

Honors Program

Department

Honors Program (<https://www.stmarytx.edu/academics/special-programs/honors/>)

Department Chair

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Description of Program/Major

Mission

The Honors program serves a diverse community of students who have proven themselves especially talented, skilled and successful in their academic careers. Our mission is to attract such students to St. Mary's University and to provide them with a challenging and rewarding program—a program which

1. complements their professional development with courses in the Catholic intellectual and liberal arts traditions,
2. encourages them to engage critically in the self-conscious formation of their worldview, and
3. prepares them to succeed after graduation to make a positive difference in the world.

Requirements

To be considered for the program as an incoming freshman, students must have a minimum high school GPA of 3.85 and a proven record of leadership. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are integral considerations in St. Mary's University's Honors Program.

Once students are in the program, they must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher in their first year and 3.25 GPA after their freshman year. If a student falls below the required minimum GPA, the student will be placed on probation and will be given one semester to increase their GPA to the required minimum. Failure to do so will result in termination from the Honors Program.

Honors scholars complete 24 hours of course work, which includes a senior thesis or project. The courses are intended to be taken sequentially, with one course taken each semester for eight semesters. All but two of these courses satisfy a St. Mary's core curriculum requirement. The two exceptions are HO 4301 (<https://catalog.stmarytx.edu/search/?P=HO%204301>), which is taken in conjunction with the Honor's senior thesis or project, and HO 4302, Prospects for Community and Civilization. Honors courses are intended to foster the learning community of Honors scholars. For this reason, students are expected to take their Honors courses in sequence with their class. Substitutions and exceptions may be considered only in special circumstances.

HO 1301. The Human Quest for Meaning. 3 Semester Hours.

This course meets the requirement for PL 1301 (or SMC 1311) and is taken in the fall semester of the first year. The goals and objectives overlap with those of PL 1301 (or SMC 1311). The focus is on the theme of authenticity, an important line of philosophical investigation in late modern and contemporary philosophy. Investigations into authenticity concern the nature and quality of the relationship between the conscious self and the world one is situated in. (Fall only).

HO 1302. The Focus of the Social Science. 3 Semester Hours.

This course meets the requirement for a social science core class (or SMC 1313) and is taken in the spring semester of the first year. The goals and objectives overlap with those of a social science core class (or SMC 1313). The course serves as an introduction to the social sciences and the study of the social structures and institutions which shape the lives of individuals. The instructor will provide the course with a thematic focus appropriate to her or his discipline. Students should be introduced to the methods of social sciences while considering local, national and global issues. Common good and communitarian approaches should be considered. (Spring only).

HO 1399. Independent Study. 3 Semester Hours.

In special cases, with the Director's permission and with approval of the appropriate undergraduate dean, an Independent Study course may substitute for one of the regular courses in the Honors Curriculum; such courses are given an HO designation. A maximum of two such courses may be included in a student's Honors curriculum.

HO 2301. The Practice of Citizenship. 3 Semester Hours.

This course meets the requirement for a social science core class (or SMC 2302) and is taken in the fall semester of the second year. The goals and objectives overlap with those of a social science core class (or SMC 2302). Civic engagement is participation in society to effect social change in fostering the common good. As a result of this course, students will understand and appreciate the need for engagement in one's community. Students will integrate the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for civic engagement and ethical citizenship at the local, national, and global levels. Further, students will research public problems, develop and participate in strategies to resolve them. (Fall only).

HO 2302. Emergence of the Universe. 3 Semester Hours.

This course meets the requirement for a science core class (or SMC 1312) and is taken in the spring semester of the second year. The goals and objectives overlap with those of a science core class (or SMC 1312). This course introduces students to the study of the natural sciences as (1) a method, (2) an ethical process and (3) an on-going quest for a comprehensive understanding of the physical, chemical and biological evolution of the universe. (Spring only).

HO 2399. Independent Study. 3 Semester Hours.

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HO 3301. The Aesthetic Experience. 3 Semester Hours.

This course meets the requirement for a literature core class (or SMC 2304) and is taken in the fall semester of the third year. The goals and objectives overlap with those of a literature core class (or SMC 2304). The focus is on fostering an understanding of the evolution of aesthetic expression in literature and the arts in Western culture and the ability to interpret individual works of literature and art through their historical context. (Fall only).

HO 3302. Religion: Experience and Tradition. 3 Semester Hours.

This course meets the core requirement for an advanced theology course and is taken in the spring semester of the third year. The course explores the process by which human experience and the human quest for God give rise to religious tradition. The course may adopt an interdisciplinary approach in which the emergence of religious tradition is studied not only from a theological perspective but also from the point of view of other disciplines such as sociology and philosophy. Prerequisite TH 1301 (Spring only).

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HO 4301. Senior Thesis or Project. 3 Semester Hours.

This course is taken in the fall semester of the fourth year. Honors students must take this course or an equivalent course in their major. The course guides students in planning, researching, outlining and writing their senior thesis or project. Students also arrange to work with a faculty mentor whose academic discipline is appropriate for their topic. Honors students in majors that require a senior thesis or senior project will not be required to complete HO 4301. However, all Honors students must complete a senior thesis or a senior project through their major or through HO 4301. (Fall only).

HO 4302. Prospects for Community and Civilization. 3 Semester Hours.

This course meets the requirement for SMC 4301 and is taken in the spring semester of the fourth year. The goals and objectives overlap with those of SMC 4301. The course is taught as a senior seminar intended to bring the Honors curriculum to a conclusion with the consideration of current problems and the possibility of solutions that can sustain cohesive communities and human flourishing. The intent is for Honors students to refocus their work as a learning community toward the future as they prepare for graduation. While interdisciplinary in scope, the specific content of the course will be appropriate to the instructor's discipline. This course does not require an extraordinary research and writing assignment, but should have graded requirements comparable to other Honors courses. (Spring only).

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