

**The Honors College at Towson University  
Seminar Proposal Guidelines**

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**DEVELOPING HONORS SEMINARS**

The Honors College invites faculty to propose honors level seminars for inclusion in course offerings in the Honors College. These seminars are one-semester courses (typically three units) and are designed to enable students and faculty to examine areas that are not usually part of regular departmental offerings. Seminars in the Honors College should provide a robust and collegial discussion environment that is intellectually demanding. Honors seminars should encourage undergraduate research, interdisciplinary perspectives, critical thinking, and global awareness.

The Honors College is especially interested in **lower level honors seminars** that allow for in-depth study of fundamental issues, ideas, topics or problems. Emphasis for these seminars should be on developing and strengthening skills important to success in Honors and undergraduate education, including oral and written communication skills, reading skills, critical and creative thinking, civic engagement, etc. These seminars should satisfy a specific Core Curriculum requirement. The Honors College is also interested in reviewing proposals for **upper level honors seminars** that are designed to deepen knowledge about a particular intellectual issue and demonstrate the interconnectedness of academic disciplines. These seminars may incorporate moral or ethical thinking, problem-solving components, and independent writing projects as part of a culminating activity. These seminars may be designed to satisfy departmental requirements (if approved by the home department).

**Suggested Honors Components to Coursework**

- an emphasis on primary texts
- a project that helps to broaden the disciplinary/interdisciplinary approach of the course
- student organized events outside the classroom that build on the course material and enhance the educational experience for students in the class or other students on campus
- student participation in broader community or regional events related to course
- student research on pedagogical or research methods (suggesting or implementing some of these innovative approaches during the course of the semester)
- student taught sessions or portions of sessions
- more advanced disciplinary methods
- incorporation of service-learning
- a focus on current global issues

This list is not comprehensive. To the contrary, the Honors Curriculum Committee (HCCC) welcomes other ideas and suggestions, as well as innovative approaches to pedagogy and course structure.

Honors seminars are limited to no more than 20 students, and they are open to students from all backgrounds. Honors seminars should be accessible to students with diverse interests from a variety of levels. It is not possible to attach prerequisites to honors seminars.

Please consult the attached [Honors College Course Criteria](#) and [Honors College Syllabus Template](#) in designing your proposal. Departments and individual instructors interested in developing an honors seminar are also invited to discuss their idea with the Dean or Assistant Dean of the Honors College.

### **Seminar Approval Procedures**

New Honors College seminar carrying Core Curriculum credit

1. Departmental Chairperson's approval (We also recommend, but do not require, review by the departmental curriculum committee.)
2. College Dean's approval
3. Honors College Curriculum Committee approval
4. Approval by Core Curriculum Subcommittee of the University Curriculum Committee (The Honors College Dean or Assistant Dean will assist faculty with the Core approval process.)

New Honors College seminar not carrying Core Curriculum credit

1. Departmental Chairperson's approval (we also recommend, but do not require, review by the departmental curriculum committee)
2. College Dean's approval
3. Honors College Curriculum Committee approval

### **Items to Include in the Seminar Proposal**

1. The attached [Seminar Proposal Form](#) signed by the faculty, Department Chair, and College Dean.
2. A brief description of the content and structure of the course with an explanation of how the course meets many of the Honors College course criteria: encouraging critical thinking, emphasizing interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives, addressing difference and diversity, employing multiple pedagogies, and incorporating clear evaluation of learning outcomes.
3. A preliminary syllabus that has the following:
  - a. a short course description with an explanation of why this is an honors seminar
  - b. clear statement of course objective(s) / goals
  - c. teaching strategies/pedagogies to be employed (e.g., discussion, groupwork, debate)
  - d. essential readings, texts and course materials (primary source readings required)
  - e. course requirements and means of assessment/evaluation (be specific; writing is required)
  - f. an attendance policy
  - g. an explanation of grading standards
4. A statement from the department approving the course to fulfill major requirements (if appropriate).
5. The name(s) of the instructor(s) teaching the course, along with preferences for semester, day(s) of week, and time of day.

Upon approval and recommendation of the Department Chair and College Dean, the Honors College Curriculum Committee will review course proposals for inclusion among the course offerings in the Honors College. The Dean of the Honors College will notify faculty of the HCCC’s decision and comments. The Department Chair and the Dean of the Honors College will work together to provide for appropriate scheduling of any approved course. Once an honors seminar is approved, it may be taught multiple times, depending on faculty’s availability and interest and the Honors College schedule.

Faculty who receive approval for a new honors seminar are eligible to receive a \$500 course development grant in the semester in which the course is first taught.

