

# HONORS IN THE ENGLISH MAJOR

## WHAT IS HONORS IN ENGLISH?

Honors in the English major is a program in which distinguished English majors complete an ambitious set of classes and projects. If you complete the requirement you can graduate “With Honors.” *You do not have to be enrolled in the University Honors Program to do Honors in the English Major. If you are in the University Honors Program you will graduate with "University Honors in Major." If you complete only the English Honors in Major Program you will graduate with "Honors in Major."*

## WHY PURSUE HONORS IN THE ENGLISH MAJOR?

### **It is an honor.**

If you have worked hard and distinguished yourself in the English department, it is nice to have the official recognition of graduating with honors.

### **It is a culmination.**

Students often get to the end of their sixteen years of education and feel the need for a large and impressive project or a “grand finale.”

### **It prepares you for graduate school.**

If you intend to go to graduate school, completing Honors in Major will look impressive on your transcript and the thesis will demonstrate your ability to do graduate-level work.

### **It is a chance to do something original and unique.**

You may have always wanted to do research and write about interests beyond that of any particular class the English department offers. The Honors Thesis requires a high level of independent work and allows you to pursue your own strengths and interests.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR HONORS IN THE ENGLISH MAJOR

1. **GPA** – Your cumulative grade point average must be 3.4 or above when you graduate, and your in-major grade point average must be 3.5 or above when you graduate.
2. **Two 700-level courses for Honors credit.**
3. **The English Major Seminar** – English 787. The seminar is a small, research-oriented course. Each semester it is taught by a different professor and addresses a different topic. (This class requires instructor permission for pre-registration. You will need a permission slip signed by the professor teaching the course.)

4. **The Honors Thesis** – English 788. The thesis is a thirty to fifty-page project requiring substantial research, field-work, or artistic revision. The thesis is overseen by a thesis advisor chosen by the student. (This course requires instructor permission for pre-registration. You will need a permission slip from the English Honors Director.)

**NOTE:** The Honors Thesis does not count as one of the English Major requirements. It must be taken in addition to all major courses. It does, however, fulfill the Capstone requirement.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Ideal Schedule for Completing the Requirements**

**Junior Year:** Fall – one 700-level course for Honors credit  
Spring – one 700-level course for Honors credit

**Senior Year:** Fall – Honors Seminar  
Spring – Honors Thesis

### **Do I have to enroll in Honors in Major?**

You only have to check in with the English Honors Director for advice and to complete contact information and to enroll in the Honors Thesis class. You *do* need forms to designate a class for Honors credit and to graduate with Honors.

### **Can I complete Honors in the English Major in one year?**

Yes, but you have to be ready to work hard. The schedule above is the most common and in many ways the best as it allows ample time for each element of the Honors in Major Program. The English major does not really get going for many UNH students until their junior year; however, people often ask about starting later or fulfilling the requirements in a different order. Even in the ideal schedule, the majority of the work occurs in your senior year, so as long as you are willing to take on the two 700-level courses in addition to the other requirements you can do it.

### **GPA**

In order to fulfill the Honors in Major requirements, your GPA must be 3.4 overall and 3.5 in the English major.

### **What if my GPA is a little low?**

The requirement for 3.4 and 3.5 in-major is for *when you graduate*. Your GPAs can be lower while you are working toward the Honors requirements, as long as you do well enough that they reach 3.4 and 3.5 with your final semester grade reports.

**If I am worried about my GPA, should I even try for Honors in Major?**

That is your decision, of course, but even if you do not get the honors designation the experience is still valuable. The two 700-level courses will still appear on your transcript, as will 787 and 788. Some people like to take the courses just for the experience of working on a major independent project.

**Suppose I finish all the requirements but just miss the GPA by a whisker because I got a C- in one course three years ago?**

The GPA requirements are firm, and exceptions are not made.

***TWO 700-LEVEL COURSES FOR HONORS CREDIT***

**When should I take these courses?**

The best time to take the 700-level honors courses is in your junior year. However, there is no absolute scheduling requirement. They can be taken while you are taking the Honors seminar or while writing the Honors thesis. They do require extra work, so be prepared to spend more time on them than on other 700-level courses.

**Which courses may I take for Honors credit?**

You may take any 700-level English course. General Education, 600-level courses, and 500-level courses *cannot* be taken for Honors in Major credit.

