sources and methods of a particular discipline. By the end of the course, students should understand the sorts of sources the relevant discipline draws on for its distinctive content and they should appreciate the advantages and the limitations of the relevant discipline’s methodologies. Like all other Honors classes, it should allow students to take responsibility for their own learning, a goal generally accomplished if the class is (a) discussion oriented, (b) (partly) student-driven in content, (c) open to independent student exploration of the course materials and methods.

**Honors Advising**

The most important foundation for Honors advising is a coherent vision of Honors pedagogy. After all, advising is itself a form of teaching, and if what defines Honors is largely the sort of pedagogy we employ, then we threaten to undermine our good work in the classroom if we do not extend our teaching philosophy to the world of advising. Hence, if our Honors classrooms are designed to be discussion oriented, experiential, and largely guided by student initiative, our advising should as far as possible respect these goals as well.

Honors advising at Creighton is animated by the Ignatian tradition of attention and conversation. Ignatius recognized that the way to establish good relationships with people was through conversation. Since each conversation is between two people with particular backgrounds, concerns, values, and aspirations, Ignatius took care to tailor his conversation to each particular interlocutor. Likewise, in Honors advising, the advisor should attend to each student in his or her particularity and tailor each advising session for that particular student, with an eye to each student’s values, concerns, and vocation in life.

**Attention, or *cura personalis* in advising**

An Honors advisor will do more than simply inform a student about possible degree programs and report the courses needed to fulfill it—that much can be accomplished by a catalogue or interactive software. In the Ignatian spirit, Honors advisors will get to know their advisees personally, meet with them regularly, talk about their needs, values, and concerns, and discuss what makes for a flourishing life; only then will advisors best be able to counsel students about how best to formulate and achieve their academic and co-curricular goals. Advisors must pay genuine *attention* to their advisees and never pre-judge them or push their own intellectual agendas on students. Rather, advisors should follow Ignatius’ advice for those offering the Spiritual Exercises for retreatants: “The one who is giving the exercises should not move the one receiving them . . . to one state or manner of living rather than another.” Instead, the one giving the Exercises should remain “in the center, like the pointer on a scale.” Likewise, Honors advisors must remain “in the center, like the pointer on a scale,” to allow the student freedom of discernment. Failure to do so is failure of attention.

Advisees, in their turn, must be ready to reflect on their passions and values together with their advisor. This reflection may require (as in Honors courses) taking multiple perspectives, careful conceptualization, and often reconceptualization before students can construct a thoughtful and articulate statement of their academic trajectory and life’s vocation. It is also the *advisee’s* responsibility to seek regular meetings with his or her advisor and to prepare well for those meetings just as the advisee would prepare for a class.

**Discernment and Vocation**

Some students enter university knowing what their career path will be. Others will need time and reflection to determine their career trajectory. However, all students will need time to discern what their life’s vocation is.

“Vocation” is a word often used to describe either skilled labor (as in “vocational-technical training”) or a call to religious life. Here we are using the word in a broader sense. If you are a student reflecting on what will constitute a flourishing life, you may find that your vocation is the job you are striving for: You might have a vocation to practice medicine, to teach, to study public policy, or to do social work. On the other hand, you may secure a job in order to have the financial wherewithal to pursue your actual vocation, which might be promoting urban farming, community theater, or political activism. In either case, your vocation will be an occupation (in the broad sense) that expresses virtue and benefits the community. However—and this sets it apart from other such occupations you might have—it is the occupation that constitutes (at least in part) your identity, whose practice gives your life meaning.

Ignatian advising should never aim simply at getting students through a degree program by making sure students fulfill all their requirements. Ignatian advising helps students to discern what their vocation is so that they can select the courses, internships, and extracurricular activities that will help them to live out that vocation. Students and advisors should therefore discuss what students value and deeply care about. By reflecting on those values and concerns as they progress in their studies, students will be better able to discern the future self they are growing into. Together with their advisors, students can then construct a plan of study to help students to achieve the future self they feel calling them.

**Practical Advice**

**What am I doing in this class?**

RSP 104 is not like your other classes. It’s a 1-credit course that doesn’t count toward your major OR your liberal arts general education. It isn’t in any field of study. You may be asking yourself: “I don’t need help learning how to study or to figure out how to use a database. So, why am I here?”

As the more visionary units of this document have noted, the Honors Program has a particular culture and ethos, and this course will help you to enter into that culture and ethos. RSP 104 will provide you with a particular framework from which you can approach your studies and co-curricular activities at Creighton. And even if you don’t need to learn how to use library databases, you may well need information about research opportunities, international scholarships, study abroad, and other opportunities characteristic of high-achieving students.

