

Honors Program

Department

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

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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

After applying to St. Mary's, first year students with a 3.8 GPA or a 3.5 GPA with a 1250 SAT and transfer students with a 3.5 GPA are invited through email to complete a separate application to the Honors Program. Transfer students who hold membership in Phi Theta Kappa are automatically admitted into the Honors Program. An alternative avenue into the Honors Program is the Existing Student Admission. To be considered for existing student honors admissions, please contact the Honors Director or Assistant Director. Applications are generally completed by May and decisions are made in June. To be eligible for existing student admission to the Honors Program, students must hold a minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA, have completed 15 hours at St. Mary's University, participate in an interview, and submit a faculty member's recommendation. All applicants should have a proven record of leadership, a desire to be life-long, interdisciplinary learners, and ready to engage in changemaking research and writing for the greater good.

Once students are in the program, to remain in good standing, they must maintain a cumulative GPA of a 3.0 or higher in their first year and a 3.25 GPA after their first year. Additionally, they must enroll in Honors required classes and seminars and participate in high-impact practices. Students who do not fulfill these requirements will be placed on probation and given one year to meet the requirements. Failure to do so will result in transition from the Honors Program.

Honors scholars complete the program based on a point system, which is a combination of required, cohorted Honors classes and seminars, Honors versions of St. Mary's core classes, and high-impact practices. All Honors students complete a single authored, mentor-led thesis or project, which is published in St. Mary's Digital Commons and present their original research at a symposium or conference.

Upon completing the Honors Program, students receive accolades during commencement and on their transcripts and diplomas.

HO 1301. Honors Emergence Seminar. 3 Semester Hours.

This seminar-based course welcomes St. Mary's University Honors students to a Marianist liberal arts education through activities designed to inspire multidisciplinary intellectual development. Students learn to value diverse perspectives and foster student development as intellectually curious, self-motivated, and independent life-long learners. Through this seminar, students will emerge with academic skills and resources as well as a map of internal and external programs and activities that will enrich their scholarly engagement. Research and writing are required. This course fulfills the core requirement for FYE 1301. (Fall only, First Year).

HO 1302. The Quest for Human Meaning. 3 Semester Hours.

This course introduces students to the love of wisdom in philosophy from antiquity to the present. Using philosophical concepts and logical arguments, it addresses questions about the nature of reality and the existence of God; the relationship between the mind and body; the difference between knowledge and opinion; and the sources of moral and aesthetic value. Taught as a seminar, HO 1302 fulfills the requirement for PL 1301 Introduction to Philosophy.

HO 1303. Honors Engineering and Society. 3 Semester Hours.

This course introduces students to the engineering profession and its role in addressing and solving contemporary global and societal challenges. Students will explore the application of engineering concepts, principles, and tools to creatively solve problems while considering public health, safety, and welfare, as well as global, cultural, social, environmental, and economic factors. Students will be exposed to ethical and professional responsibilities in engineering decision-making, and learn to exercise critical thinking, presentation and writing skills. Research and writing are required. This course fulfills the requirement for a Social Science course.

HO 1304. Approaching Creativity. 3 Semester Hours.

In this course, students actively engage in the creative process by exploring how they may be more creative in their own lives, community, and career. Students read, explore, and complete visual and written assignments. This hands-on course requires peer discussion and reflection through which students discover how personal reflection, observation, cultural background, and knowledge influence visual awareness. Students will work on and/or develop a creative project that will provide experiences for community members. This course fulfills the core requirement for Fine Arts.

HO 1305. Religion: Experience and Tradition. 3 Semester Hours.

This course provides an introduction to the academic study of theology in Christian traditions, engaged with other traditions. The course introduces students to fundamental ideas, terminology, cultural contexts, literature, texts, and elements of material culture that hand down human questions and understandings of God and what it means to be God's people. Honors Introduction to Theology will introduce students to the basic methods of research and writing used by scholars of theology and religion. Students will be invited to incorporate themes and ideas from different academic disciplines. This course fulfills the core requirement for TH 1301 Introduction to Theology.

HO 1341. Honors Graphics and Design. 3 Semester Hours.