**How do I make a course Honors?**

Ask the professor at the beginning of the semester if he or she would be willing to have you take the course for Honors credit. If so, get a “Change of Honors Designation Form” from the English Department, Registrar’s Office, or from Hood House and have the professor and English Honors Director sign it. *It is due prior to or on the Registrar’s add/drop deadline near the beginning of the semester.*

**How much extra work do I have to do for Honors credit?**

Usually, it is an extra project or an expansion of one of the projects already assigned; you and your professor decide. Sit down with the professor and discuss what would be most appropriate.

**What if a professor doesn’t want to let me take the course for Honors credit?**

Then you are out of luck! This situation does not usually happen unless there is a very good reason having to do with the way the class is structured. Check with the English Honors Director for alternative classes.

**Can I get Honors credit for a course that I took last semester?**

No. An Honors designation is like dropping or adding a course. The Registrar actually makes a separate little section of the course just for you. This process cannot be done after the semester is over.

## ***THE HONORS SEMINAR – ENGL 787***

**The Honors Seminar** is taught every semester by a different professor and addresses a different topic. The course is small and designed to introduce you to research and critical thinking skills in an intimate seminar format. It also gives you a chance to meet the other students who will be working on their Honors theses.

### **When should I take the Honors Seminar?**

Usually, students take the Honors Seminar in the fall of their senior year. You may certainly decide to take it earlier, especially if the topic being taught that semester appeals to you.

### **Can I take the Seminar while I am writing my honors thesis?**

The Seminar should be taken before the thesis unless there are unusual circumstances.

### **What if I do not like the topic being taught?**

Be sure to look at the Honors Seminar course descriptions during your junior year to determine which topic best fits your interests. Disliking the topic of the Seminar is not an acceptable reason for waiting to take it in the spring along with your Thesis.

## ***THE HONORS THESIS – ENGL 788***

**The Honors thesis** is the major product of your Honors in Major experience. To begin with, it is much longer and requires a lot more independent work than you are used to. You need to be prepared to work hard and independently approach the process with intellectual and emotional ingenuity.

The Honors thesis must be thirty to fifty pages in length and demonstrate significant research, fieldwork, or creative effort. It must be composed of original written material. Students are expected to create work of equal or greater quality than that produced in upper-level classes.

You should begin thinking about your thesis early in the process so you will have time to choose an appropriate topic and prepare yourself for the work you will be doing.

### **Choosing a Topic for your Thesis**

Some people have a very clear sense of their thesis project long before they begin, but most people just have a general area of interest. One way to narrow things down is to talk to a possible advisor; he or she might have some good suggestions. Another is to look at your past writing and try to figure out how and why you did your best work.

The most common mistake people make is to bite off more than they can chew. If you're thinking about writing about three authors, write about two. If you're thinking about analyzing journalistic practice across the nation, try focusing on one or two

newspapers. If your plan is to write a series of great American novels, just write one, and don't worry about the "great" part.

### **Your Thesis Must Be Original Material**

While you are free to expand on something you have already written, the thesis needs to be an original reworking of your former work. Please discuss these aspects with your thesis advisor who must approve it or the English Honors Director.

### **How can I have a "topic," if I am writing fiction, poetry, or creative nonfiction?**

A fiction, poetry, or creative nonfiction thesis would generally consist of a portfolio of work with some unifying theme or aesthetic principle. While you wouldn't necessarily have a "topic," you would have an artistic goal or plan that you would need to enunciate.

**If I am hoping to go to graduate school, how should I craft my thesis topic to seem the most appealing to a graduate program?** You would want to choose a topic appropriate to graduate-level work. If a graduate school sees that you can already write something good enough for a graduate class, it will be more likely to accept you. Talk to an advisor about writing a thesis using the model of the graduate assignment.

### **Can I do an interdisciplinary thesis -- in art and fiction writing, for example?**

Many students have, and such work can be very interesting and rewarding. Remember, however, that this is an English Honors thesis, and should consist primarily of work consistent with the study of English literature and language. An interdisciplinary project in art and fiction writing would need to fulfill the thirty to fifty-page requirement for the English Honors thesis *in addition to* the art element. You must find a secondary advisor in the other discipline who can evaluate that part of the work and obtain the advisor's signature on a permission form, to be turned in to the English Honors Director.

### **I don't know if I can finish my Honors thesis in one semester; can I take a year to do it?**

No.

### **How do I register for the Thesis Course and submit the thesis proposal?**

In order to register for the thesis course, students must submit a thesis proposal and permission form (available from the English Department) to the English Honors Director *during the registration period of the prior semester*. Your thesis advisor must approve the proposal. It should be a short one to two-page description of your thesis accompanied by a small bibliography. Your proposal should accomplish the following:

--Clearly state your purpose or thesis; identify the specific goal you wish to accomplish.