Finally, RSP 104 is another opportunity for Honors students to get to know each other. As high achievers, Honors students often experience stress and anxiety. RSP should be an opportunity to relieve stress and assuage anxieties through building good relationships with your peers and advisor.

**What are the “Suggested Guidelines”?**

Students outside the Honors Program follow the Magis Core, which is designed to ensure that students will graduate with a rigorous liberal arts education in the Jesuit-Catholic intellectual tradition. Students in Honors will likewise graduate with a rigorous liberal arts education in the Jesuit-Catholic intellectual tradition, but they have more flexibility in the way they reach that goal. They have that flexibility for two reasons. First, they are selected in part because they have the ability and the will to take charge of their own educational program in consultation with their advisors. Second, the increased flexibility allows for the possibility of higher achievement, such as double majors or a rigorous program of guided research. The Suggested Guidelines are designed to promote that flexibility.

In advising meetings, you should never treat these guidelines as boxes to be checked. You should always select courses with an eye to a coherent plan of study that will promote your academic goals and your life’s vocation.

**Are the Suggested Guidelines really just suggested or are they requirements?**

It is sometimes possible to fulfill the learning outcomes of the Guidelines without taking a class, and in that case you may be excused from a course to fulfill that Guideline. If you are fluent in a non-English language, you may be excused from the foreign language guideline. If you perform regularly in community theater or an orchestra of high-enough quality, you may be excused from your fine arts requirement if you submit a petition to the Honors Program Director. Otherwise, you should treat the Guidelines as requirements.

**Do my Honors courses count toward fulfilling the Guidelines?**

Yes. The syllabus for the course will tell you what Guidelines the course satisfies. Be cautious: Students sometimes make unwarranted assumptions about what courses count for. Composition courses are not literature, even if they are taught in the English Department (while courses on poetry, drama, novels taught in foreign languages are).

**A course I would like to take is full. What do I do?**

First contact the instructor. In some departments, the instructor is given the power to grant overrides and may grant you one. In other departments, the instructor must ask the department chair for permission to grant an override. Some departments by policy will not grant overrides for closed courses, and there is nothing to be done except hope that someone will drop and you can nab their space. If you request an override, please *give a good reason*. “This course fits beautifully into my schedule” is not a good reason.

**A course I would like to take has prerequisites. What do I do?**

There are some fields of study in which Honors students may advance to higher levels without taking introductory courses. Honors students sometimes seek waivers in fields such as sociology or theology, or history to take more advanced courses. In other fields, such as foreign language, math, and natural science, these sorts of waivers rarely make sense.

By agreement with History and the Core Director, Honors 100 is the equivalent of a Magis Core freshman critical issues course in History. Therefore, students who have done HRS 100 may sign up for any History course for which a History critical issues class is a prerequisite.

By agreement with English and the Core Director, Honors 100 is the equivalent of a Magis Core freshman critical issues course in English. Therefore, students who have done HRS 100 will automatically have the English Critical Issues prerequisite waived.

By agreement with Philosophy, HRS 100 taught by a philosopher counts in place of PHL 110 and HRS 101 taught by a philosopher counts in place of PHL 320. However, these equivalences are not recognized by the Registrar’s software, so students must get waivers from Philosophy (which are automatically granted) if they want to take courses for which these are prerequisites.

**Can I take more than 18 credits without paying further tuition?**

Honors students may apply for a tuition waiver—not an override—to take up to 21 credits. In order to take 18.5-20 credits, the student must request a waiver from the Director by explaining why it is important for the student to take an increased course load. In order to take 21 credits, students must first meet with their Honors advisors, who must then write a note of support for the student to take 21 credits. Each request for a waiver must include (a) the student’s NetID and (b) the student’s reason for needing to take the increased course load. Please note that the waiver will not be processed until the end of the add-drop period of the term in which the student has the overload. If you see that your tuition bill includes charges for the additional credits, do not panic. The charges will be removed.

**What is “double dipping”?**

Double dipping is the use of a single class to fulfill multiple curricular requirements. Some sorts of double dipping are permitted; other sorts are not permitted.

