



Expectations for Honors Teaching

The Honors College welcomes faculty from all KSU disciplines to participate in Honors education and engage with University Honors Program students at KSU. Opportunities for faculty to teach Honors courses are available through a number of avenues:

- Teaching Honors sections of general education courses and the first-year seminar course
- Teaching Honors sections of lower or upper-level courses specific to particular majors
- Teaching 3-credit special topics or interdisciplinary Honors seminars (HON 2290, HON 3301 & HON 4490)
- Teaching Intro to Honors Research (HON 2001, 1 credit) or Honors Interdisciplinary Research Methods (HON 3301, 3 credits)
- Teaching 1-credit, pass/fail, special topics Honors colloquia (HON 3000)
- Providing Honors Contract opportunities to Honors students enrolled in non-Honors classes
- Mentoring Honors students enrolled in Directed Study courses (HON 4400)
- Mentoring Honors students in their Honors Capstone Project
- Mentoring Honors students enrolled in the Honors Research course (HON 3002)
- Mentoring Honors students enrolled in the Honors Teaching Assistance course (HON 3203)
- Leading an Honors Discovery – this is a short-term non-credit study on a special topic
To propose a Discovery, please follow this link:
http://honors.kennesaw.edu/programs/docs/Honors_Discovery_Proposal_Form.pdf

Typically, prospective Honors faculty have established track records of effective teaching and are suggested by their department chairs. The Honors College may request that prospective Honors faculty provide teaching evaluations or other documentation of innovative and effective teaching, or a proposal describing a proposed Honors course. We also welcome faculty interested in teaching Honors courses to contact the Honors College directly.

Honors Program approval is needed for proposals for new special topics seminars and colloquia. The Honors College coordinates scheduling of Honors courses in conjunction with department schedulers, and will accommodate instructors' preferences whenever possible.

Honors faculty participate on a volunteer basis, and through arrangement with the faculty member's department chair, Honors courses must be taught "in load." Honors faculty do not receive course reassigned time or additional remuneration. However, Honors faculty enjoy smaller class sizes, the opportunity to build special topics seminars and colloquia around their intellectual passions, and bright, highly motivated students who read, do their homework, ask questions and engage in class discussions. Through Honors teaching, faculty may also identify students who would be assets as research assistants, supplemental instruction leaders, or tutors.

What distinguishes an Honors class?

The goal of Honors education is to "provide students with a balance of challenge and the support they require to be able to respond to [the] challenge," according to Linda West in the introduction to *Teaching and Learning in Honors* (2). Honors education should challenge the students' "previous

world views" and ask students to "consider multiple points of view, to scrutinize evidence and to make meaning in a deliberate and responsible way" (2).

There is no single model, pedagogy, or structure for teaching an Honors class. The characteristics of good teaching transcend both Honors and non-Honors classes. However, at the heart of a successful Honors program are the interactions between teacher and students and the students and each other that take place in the classroom. By the nature of their smaller class size and highly motivated students, Honors courses give faculty opportunities to try techniques, activities and assignments that would not be feasible in larger, non-Honors courses. The Honors College expects the following to characterize all Honors classes:

- **Intellectual challenge.** Honors classes should emphasize content and activities that stimulate students to think about topics in new ways, explore subject matter in greater depth or breadth, or gain first-hand exposure to issues through experiential learning. Coursework should foster creative and/or critical thinking skills. Creative thinking focuses on “exploring ideas, generating possibilities, looking for many right answers rather than just one,” according to Robert Harris, the author of the webpage *Virtual Salt*. He contrasts creative thinking with critical thinking, which “emphasizes the skills of analysis—teaching students how to understand claims, follow or create a logical argument, figure out the answer, eliminate the incorrect paths and focus on the correct one.”
- **Quality, not quantity.** Providing intellectual challenge does not mean loading on more assignments (the approach students often experience in high school Honors and Advanced Placement classes). As a general rule, college Honors courses should provide different work, rather than more work. This may mean holding students to a higher standard for quality of thought, or substituting more challenging readings, problems, projects or activities than those assigned to non-Honors classes. Ultimately, the intellectual quality demonstrated by the students’ work is more important than the quantity of assignments.
- **Interactivity.** Honors faculty are expected to take advantage of small class size to create an interactive classroom environment. The faculty member is expected to facilitate discussion, debate, and student-centered activities such as peer teaching, student discussion leaders, and partner or group work that may not be feasible in large classes. The “sage on the stage” lecture format is not an appropriate pedagogy for Honors classes.
- **Faculty accessibility.** In addition to being active participants in their own learning, Honors students are likely to seek out faculty for detailed feedback on their work and for mentoring advice on their academic and career aspirations. The Honors College values faculty who embrace this role as mentor. We expect all Honors faculty to provide timely, constructive and clear feedback on assignments, and to be accessible to consult with students during office hours.
- **Content or pedagogy distinctive from that in non-Honors sections.** Honors sections of courses that are also offered to the general student population in a non-Honors format should be distinct from the non-Honors course in substance and/or pedagogical approach. Faculty members have discretion to determine what will be different about their Honors section. Distinctive features of the Honors section might include one or more of the following:

