Teaching in Honors

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Honors courses provide first and second year fellows an opportunity for shared intellectual experiences shaped by the expert teaching faculty. These courses provide a space for students to learn skills required for engaging in thoughtful dialogue, develop the ability to formulate sophisticated questions, and practice critical thinking about challenging topics. Honors courses should, moreover, foster student excitement for intellectual inquiry.

**BACKGROUND**

**Eligibility for Teaching in the Honors Program**

Only full-time, permanent faculty members are eligible to teach an Honors seminar. Teaching in the Honors Program is a significant opportunity for faculty who possess strong records of effective teaching.

**Honors Student Profile**

Each year approximately 45 Honors Fellows are accepted as incoming students to Elon. On average, they have an average SAT of about 2140, adjusted high school GPA of 4.8, and are ranked in the top 5% of their class. For additional information about what we know about gifted and high achieving students generally, and Elon Honors students more specifically, please see “Honors Teaching Tips” on the Honors website (www.elon.edu/honors) by following the links “For Faculty / Teaching Honors Courses.”

**Honors Curriculum**

In their first two years at Elon, Honors Fellows take a fairly structured curriculum intended to give them a firm foundation in the liberal arts and help prepare them for a thesis in their major. Honors Fellows may choose any major at Elon, so there will be students in Honors courses with interests ranging from accounting to zoology.

**HONORS COURSE INFORMATION**

All Honors courses will carry an HNR prefix (e.g. HNR 174). They can be accepted as substitutes for major or minor requirements at the discretion of the departments. Courses must be able to count in at least one of the 4 categories of the General Studies Core. Courses must also have broad appeal since these are required courses for a wide range of majors.

**All courses taught in Honors should…**

* Stimulate the asking of sophisticated questions and guide students in ways to address and answer them
* Engage students in regular and thoughtful discussion
* Provide significant but reasonable challenge
* Make assignments and expectations clear
* Offer structure and support to guide students though research and writing processes

Please keep in mind that while Honors students are motivated to excel, *they are first- and second-year students and rely on faculty to provide explicit instructions and guidelines* that will enable them to build the necessary skills and expertise that are required for future independent research.

**Types of Honors Courses**

There are three types of classes in the Honors Curriculum: 1 taught in the student’s first year, and 2 options taught in the student’s second year.

**1. First Year Disciplinary Seminars**

These courses are always offered in the spring for first year Honors students and typically enroll between 15-25 students. The course should be a discipline-based, liberal arts course that utilizes reading beyond a textbook, encourages the development of research and writing skills, and promotes advanced critical thinking. These courses should be distinct from general departmental offerings by being tailored to the students and program goals of the Honors program. While the course should be firmly based in a discipline, it should be intellectually stimulating to students considering a variety of different majors. The term “seminar” implies that active discussions should occur fairly regularly. As an introductory level course, it should not assume knowledge in the discipline.

**2. Second Year Team Taught Interdisciplinary Seminars**

These courses are offered both fall and spring semester of the students’ second year and typically enroll between 15-25 students. Each seminar should illustrate both the synergy and differences that result from studying a set of issues or problems from more than one disciplinary perspective. The course should be truly team-taught, meaning that it is developed together and taught by two professors who are present every day, and who are regularly interacting in class (rather than the model where one professor is present part of the semester, the other in charge the other part of the semester). At least one of the professors must be from a department in the arts and sciences. The Director of the Core Curriculum and the Core Curriculum Committee, in consultation with the faculty and the Director of the Honors Program and Honors Advisory Committee, will determine which area or areas of the Core Curriculum requirements are fulfilled by the course. The course should be inter- or multidisciplinary. Because the Honors curriculum is intended to help prepare students for a thesis, there should be a fairly substantial project that further enhances the research and writing skills students have developed in the first-year courses.

**3.** **Multidisciplinary Seminars (taught by a single instructor)**

These courses are offered both fall and spring semester of the students’ second year and will typically enroll between 8-12 students. Each seminar should illustrate both the synergy and differences that result from studying a set of issues or problems from more than one disciplinary perspective. These courses will be taught by a single faculty member and should be developed with the small seminar size in mind. The Director of the Core Curriculum and the Core Curriculum Committee, in consultation with the faculty and the Director of the Honors Program and Honors Advisory Committee, will determine which area or areas of the Core Curriculum requirements are fulfilled by the course. Because the Honors curriculum is intended to help prepare students for a thesis, there should be a fairly substantial project that further enhances the research and writing skills students have developed in the first-year courses.

Proposal Guidelines

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Download the appropriate Proposal Form from the Honors website (www.elon.edu/honors) by following the links “Honors Courses > Teaching Honors Courses.” *Please talk with your department chair before submitting a proposal so as to avoid scheduling misunderstandings*. Proposals are reviewed once in the fall, once in the spring. Please see the calendar on the Honors homepage for deadlines for any given year. Submit your proposal via email to the Honors Director (Lynn Huber: lhuber@elon.edu) as a Word file.

**Process for consideration**

Proposals will be evaluated by the Honors Director, Associate Honors Director, and the Honors Advisory Committee. The Committee will make recommendations about which courses should be approved. The Honors Director will then decide which courses will be offered and when. It is possible that strong courses will not be chosen because of the need for balanced offerings (too many courses from a particular perspective or discipline offered recently, for example), but those courses may be appropriate at a later date.

**If a course is selected**

Each professor who develops a new Honors course will have access to a summer stipend of $2000. The Honors Program asks professors to commit to teaching their course twice so there can be some continuity for the Honors Program and so that faculty can refine the course in the second offering. Ideally the second offering will *not* be the next year, but scheduling can be difficult since the program needs a balance each year in terms of topics, areas of the Core Curriculum, and new and repeat courses, and because individual faculty have constraints on their availability as well. Faculty whose courses are chosen will be expected to attend the Honors Teaching Workshop prior to the year in which they offer the course, in order to learn more about the program expectations and to hear about what has and has not worked well for other faculty. Faculty will also be encouraged to participate in informal meetings, and annual Teaching Workshops to continue to develop their courses with the knowledge of best practices for teaching Honors students.

In a typical year, the Honors Program will need two first-year Honors Seminars and a combination of second year seminars (e.g. 4 Team-Taught or 2 Team-Taught + 4 Multidisciplinary, or 3 Team-Taught + 2 Multidisciplinary). There are already approved courses from a previous round of proposals, so it is possible that a course might be approved this fall but not offered for a couple years because of the complexity of scheduling.

For a list of courses offered recently, please consult the Honors website at http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/honors/courses.xhtml.

Thanks for your interest and please contact us if you have any questions.

Lynn R. Huber Barbara Miller

Director of Honors Associate Director of Honors

[lhuber@elon.edu](mailto:lhuber@elon.edu) [bmiller9@elon.edu](mailto:bmiller9@elon.edu)

Phone ext: 5709 Phone ext: 5728