

What is an Honors Course at Carolina?

Honors Across the Curriculum

Honors Carolina offers a changing roster of more than 175 specially-designated courses each academic year. The courses are taught by faculty in departments and curricula throughout the College of Arts and Sciences and in the professional schools that have undergraduate degree programs. Honors courses are offered at a variety of levels, from first year seminars to more advanced classes for juniors and seniors. Most honors courses are designed to assist students in fulfilling their general education requirements.

Faculty teach honors courses as a part of their normal teaching load. The Honors Carolina deans work with individual instructors and department scheduling officers to coordinate faculty teaching interests with the program's curricular needs.

Honors courses offer faculty a flexible environment in which to:

- explore innovative approaches to undergraduate teaching;
- connect their research interests with the work of the classroom;
- develop new uses for instructional technologies; and
- create co-curricular learning experiences outside the traditional classroom.

Honors Carolina awards course development grants and supplemental funds to encourage such creative course design.

Honors courses that departments intend to offer on a regular basis ordinarily carry a regular department course number with an H suffix. Courses that are more experimental or that cross disciplinary boundaries may be offered with an HNRS number managed by Honors Carolina. In all cases, instructors' home departments receive enrollment credit for honors courses.

Honors Carolina students register for honors courses during a priority registration period. Other students who have at least a 3.0 GPA may enroll in honors courses on a space-available basis during the regular registration process. Honors Carolina is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence, and to making the rewards of achieving those standards available to all students who desire the honors challenge.

Characteristics of Honors Courses

Honors Carolina is a campus-wide enterprise, and for that reason any definition of honors instruction must be flexible enough to accommodate a wide variety of disciplines. The general characteristics and objectives of honors courses are as follows:

- Format – Honors courses are ordinarily taught as seminars with enrollments of 20-24 students (limited exceptions are made when appropriate for a particular discipline). That intimate learning environment offers students and faculty greater opportunities for one-to-one interaction and a chance to delve more deeply into a specific topic than might otherwise be possible.

- Approach – The primary objective of honors instruction is to immerse undergraduates in the work of a research university, to engage them in an active understanding of how knowledge and art are created, evaluated, and applied. Honors courses offer students regular and sustained opportunities to:
 - work with primary sources;
 - conduct original research; and
 - participate in original creative activity.

Ideally, honors courses bring multiple disciplinary perspectives to bear on a chosen topic. They challenge students to grapple with the complexities of knowledge, and they emphasize exploration and discovery over factual assimilation.

- Pedagogy – Honors courses require that students assume significant responsibility for their own learning and that of their classmates. The courses offer opportunities for teamwork as well as independent inquiry; they model and inspire thinking that is original and open to risk; and they demand that students meet the highest standards of scholarly rigor in expository or creative writing and in public presentation of their art, ideas, and discoveries. In many honors courses, these objectives are met by including in the syllabus an individual or team project that constitutes a significant portion of the final course grade.

Honors courses involve more reading, writing, and public speaking than non-honors offerings. The honors distinction, however, is not simply a matter of quantity. Honors courses challenge students to read more complex materials, to wrestle with more intricate problems, to reach beyond established understandings, to generate new questions and creative techniques, and to produce more sophisticated accounts of their scholarly labors.

- Assessment – The evaluation of student learning is keyed to the primary objective of honors instruction; that is, the incorporation of undergraduate students into the intellectual life of the research university. To the fullest extent possible, assignments and assessment tools mirror the diverse ways that knowledge and art are disseminated and appraised in the disciplines. These include (but are not limited to) discursive, critical, and synthetic essays; peer review; narrative and project-based research reports; and public presentations, exhibitions, and performances.

Arranging to Teach an Honors Course

Faculty who wish to teach an honors course should discuss that interest with their department chair and director of undergraduate studies. They are also invited to contact one of the Honors Carolina deans, who will be happy to consult with them on course design and scheduling:

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