**Submission Guidelines**

1. After completing the proposal syllabus and form, please submit a signed copy to the Honors College Curriculum Committee. **Please Note: Only proposals that have been approved by the Department Chair and College Dean will be considered by the HCCC.** You may submit the required documents by email ([honors@towson.edu](mailto:honors@towson.edu)), mail (Honors College, 302 Stephens Hall), or fax (410-704-4916).
2. The HCCC will review your proposal and contact you with any questions.
3. The Dean of the Honors College will notify faculty of the HCCC’s decision and comments. The Dean of the Honors College will also help you prepare the proposal for the Core Curriculum Reporting Subcommittee of the University Curriculum Committee, if appropriate.
4. The Department Chair and the Dean of the Honors College will work together to provide for appropriate scheduling of any approved course.

Faculty are encouraged to submit seminar proposals about one year in advance. Please follow the following timeline for submitting proposals to the HCCC.

<i>Plan to teach in</i>	<i>Submit to HCCC by</i>
Fall	February 1
Minimester	April 1
Spring	September 1
Summer	September 1

## HONORS SEMINAR PROPOSAL FORM

Faculty Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Tentative Title of Seminar, Level, and Possible Core Curriculum Category or Department Elective:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Semester to Teach Course: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please attach the following items with this form:**

1. A preliminary syllabus that contains the following information:
  - a. a brief description of the content and structure of the course with an explanation of how the course meets many of the Honors College course criteria: encouraging critical thinking, emphasizing interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives, addressing difference and diversity, employing multiple pedagogies, and incorporating clear evaluation of learning outcomes (If the seminar content is similar to an existing Towson course, please explain the differences between your seminar and the existing course.)
  - b. a clear statement of course objectives, including Core Curriculum learning goals (if appropriate)
  - c. teaching strategies/pedagogies to be employed (e.g., discussion, group work, debate)
  - d. essential readings, texts and course materials (especially primary source readings)
  - e. course requirements and means of assessment/evaluation (student research and presentation is encouraged)
  - f. an attendance policy
  - g. an explanation of grading standards
  - h. a course bibliography
2. A statement from the department approving the course to fulfill major requirements (at the 300-level only, if appropriate).
3. The name(s) of the instructor(s) teaching the course, along with preferences for semester, day(s) of week, and time of day.

**Signature of faculty:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Department Chair:**

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Note: By signing this, you are agreeing to allow the faculty member to teach this course during the suggested term, provided it is approved and requested.)*

**Signature of College Dean:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Please submit this form and the proposal syllabus to the Honors College, 302 Stephens Hall.

## HONORS COLLEGE COURSE CRITERIA

Honors College students don't want more work. They want **different** work. When you plan an honors course consider how it will be different. Honors components and features should be highlighted in the syllabus so that they are readily apparent to the students. Honors courses differ from other courses in some, but not necessarily all, of the following ways.

- **Critical Thinking**
  - Honors courses should emphasize critical thinking skills by offering insight on how theories were developed, stressing reasoning and the synthesis of knowledge. Critical thinking is encouraged at an appropriate level of objectivity, fostering students' ability to ask relevant questions and develop hypotheses, and encouraging the integration of concepts and theories with applied learning experiences. Honors courses should expose students to cutting edge knowledge, present views and theories not available in non-honors courses, and encourage applications of different theories.
- **Interdisciplinary and Comparative Perspective**
  - An interdisciplinary perspective is encouraged throughout honors seminars, with special attention given to points of similarity between disciplines. Honors courses are also characterized by a comparative perspective with comparisons of cultures, disciplines, theories, societies, historical periods, or methodologies.
- **Difference and Diversity**
  - Honors courses should include issues of diversity, whether the focus is economic, ethnic, cultural, social, racial, religious, geographic, biological, historical, regional, etc. Honors courses should also encourage sensitivity to differences in values, cultures, societies, historical periods, disciplines, religions, etc.
- **Multiple Pedagogies**
  - Honors courses should creatively employ approaches to teaching that respond to the varied learning styles and needs of students. Developing creative ways to teach and measure learning outside traditional requirements help make honors courses unique.
  - Honors assignments should offer a variety of experiences that encourage collaborative and experiential learning outside the classroom such as field trips, lab experiences, films, the Internet, lectures, guest speakers, active-learning exercises, and cooperative-learning experiences to help students connect what they are learning with real world experiences, in a context they can relate to.
- **Evaluation**
  - Honors courses should explicitly and clearly relate evaluation methods to course objectives and outcomes stated in syllabi. All levels of students' understanding of course objectives and competency in receptive and expressive communication skills should be evaluated in honors courses.

## HONORS COLLEGE SYLLABUS TEMPLATE

The following information **must** be included in every course syllabus in order for the course to be offered as an honors seminar. Faculty teaching honors seminars that also fulfill Core Curriculum requirements must complete an assessment report which follows the format and guidelines outlined in the assessment plan for the course.