This introduction to the engineering design process and development of basic design projects includes a brief introduction to the history of drawing, drawing instruments, lettering, and the sketching process. Students develop perceptual and conceptual drawing skills through a variety of approaches, including sighting, contour line, and compositional studies. Students elaborate work drawings, including pictorials, orthographic projection, dimensioning, sections, and auxiliary views, using descriptive geometry, such as points, lines, planes, revolutions, intersections, etc., and the utilization of CAD software. This course fulfills the core requirement for Fine Arts.

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 2101. Honors Discovery Seminar. 1 Semester Hour.

In this required, one-hour seminar, students explore topics for research through a series of colloquia and workshops, beginning their journey toward a major research and writing project. By the conclusion of the seminar, students will develop and test a research question for their honors thesis/project. To form a mentoring relationship with advanced Honors students, this seminar collaborates with HO 3301. (Fall only).

HO 2102. Honors Discernment Seminar. 1 Semester Hour.

In this required one-hour seminar, students, with the intention of making a positive difference in the world, map future professional and education goals through job shadowing, site visiting, writing curriculum vitae and resumes as well as personal statements, developing a professional online presence through dossiers or other networking platforms, networking, visiting graduate schools/medical schools/law schools, studying away/abroad, and beginning applications for national awards, competitions, and fellowships. (Spring only).

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

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. Research and writing are required. This course fulfills the core requirement for Social Science.

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

This course introduces students to the study of the natural sciences as (1) a method, (2) an ethical process, and (3) an ongoing quest for a comprehensive understanding of the physical, chemical, and biological evolution of the universe. This course fulfills the core requirement for Science. (Spring only).

HO 2303. The Aesthetic Experience. 3 Semester Hours.

This course focuses on fostering an understanding of the evolution of aesthetic expression in literature and the ability to interpret individual works of literature through their historical context. Research and writing are required. This course fulfills the core requirement for Literature.

HO 2304. Public Space: Monuments and Memory. 3 Semester Hours.

This course examines the public commemoration of history. People across the world have marked significant events with public displays. Such monuments serve as both divisive focal points for political debates and as vivid connections to history. Focusing on a particular historical period or theme, the course will provide students the opportunity to learn about that topic or theme and explore how the historical events they study have been memorialized. Students will also examine why we commemorate certain events while ignoring others. The class will include tours, field trips, and hands-on experiences. Research and writing are required. This course fulfills the core requirement for History.

HO 2305. Honors Special Topics. 3 Semester Hours.

Taught by faculty across the university, this course explores a variety of topics dependent upon the faculty member's expertise, with the intention of offering unique, innovative learning opportunities on campus and away.

HO 2399. 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 3101. Honors Inquiry Seminar. 1 Semester Hour.

In this required, one-hour seminar, Honors students solidify their research question for their theses/projects, establish their faculty mentor relationship, learn about the IRB process, develop methodologies and a working bibliography. Students also mentor second-year students through exemplifying best practices and research exploration. To form a mentoring relationship with second-year Honors students, this seminar collaborates with HO 2301. (Fall only).

HO 3302. Honors Research and Writing. 3 Semester Hours.

This course emphasizes the development and practice of academic writing and research skills. Assignments build on students' thesis/project topics and include prewriting exercises, critiques, a critical annotated bibliography or a literature review, and a statement of proposed research. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research will be introduced. Research and writing are required. Discipline-specific research and writing classes that meet these outcomes may be substituted for this course. (Spring only).

HO 3399. 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 4102. Honors Leadership Seminar. 1 Semester Hour.

This required, one-hour senior seminar brings 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. Through colloquia, workshops, and written reflections, Honors students, as futurists, refocus as a learning community of change-makers who will influence the world through the ethical use of power. (Spring Only).

HO 4301. Honors Thesis/Project. 3 Semester Hours.

Synthesizing Honors seminars, this course guides students in writing their single-authored publishable theses or projects with the guidance of a faculty mentor whose academic discipline is appropriate for their topic. Research and writing are required. Discipline-specific research and writing courses that meet these outcomes may be substituted for this course with Honors Director approval. All Honors students' thesis/projects will be published through St. Mary's open access service and presented at a conference or symposium. Pre-requisite HO 3302 or equivalent. (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).

HO 4399. 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.