1. **Greater breadth of topics:** The addition of topics that are not covered in a non-Honors version of the class. This might include readings, lectures, assignments, activities, field trips or out of class experiences unique to the Honors class.
 2. **Greater depth on selected topics:** More in-depth treatment of a particular topic or topics. This might include readings, lectures, assignments, activities, field trips or out of class experiences unique to the Honors class.
 3. **Pedagogical techniques unique to the Honors class,** such as the Socratic method, simulations, case studies, peer-teaching or discussion-leading, experiential or service learning, or essay questions rather than multiple choice exams.
 4. **Higher standards in grading,** such as requirements for more references in a research product, fewer grammatical errors in written work, or greater evidence of creative or critical thinking.
- **Adherence to learning outcomes established by departments.** Honors sections of courses offered by departments outside the Honors College must still fulfill learning outcomes established by that department for that course. For example, an Honors section of HIST 1100 – World History must still fulfill learning outcomes defined by the History Department for that course.
 - **Grade distributions that may vary from those in non-Honors classes.** Because students who are accepted to the Honors Program and Dual Enrollment Honors Program are top academic achievers, it is not unusual that grade distributions in Honors classes may skew higher than those for non-Honors classes. While the Honors College anticipates high grades from Honors students, no Honors class should be designed to be an “easy A.” Every Honors class should provide a valuable intellectual experience. A course where every student earned an A would raise concern about the rigor and challenge that is expected in Honors classes. The Honors College discourages grading practices that use competition within the class to artificially lower students’ grades, such as grading formulas based on a bell-curve model where only a certain percentage of students could receive As, Bs, Cs, etc.

What should appear on my syllabus?

- The course title should indicate that the course is an Honors course. For example, “COM 2129 – Honors Public Speaking.”
- If this is a course that is also offered in non-Honors sections, the Honors College asks faculty to provide a description on their syllabi about content, pedagogy or grading standards that make the Honors class different from non-Honors sections of the same course. This description might include:
 1. Acknowledgement that some of the course content is different, such as the addition of topics that are not covered in a non-Honors version of the class or more in-depth treatment of a particular topic
 2. Reference to readings, assignments, activities, field trips or out-of-class experiences that are unique to the Honors class
 3. Reference to pedagogical techniques unique to the Honors class, such as the Socratic method, simulations, case studies, peer-teaching or discussion-leading, essay questions rather than multiple choice exams, and experiential or service learning, service learning
 4. Indication of higher standards in grading, such as requirements for more references in a research product or fewer grammatical errors in written work.
- All standard elements required on any KSU syllabus, such as the enrollment policy, the grading formula, major assignments, office hours, the attendance and make-up policies, and

statements regarding academic honesty and disabled student services, must also appear on syllabi for Honors courses. Honors students are often apprehensive about their decision to take an Honors course rather than a non-Honors section of the same course, and appreciate syllabi that spell out clear and detailed expectations.

Honors faculty will be asked to submit a copy of their syllabus to the Honors College at the start of each semester.

What should I expect from Honors students?

KSU's Honors classes are available only to students who have applied to and been accepted to the University Honors Program or the Dual Enrollment Honors Program. These students meet higher GPA and SAT/ACT admissions standards than KSU's general admission requirements. Honors must maintain a minimum 3.25 KSU GPA to remain in good standing in the Honors Program. Honors students must maintain a 3.25 GPA through graduation and complete at least Honors learning experiences, in addition to the University Honors Senior Capstone, to graduate as an Honors Scholar.

The following attributes of Honors students (University of Connecticut Honors Program, 2015) are equally applicable to KSU Honors students.

Honors students...

- *Have demonstrated **high levels of academic achievement***. They tend to grasp academic material quickly and prefer analysis and synthesis to memorization.
- *Are **individuals***. They still have relative areas of strength and weakness, and their learning styles will vary.
- *Are **highly motivated and ambitious***. They often show intrinsic motivation for learning, but they also focus on their grades, particularly if they will be attending graduate or professional school.
- *Tend to have **wide-ranging abilities and interests***. They are likely connect material from your class to other subjects you were not expecting. However, they may also over-commit or have trouble making decisions between academic fields.
- *Have learned to **expect success***. Honors students tend to participate in class and produce high quality work. They may also demonstrate perfectionism and anxiety, particularly if they have had little experience with failure or even constructive criticism.
- *Often **hold others to high standards***. This includes their peers (in group work and class discussions) and their instructors. Establishing clear expectations for the class can be very important.
- ***Are still college students***. They deal with many of the same social and emotional issues as other students, although they may not show it. Undergraduate Honors students are also distinct from graduate students, even when they are doing independent research or taking graduate courses.

- University of Connecticut Honors Program,

What does the Honors College expect from Honors students?

We expect that Honors students will:

- Attend class
- Participate in class
- Conduct themselves in alignment with KSU's Student Code of Conduct pertaining to both academic honesty and behavior inside and outside of the classroom.

We invite Honors faculty to notify the Honors College of students who are not meeting their expectations. Honors students who are found responsible for violations of the Student Code of Conduct will be dismissed from the Honors Program or Dual Enrollment Honors Program. Please let us know if you are reporting a violation to the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity office.

How will I be evaluated as an Honors Faculty member?

At the end of each semester, Honors Faculty will be asked to provide to the Honors College with a copy of their student course evaluations. The Honors College may also review grade distributions, syllabi, and comments from student exit surveys. An outstanding Honors faculty member will be recognized each year at an end-of-year Honors College luncheon.