### **COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE**

*Topic Title*

### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

*Instructor's name*

*Instructor's office number*

*Instructor's telephone number*

*Instructor's email address*

*Office hours*

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

#### **Catalog Description**

#### **Course Rationale**

*Briefly describe the nature of the course and the ways in which it meets some of the honors seminar criteria. If the seminar content is similar to an existing Towson course, please explain the differences between your seminar and the existing course.*

#### **Course Objectives / Goals**

*Identify objectives which depict interaction and higher level of cognition and critical thinking skills such as synthesis, interpretation, and evaluation—not merely comprehension.*

#### **Learning Outcomes**

*Please provide learning outcomes for the seminar. If the seminar is also approved for Core credit, Core Curriculum learning outcomes must be stated verbatim on the syllabus.*

### **COURSE TEXTS**

*Required texts*

*Recommended texts*

### **ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES**

*Please indicate how assignments allow the students to demonstrate that learning outcomes have been met. If your seminar will also fulfill Core requirements, please refer to the assessment plan for that category (<http://www.towson.edu/honors/faculty/index.asp>).*

## GRADING

*The following rubric is provided only as an example. Please be sure to include a numerical scale or summary that explains how the grade is determined. Refer to the Undergraduate Catalog for the university's grading scale.*

**Grade A:** *The student thinks critically. The work is without major weaknesses and flawlessly executed. The student performs consistently at a level of intellectual excellence compared against the criteria outlined above.*

**Grade B:** *The student is less consistent in thinking critically than is a student who performs at an A level. Work reflects more strengths than it does weaknesses. It demonstrates a good grasp of thinking critically, is on the whole precise, measured against the criteria outlined above, but lapses occasionally into common sense and unreflective thinking.*

**Grade C:** *The student inconsistently thinks critically. The work reflects as many weaknesses as it does strengths (see F and D for specific criteria).*

**Grade D:** *The student thinks critically at a minimal level. This kind of work is often poorly executed, shows only occasional critical thinking, but generally lacks discipline and clarity. The student "goes through the motions" of the assignment but does not engage it in earnest. The work mirrors F work.*

**Grade F:** *The student does not think critically and/or has failed to do all of the required work. The work of this kind of student will be based on "common sense" thinking. This includes basing conclusions on opinions and on irrelevant information. There will be no awareness of underlying assumptions, identifying key concepts, nor competing points of view. The student will not trace implications and consequences. Student's work lacks evidence of consistent reflection and of problem solving skills.*

## COURSE POLICIES

*Attendance policy (including lateness) as it relates to grades in this course, consistent with TU Class Attendance/Absence Policy*

*Academic integrity policy as it relates to grades for this course, consistent with TU Academic Integrity Policy*

*Classroom conduct policy (including cell phone policy)*

*Late work and test make-up policy, including penalties for late work (if any) and procedures for making up work in the case of absence (if allowed)*

**Students with Disabilities Policy:** This course is in compliance with Towson University policies for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Disability Support Services (DSS), 7720 York Road, Suite 232, 410-704-2638 (Voice) or 410-704-4423 (TDD). Students who expect that they have a disability but do not have documentation are encouraged to contact DSS for advice on how to obtain appropriate evaluation. A memo from DSS authorizing your accommodation is needed before any accommodation can be made.

**Academic Standard Committee Statement on course repetition policy:** Students may not repeat a course more than once without prior permission of the Academic Standards Committee.

## COURSE EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

*Please include the following statements in your syllabus.*

Student evaluations play a crucial role in my delivery of this course. This semester, all course evaluations will be administered online during the last two weeks of the course. You will receive an email with a link to the website with directions on how to access the survey. It is important that you complete the survey because I use the results to modify the course and assess my teaching, and the University uses the results to address technology and facility needs. You can be assured that your responses will be confidential. The results will be transmitted to me after the grading period and they will not include any identifying information.

*If the seminar will also be approved for Core credit, please provide the following statements about assessment in your syllabus.*

Throughout the course, I will assess your demonstration of the Core Curriculum learning outcomes through your class participation, creative project proposal, and creative project. These assessments are required by the university and are designed to help us evaluate your grasp of the material. These assessments are not graded.

At the end of the semester, I will ask you if the Honors College may keep your final project (original or copy) as a means of demonstrating the class attainment of Core Curriculum learning outcomes. You are not required to provide a copy of your project to the Honors College. If you choose to allow the Honors College to keep your project, you will receive a letter from the Dean confirming that your project will be stored for assessment purposes only and that it will not be displayed, distributed, or copied without your consent.

## COURSE OUTLINE OR TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

## COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY