

BIOLOGY & SOCIETY

THE HONORS PROGRAM

BSOC 4991 and 4992

The Honors Program is designed to challenge academically talented undergraduate students whose major is Biology & Society. Students who enroll in the honors program are given an opportunity, with faculty guidance, to do independent study and research dealing with issues in biology and society. Students participating in the program should find the experience intellectually stimulating and rewarding.

SELECTION OF STUDENTS

Biology & Society majors are considered for entry into the honors program at the end of the second semester of the junior year. Application forms for the honors program are available in the Biology & Society office, 303 Morrill Hall. The Biology & Society honors program is available to Biology & Society majors from the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, and Agriculture and Life Sciences. To qualify for the Biology & Society honors program, students must have an overall Cornell cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.30, have formulated a research topic, and have found a project supervisor and a second faculty member willing to serve as advisors. Both must hold academic appointments at Cornell, and at least one must be a member of Biology & Society. Applications will be reviewed by a committee headed by the director of undergraduate studies, who will notify students directly of the outcome. Applications are due by Friday of the 2nd week of classes. Students will be permitted to register for the honors program only by permission of the department. Students must enroll for two semesters, 4 credits each semester with a total of 8 credits awarded. At the end of the first semester, the student will receive a grade of "R" for satisfactory progress. The grade recorded at the end of the second term evaluates the student's performance in the course for the entire year.

If, after admission to the honors program, a student fails to maintain a high scholastic average, fails to demonstrate substantial progress on the thesis, or for any other reason is considered unsuited for honors work, the student reverts to candidacy for the regular Bachelor's degree. The student who does not continue in the honors program must change the first semester to Independent Study in order to receive a grade.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to complete two semesters of honors project research and to write an honors thesis. The project must include substantial research and the completed work should be of wider scope and greater originality than is normal for an upper-level course.

The student has primary responsibility for constituting a committee of two faculty advisors, formulating ideas, developing the proposal, carrying out the study, and preparing a suitable thesis. Honors projects will be carried out under the direction of the two advisors mentioned above. The project supervisor should be expert in the topic and willing to serve as the primary advisor.

Students must register for 4 credits each semester (8 for the whole year) in BSOC 4991 (fall) and BSOC 4992 (spring), Honors Project I and II. Students should note that honors credit may not be used to fulfill any major requirements. The student and the project supervisor must reach clear agreement at the outset as to what sort of work will need to be completed during the first semester. At the end of the first semester, a grade of "R" will be assigned to note satisfactory progress. The advisors, in consultation with the director of undergraduate studies, will evaluate whether or not the student should continue working on an honors project. The student who does not continue in the honors program must change the first semester to Independent Study in order to receive a grade. The grade recorded at the end of the second term evaluates the student's performance in the course for the entire year.

Students should meet regularly with the project supervisor during the period of research and writing for the honors thesis. The responsibility for scheduling these meetings, and for carrying out the research in timely fashion, rests with the student. Advisors are expected to make themselves available for discussion and to offer advice on the plan of research, as well as provide critical and constructive comments on the written work as it is completed. They are not expected, however, to pursue students to ensure that the research and writing are being done on schedule.

THE HONORS THESIS

There is no prescribed length for a thesis, since different topics may require longer or shorter treatment, but the thesis should be a substantial body of work. We have found that a social science/humanities thesis is normally in the range of 70 - 100 double-spaced typed pages. Science theses often take the form of a scientific paper with an extended discussion consisting of a literature review and/or a discussion of the project's significance. A science thesis may be fewer pages. The thesis must be completed in a form satisfactory for purposes of evaluation and submitted by April 15* to the two thesis advisors. The candidate must meet with the two readers for a formal defense of the thesis by May 10*. CALS students must follow the requirements set forth by the college for formatting, binding, and submitting their honors thesis. Please see Stacey Stone or Sharon Loucks in CALS for further information.

One bound copy of the completed and defended thesis (suitably bound in a plastic or hard-backed cover), together with the advisors' recommendations, must be submitted to the Undergraduate Coordinator in 303 Morrill Hall by May 15.* Other copies may be required by the project supervisor or Advising Coordinator in each College.

Following the formal thesis defense, the thesis advisors will submit to the director of undergraduate studies a recommendation to include: 1) the evaluation of the honors thesis by the two readers; 2) an evaluation of the student's academic record in the Biology & Society major; and 3) a recommendation for or against awarding honors, as well as a recommendation for the level of honors.

As the director of undergraduate studies may have little knowledge of the subject area of the thesis, recommendations should be carefully prepared to help ensure consistency within the Honors Program. If there is disagreement among the readers, the director of undergraduate studies will make the final decision after consultation with the interested parties.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT DATES

- Last week of second semester junior year: Application for honors program submitted to 303 Morrill Hall.
- First Monday after Labor Day: a 1000-word thesis proposal with preliminary bibliography submitted to first reader
- End of first semester: students meet with first reader to decide whether to move forward
- March 7* First draft submitted to thesis advisor
- April 15* Thesis completed in a form satisfactory for evaluation and submitted to the three readers
- April 29-May 10* Thesis defense accomplished
- May 13* One bound copy of completed and defended thesis submitted to the Undergraduate Coordinator in 303 Morrill Hall

* If these dates fall on a weekend, the deadline will be the previous Friday.

PEOPLE TO CONTACT FOR BSOC HONORS INFORMATION:

In Arts & Sciences and Agriculture & Life Sciences: Rachel Prentice, Director of Undergraduate Studies, rep35@cornell.edu
Stacey Stone, Undergraduate Coordinator, sms252@cornell.edu