



HONORS PROGRAM CORE CURRICULUM

Honors students enroll in these seven four-hour seminars in place of the 43–49 hours of standard, introductory Liberal Education classes taken by the rest of Westminster College’s student body. Both the Humanities and Science seminars are taken in sequence, whereas the other three seminars can be taken in any order.

Humanities I (HON 201)

The “gateway” course to the Honors program, this seminar is taken by all first-year Honors students during the fall. Typically team-taught by Philosophy professor Nick More and director of the Honors Program Richard Badenhausen, the class examines central primary texts from the Greeks to the Renaissance and places those texts into their philosophical, literary, and historical contexts. Class sessions emphasize discussion (rather than lecture) of works like Homer’s *The Odyssey*, Plato’s *Republic*, Dante’s *Inferno*, and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, and stress the development of writing and communication skills. The ultimate goal is to help the student find his or her voice as a thinker, writer, and individual. Along the way, the class explores themes like the meaning of heroic action, the make-up of an ideal society, the relationship between an individual and his or her community, the nature of the divine, and the notion of justice.

Humanities II (HON 202)

This second semester course picks up where Honors 201 leaves off, starting with Shakespeare and moving through a variety of primary texts to the present. The seminar explores works like Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Descartes’ *Meditations*, Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and Dostoevsky’s, *Notes from Underground*. Themes include the epistemological crises that surfaced from the Renaissance onwards, the relationship between the creator and the created, and the struggle of individuals to survive in the face of “modernity,” among many others. The emphasis on writing and communication continues, which allows students to become increasingly confident in expressing themselves. Also, since the Humanities seminars are restricted to the incoming Honors class, freshmen Honors students establish a close bond that lasts for their four years at Westminster.

History and Philosophy of Science (HON 221)

This seminar examines the changing nature of scientific knowledge. It begins by examining the first pre-Socratic notions of natural causation and eventually explores modern, relativist interpretations of scientific progress. Along the way, the seminar combines a critical evaluation of primary texts from the history of science with discussion-based creative exercises to explore some very fundamental questions like “Just what is science, anyway?” and “Does science investigate reality or the appearance of reality?” Taught in various team-teaching arrangements by the founding director of Honors, Philosophy professor Michael Popich, Geology professor Dave Goldsmith, and Art/Film Studies professor Doug Wright, the course serves as the first of a two-course sequence in the sciences.

Science, Power, and Diversity (HON 222)

One of the most popular courses in the Honors curriculum, this second science seminar explores the social construction of the science–power relationships that influence discovery and applications of technology, especially in terms of how scientific discovery is transmitted and received by media and society, respectively. It emphasizes seminal scientific issues of the twentieth century and the present, such as the language of science, the exclusion of women and minorities from scientific discourse, genetic predisposition to disease, and historical progression of brain studies, among others. Taught by biologist Bonnie Baxter and Gender Studies/Philosophy professor Bridget Newell, this class employs a variety of learning strategies, including collaborative research, reading of primary materials, and lab work.

The Political Economy of Conflict (HON 211)

This course investigates a variety of perspectives in the study of the political economy of conflict from conservative, liberal, and radical perspectives. The perspectives include Friedman, Galbraith, Marx, and Veblen. The course uses both traditional and nontraditional learning strategies. Students engage in a simulated society (SIMSOC) project in which they learn the political and economic basis of conflict, and how those conflicts might be resolved. The course is team taught by John Watkins, Professor of Economics, and Chuck Tripp, Professor of Political Science.

The Arts in Performance (HON 212)

Students and faculty explore a variety of different art works in performance and discuss the nature of those works in intensive discussions that are contextualized through readings, writing assignments, and other creative exercises. The class concentrates upon a select number of performances in disciplines like music, drama, ballet, opera, photography, painting, sculpture, and film. That experience is enhanced, when appropriate, by guest lecturers or master classes in those fields. Since the class takes advantage of the rich cultural scene in Salt Lake City, the focus of the seminar changes every year, depending on which performances and exhibits are running. The class has been team-taught by Philosophy professor Nick More, Music professor Karlyn Bond, and English/Environmental Studies professor Jeff McCarthy.

Human Culture and Behavior (HON 231)

Why do people do the things they do as individuals, groups, or as a society? How does our culture and society shape our behavior? How does our behavior shape society? Are the answers to be found in genetics, the family, religion, or elsewhere? This seminar explores the intersection of human culture and behavior via the methods and perspectives of a variety of social science disciplines. The course examines topics as diverse as addiction, war, evolution, crime, and racial injustice. The class is currently taught by Lesa Ellis (Psychology) and Al Patenaude (Justice Studies).

Features that Distinguish Honors Seminars

- Interdisciplinary (integration of disciplines in class sessions, course design, approach to materials, and assignments)
- Team-taught
- Intensive, Student-Centered Approaches to Learning
- Emphasis on Primary Texts
- Cultivation of Writing and Communication Skills