- Explain your methodology. What research tools will you use? What critical and stylistic approaches will you adopt? How will the writing and revision process be conducted?
  - Define the structure of the work. Give some sense of the various sections of the work, how long they will be, and how they will progress.
  - Offer a short bibliography of both primary and secondary works.
- If you are writing a fiction or poetry thesis, you will have to approach this process differently. It isn't enough, however, to say that you intend to write several poems or stories. You should:
- Identify your artistic goals. Explain how you shop to develop your own writing skills.
  - Identify your conceptual goals. What issues, concerns, or themes do you deal with in this particular set of works?
  - Will you keep a progress or reading journal?
  - You may also want to identify your influences. What writers are you building on or responding to? These may constitute your bibliographic entries.
  - Please check with your advisor or the English Honors Director if you have any questions.

### **Working on the Honors Thesis**

The Honors Thesis is a big project. It requires emotional and intellectual energy, and since you'll be working on it the last semester of your college career, it can take a lot out of you. It is probably the longest project you have ever worked on so keep in mind that many of you are unfamiliar with the rhythms of a longer writing process.

Here are some tips:

- Give yourself time. You can't write a 30 to 50-page paper in a week or over a few all-nighters. Structure your working schedule. It is highly recommended that you set up a written schedule with your advisor. Important points and dates to keep in mind: *Ideally, your thesis should be handed to your advisor at least one week prior to the last day of classes.* Please allow for editing and revision in your schedule. Remember that grades for the thesis must be handed in well before Commencement.

Tips:

- Expect the thesis to change. You can't really predict how your ideas will progress, or how your research will change your interests when you write your Thesis Proposal. Every project can change and some will change radically. Your Thesis Proposal is not a contract and you can change the structure, methodology, etc. as long as you and advisor agree.
- Keep in close touch with your thesis advisor.
- If things are going strangely, slowly, or badly, tell your thesis advisor or the English Honors Director. They will work with you and help you through the writing process.

### **The Presentation of the Honors Thesis at the URC**

All students must publicly present their research prior to graduation. The majority present at the Honors English Undergraduate Research Conference held in late April. Students deliver a 10-12 minute presentation, describing their project and reading

from a portion of it. The English Honors Director will tell you how to register for the URC.

### **How do I hand in my thesis?**

Your advisor-approved thesis should be ready to hand in by the last day of classes. This means your thesis should be handed in two weeks prior to the last day of classes so as to ensure that there is enough time for your advisor to request any editing changes. Keep in mind that grades need to be handed in well before Commencement.

Please use this template on the title page:

- 1) Title of Thesis
- 2) Student's Name
- 3) Honors Senior Thesis
- 4) Semester Date (Spring 2017)
- 5) Thesis Advisor's Name

You will need to hand in (e-mail) TWO digital PDF copies of your final thesis: a PDF copy for your thesis advisor and a PDF copy for the English Honors Director. Optionally, you may also wish to upload your thesis to the University Honors Program Scholars' Repository: <http://scholars.unh.edu/honors/>. Students can also browse the repository and read theses of their peers. **Please be advised that if you decide to upload it to the UNH site, your thesis will be readily available to the public for download.**

You will need to fill out the **Certificate of Completion of Honors Program Requirements** in order to graduate with Honors. This form needs to be signed by the English Honors Director and submitted to the Honors Program Office in Hood House.

### **What if my thesis isn't finished on time?**

Everyone will work hard to help you complete your thesis. This is why it's a good idea to stay in close contact with your thesis advisor. Since you'll be graduating, it is very important that your grade is submitted before the Registrar's deadline.

### ***TOPICS FROM PAST HONORS THESES***

Women and Houses: Gendered Space in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Literature and Architectural Theory.

The Effects of "Political Correctness" on the Journalistic Editing Process

The Application of Michael Foucault's Theories to the Works of Toni Morrison

Sex, Politics and Power in the Works of Milan Kundera

Gothicism in Charles Brockton Brown and Joyce Carol Oates

How Newspapers are Changing to Attract Generation-X Readership

Fairy Tales in the Context of European History

Gender and Identity in Christina Rossetti's Poetry

The Joy of Melancholy

Edna the Oblivious Oppressor: An Intersectional Analysis of Privilege and its Lack thereof in *The Awakening*

Feminism and Political Humor in the works of Molly Ivins and Paula Poundstone

*Frankenstein* in the Context of Mary Shelley's Life

Kurt Vonnegut's Literary Technique and American Culture