

### CREATING STAND-ALONE AND CONCURRENT HONORS SECTIONS.

A stand-alone Honors Section is a distinct version of an already existing course. It is listed separately on the list of courses for the term, and meets separately from the regular version of the course. A concurrent Honors section is also listed separately on the list of courses, however it is run similar to a 400/500 level course: students attend the regular section of the course and then have additional enrichment provided by the instructor.

Both stand-alone and concurrent honors sections of already existing courses require **no curriculum committee approval**. Department chairs simply designate a section as Honors when they submit their schedule. The number of credit hours is the same. Stand-alone and concurrent sections are both listed separately and designated as Honors. Example from the course listing (note the H section code):

H 11146 103 H4 HONORS: WORLD HISTORY TO 1500 3.0

Obviously, concurrent sections meet at the same time as the regular section of the course to which they are attached, even though they will be listed separately. Honors College Students will register for the Honors Section of the course, and then attend the regular section and also receive whatever enrichment is proposed.

The policy and procedures for ensuring that an Honors Section, whether concurrent or stand-alone, differs sufficiently from a regular section of the course are set out below, along with some suggestions.

#### Standards for Honors Courses

Honors Sections of courses are offered in any discipline, at any level, and through a variety of means. Determining criteria for such a variety of courses is difficult. Accordingly, the Honors College establishes learning outcomes for students who have earned the Honors Diploma or Certificate. These learning outcomes are:

1. **Independence of thought and research.** Honors Students question what they learn, develop their own viewpoints, seek original solutions to problems where possible, and pose their own research questions, problems or creative activities.
2. **Strong critical thinking abilities.** Honors Students understand the relationship between evidence and conclusions, can sort relevant from irrelevant information, and can decide the best methods for attaining goals.
3. **Good oral and written communication skills.** Honors Students can explain their views and the views of others in clear, well-argued terms.
4. **Masters of their own discipline.** Honors Students know the required content and possess the necessary skills to be fully competent in their discipline. Yet they go further and seek a “depth dimension.” For example, they may know the historical and contextual origin of some of their content knowledge and skills, or they may understand the theory behind a practice or a formula better than other students.
5. **Possess broad-based knowledge.** Honors Students should have a strong arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences background and strive to forge connections between disparate ideas and disciplines.

Honors Sections of courses should strive to modify existing courses in order to attain some of these learning outcomes.

### **Ensuring Satisfaction of Learning Outcomes.**

The instructor(s) of any Honors section of a course already offered as a non-honors course are required to submit to the Honors College a report of no more than one page. For stand-alone courses, this report outlines how the course differs from the regular section and how it helps students achieve some of the learning outcomes listed above. For concurrent sections, the report details the additional enrichment the course will provide that achieves some of the learning outcomes. The Dean will approve this description and it will be kept on file. It does not need to be resubmitted each subsequent time the course is offered, unless the instructor(s) have made sufficient changes in the course to merit a new report.

### **Some suggestions for Honors Sections:**

- **Try to avoid simply adding more assignments** – Honors courses do not typically require more work, just a different kind of work. Sometimes they require fewer assignments, but these assignments might require greater conceptual analysis, or more independent research.
- **Change (don't simply add) assignments** – Papers instead of in-class essays, independent research project instead of final essay, different/more challenging questions on the exam, etc.
- **Covering additional content** – Even if we don't want too much extra work, we do encourage enriching the content, especially if the additional content adds depth of understanding or an interdisciplinary aspect to the course. Again: try to *substitute*, rather than *add* work, but recognize that enriching the course also means more making it more challenging.
- **Differences in pedagogical approach** – More discussion than lecture, student led presentations instead of faculty led presentations, flipped classrooms to enhance discussions, etc.
- **Covering the same content with greater depth** – When teaching honors intro to philosophy, for example, it works to teach the material as if the students were advanced majors, rather than beginning philosophy students. The same approach has worked for Honors Statics. Honors Students happily rise to the higher expectations.
- **Flipping the class** – have more of the work done online, before they enter the classroom, and this frees up time for discussion and exploration.
- **Independent research** – this would typically replace a regular assignment and is strongly encouraged.
- **For concurrent sections** – It is not required that Honors Students and faculty meet separately outside the regularly scheduled course times, although it is strongly encouraged. Meetings do not have to be weekly. Honors Students can be given independent or group assignments that cover additional dimensions of the material, or require independent research. They can be given different versions of the same exam or different versions of the same assignments. Instructors who teach concurrent sections are encouraged to think about *replacing*, rather than *adding*, assignments.

**Stand-alone Honors sections must always be smaller than regular sections, preferably in the range of 15-25 students. 35-40 students for classes whose regular size is 50+.**