In Honors, there are two sorts of requirements: Each student must take 8 dedicated Honors classes (3 Foundational Sequence courses and 5 SAM classes). These courses are delivered to students through a particular pedagogy, and the pedagogy is important to a robust Honors education. However, each of these courses also covers one or more fields of study (such as chemistry or theology and literature). When you take an HFS or SAM course in science (for instance), you are double dipping in that you are (1) satisfying the requirement to take 8 dedicated Honors classes and (2) satisfying a science requirement. This is permissible double dipping because you are satisfying two DIFFERENT sorts of requirement (delivery method and Guideline field). However, if you take a course in theology and literature and then try to count it for BOTH theology AND literature, that is impermissible double dipping because you are trying to satisfy two of the SAME sort of requirement (Guideline fields).

As you plan your course of study, you may find, if you are working in related fields, that a single course may count for two different majors or for a major and a minor. Make sure you are informed about both the College and the Department rules on double dipping in these cases, which may vary across fields of study.

**Do AP, IB, transfer credits count toward the Guidelines?**

If Creighton accepts the credits, and the courses are in Guideline areas, then yes. Nevertheless, planning your academic trajectory in Honors is never just a matter of box checking, and so you should not just assume you are “done” if you enter with six credits of history or biology.

**What sorts of grants are available to Honors students?**

Honors supports student achievement, and so the program sponsors several grants that students may apply for:

* If you are presenting your research at a conference, you may apply for an Honors travel grant. The forms are available on the Honors website. Please apply to CURAS first; Honors will subsidize up to $350 beyond what CURAS funds. You may apply for more than one travel grant in a year if you are presenting at more than one conference.
* Honors offers summer research grants. There is a single application for any students seeking a Dean’s Summer Research Grant, a Ferlic Grant, or an Honors Grant. You will be notified of the application process through CURAS.
* Study abroad grants are available on a limited basis. If funding permits, Honors can help defray the cost of study abroad through small grants.
* Honors students may apply for tuition waivers for over 18 credits. Students wishing to take 19 or 20 credits should e-mail the Director with their request and their NetID. Students wishing to take 21 credits must first discuss the issue with their Honors advisor, who must approve the proposal and inform the Director, who will then consider the request.

**Honors requires research. When do I begin research and how do I find research opportunities?**

This is a question you should discuss with your advisors and with faculty in your field of study. Some students want to do research as soon as they arrive on campus, while others wait until their junior or senior year. The most important consideration is that you select your research opportunities wisely. Do not jump into research that will not advance your particular career and life goals, but seek out research opportunities for growth and intellectual adventure that are well suited to your life’s trajectory. Your advisors, faculty, and CURAS will help you to identify the best opportunities. You will get an excellent idea of the sort of projects you can participate in by attending Honors Day.

**What are requirements for graduation?**

To graduate, each Honors student must fulfill the following requirements

* Complete the Honors Program curriculum (3 Foundational Sequence courses, 5 Sources and Methods courses, 1 Intersections course, and fulfill the Guidelines or “Honors Core”)
* Complete at least one major
* Earn at least 128 credits (with 48 in courses level 300+ and the final 32 earned at Creighton)
* Produce high-quality research presented at Honors Day during the student’s junior or senior year
* Complete the Honors Program portfolio
* Remain in academic good standing in the Honors Program

**What are the national and international honors and awards that Honors students should begin thinking about even as freshmen?**

Honors students at Creighton have been phenomenally successful in winning important awards and scholarships. Creighton students tend to be modest and hesitant to apply. When they apply, however, their success rate is admirable.

For students currently at Creighton, think about applying for the Goldwater Scholarship (for students planning post-graduate work in the sciences) or the Clare Boothe Luce (for women in science). Creighton Honors students’ success rate in winning the Goldwater has been phenomenal. Students may also apply for Truman or Udall scholarships. More information can be found at <https://www.creighton.edu/financialaid/typesofaid/outsidescholarships/>.

As students end their junior and enter their senior year, they might consider applying for a Fulbright, Marshall, or Rhodes. Creighton Honors students have received Fulbrights to conduct research or teach in Germany, Canada, Ecuador, Bulgaria, and the Galapagos Islands. For more information, see <http://catalog.creighton.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies-procedures/national-scholarship/>.

Most Honors students join multiple honor societies, often those that represent their disciplines of study. However, there are two national honor societies that stand apart from the crowd. Alpha Sigma Nu is the Jesuit honor society that recognizes students for their academic achievement and service. Phi Beta Kappa is the nation’s oldest honor society and recognizes students for breadth and depth of study in the liberal arts and sciences. Please note that to be inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, you must have both (1) foreign language to the intermediate level and (2) a math class (which includes statistics and logic).

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