

## The English Honors Program

The **ENGLISH HONORS PROGRAM** offers, for English majors who have shown exceptional talent, opportunities to further their study of literature in smaller settings. Qualified students may take one or more honors seminars, which bring able and committed students together with their peers in small classes that more readily allow for in-depth reading and student participation. English majors who have taken three honors seminars may also complete a senior honors thesis, a unique opportunity for extended critical study with a faculty member in an area of mutual intellectual interest.

English majors may join the program when they have completed three semesters of undergraduate work, achieved a combined grade point average of 3.33, both overall and in the major, and taken three English literature courses, including ENGL 200 and either ENGL 300 or ENGL 301. Although the beginning of one's junior year is the ideal time to start the honors program, sophomores who have completed 200, 300 or 301, and at least one other American or British literature course may be eligible to begin the honors program early during their sophomore year second semester *with permission from the director of the Honors Program*. The latest time one may begin the honors program is during one's second semester junior year. To complete the Honors Program in English, upon graduation, students must have successfully completed three honors seminars and an honors thesis under the rubric of English 391 (the Honors Independent Study), while continuing to maintain that 3.33 GPA.

To enroll in the program, visit Room 200 English Building a few weeks before course registration begins and speak to Nancy Rahn (nrahn@illinois.edu). We hold a lottery to determine sign-up times for honors seminars; we will make information about the specific dates for the lottery available each semester. No special permission is required for students who meet the qualifications described above. To enroll in the English Honors Program, students need not be part any other honors program or organization.

**ENGLISH HONORS COURSES** are small seminars, usually no larger than eighteen students. Although priority goes first to students who need to complete the Honors Program and then to other English majors, these courses are open to anyone with a GPA of 3.33 or above who can do independent work in English. Honors seminars and tutorials count as advanced courses and may be used to meet the LAS advanced hours requirement.

**THE HONORS THESIS** is a scholarly and critical essay of 20-25 pages, written under the rubric of English 391 (Honors Independent Study) over the course of a semester (fall or spring) in the senior year. The essay is evaluated carefully by the student's faculty director and by two other faculty readers selected by the director and the student. The director also determines a course grade for the student in English 391.

*A student planning to write an honors thesis should get a faculty member's commitment to direct the project during the semester before the one in which the thesis will be written. Be sure to allow time to approach more than one faculty member if necessary.* One month before the end of classes, the student planning to write a thesis needs to obtain the faculty director's approval of an honors thesis prospectus and turn in the registration form and one-page proposal to Nancy in room 200 EB. Then the student will get approval and be permitted to register for English 391. Students doing the Teaching of English major are advised to plan their thesis even further ahead, as they will need to write it in the fall semester before student teaching.

**THE HONORS PROPOSAL**, to be submitted when registering for English 391, is a brief typed description (at least 200 words, but no longer than one single-spaced page) of the nature of research to be undertaken in the thesis semester. The proposal should specify the main writer(s) to be studied, the types of secondary work to be consulted, and the broad questions that will determine the essay's argument. A formal bibliography is not required at the proposal stage. The proposal will not yet state the writer's argument, but should articulate questions that will help to build it. For more information about narrowing your topic for the proposal, see the handout, "How to Write a Proposal for Your English Honors Thesis," available in Room 200 EB. Also available there are examples of successful proposals.

To reiterate, this proposal is due before classes end in the semester *before* the student plans to write the thesis. For theses to be written in Spring 2017, proposals and signed registration forms are due Monday, November 13<sup>th</sup>. **For theses to be written in Fall 2018, proposals and signed registration forms are due Monday, Marcy 12<sup>th</sup>.**

After the appropriate deadline, the Director of the English Honors Program will notify you by email that your proposal is acceptable or that it needs revision. Otherwise, your proposal is not graded in any way.

**LEVELS OF DISTINCTION:** To be eligible for Distinction in English, a student must complete three honors seminars and the requirements for English 391, including the honors thesis. Levels of distinction will be decided by the Honors Committee, which will consider a student's overall GPA, record in honors seminars and English courses, and the recommendation of the readers of the honors thesis. *Distinction* is normally awarded for a GPA of 3.33, satisfactory work in the honors seminars and English courses, and an honors thesis of merit (two out of three readers recommend Distinction). *High Distinction* is usually awarded for a GPA of 3.5, excellent work in the Honors seminars and English courses, and an honors thesis of superior quality (two out of three readers recommend High Distinction). Honors graduates' names are usually announced at Convocation.

Thesis writers are reminded to review the University Student Code, Article 1, Part 4, on Academic Integrity, and to review their documentation practices with their faculty directors before submitting the final thesis draft. Students found to have violated academic integrity in any English course, or in the writing of the Honors project, make themselves ineligible to receive Honors in English.

Further questions? Please email Associate Professor Andrea Stevens, Director of the English Honors Program, at [arstev@illinois.edu](mailto:arstev@illinois.edu).

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