



UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND GUIDELINES

2023-2024

APPROVED BY
MEMBERS OF THE HONORS COMMITTEE
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INTRODUCTION

The mission of the University Honors Program is to help academically gifted students achieve their fullest intellectual potential by preparing them to enter a world acutely in need of their talents. We offer motivated, intellectually curious students a unique educational experience that integrates curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular learning in both interdisciplinary study and the students' major discipline, engaging them in a rigorous and dynamic course of study that complements and enhances their non-honors learning.

In a series of discussion-based honors courses, students are challenged to pursue ideas in greater depth, seek the integration of their knowledge at a deeper level, and demonstrate greater intellectual initiative. These classes, which are part of the Mount's core curriculum, are capped at a smaller number than the equivalent non-honors classes and are specially designed to help our most gifted students achieve their fullest academic potential. The honors sequence culminates in an intensive research project in the major during senior year. The Senior Honors Project allows honors students to work intensively with a faculty mentor in the student's major field of study, leading to an advanced piece of research or creative production. Students present the results of their work shortly before graduation at the annual SPARC (Scholarship, Performance, Art, Research and Creativity) Festival. For many students, this project serves as a powerful bridge to graduate school or a profession.

Honors students at the Mount make up a community of like-minded junior scholars. In their honors classes they are given the opportunity to develop the full range of their intellectual capacities in an atmosphere that promotes collegiality and a shared spirit of free inquiry. Co-curricular activities such as field trips to major cultural centers, faculty-led discussion dinners at the President's house, and an honors housing option further strengthen the cohesion of the program's intellectual community.

This handbook details the requirements that must be met in order for students to remain members of the Honors Program in good standing and the policies governing the various aspects of the program. At the end of the handbook you will find information about several university services that support the efforts of our students.

The University Honors Committee and I wish you a successful and rewarding undergraduate career.

Sincerely,

Sarah K. Scott, Ph.D.
Director, University Honors Program

ADMISSION AND INDUCTION

ADMISSION PROCESS FOR INCOMING FRESHMEN

High school students accepted to Mount St. Mary's University are automatically offered the opportunity to join the Honors Program if their (weighted) high school grade point average is 3.75 or above.

Students who have been offered the chance to join the program are informed of their acceptance by official notice. Once they have paid their tuition deposit and committed to attend Mount St. Mary's, they are asked to indicate whether they desire to enter the program by completing an online application.

Once they have joined the Honors Program, honors students must maintain a GPA of **3.400** to remain in good standing as members of the program.

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR RISING SOPHOMORES AND TRANSFER STUDENTS

Currently enrolled Mount students interested in joining the Honors Program are welcome to apply *at the end of their first semester of study*. To qualify, students must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.400. The components of a complete application are as follows:

1. A completed online application form.
2. A letter of recommendation from one faculty member that describes the applicant's academic achievements, citizenship on campus, and leadership potential. These should be submitted directly to the Honors Director by e-mail (sscott@msmary.edu).

Complete applications should be submitted by **February 14th**. Applicants will be informed of their acceptance by February 25th. Students should then enroll in Honors sections for the following semesters.

Incoming transfer students interested in joining the Honors Program should contact the Honors Director. The decision about whether a transfer student will be admitted into the program will depend on the number of honors courses the student would still have left to take before graduation, prior institutional GPA, and other factors.

INDUCTION INTO THE HONORS PROGRAM AND THE HONORS SOCIETY

Official induction into the Honors Program and the Honors Society is held in the fall semester of each academic year during Family Fest weekend. Invitations are sent directly to students. Students are welcome to invite family members and friends to the ceremony, which is presided over by the Honors Director. Senior honors students and their Honors Project mentors are also invited to the ceremony, as well as the faculty at large. During the ceremony, seniors and their mentors are recognized and honored for their research collaborations. Recipients of the Founders Scholarship are also recognized, and the Honors Program Service Award is given to a member of the Mount community who has supported the efforts of the Honors Program in significant ways. These awards are presented to recipients by the President of Mount St. Mary's University.

REQUIRED COURSES

Honors students should enroll in and complete a series of nine honors courses, each of which is an honors version of the Mount core curriculum. (This the Mount’s four-year curriculum of sequenced and integrated courses.) In addition, in order to graduate from the Program, honors students must successfully complete the two-semester, four-credit senior honors project.

In certain circumstances, an honors student may be permitted to take a non-honors version of a course that exists in an honors version. The only legitimate reason for such a departure from the usual honors course requirements, however, is that the student has an *unavoidable* scheduling conflict. Honors students seeking permission to substitute a non-honors course for one that exists in an honors version must send a formal request to the Honors Director that includes a rationale explaining why the departure from the general policy is necessary. The student’s academic advisor must also send the director an official notification that he or she approves of the departure.

Sixth course option. Honors students with a grade point average of 3.75 or higher in a given semester are eligible to enroll in a 6th course in the following semester above the standard 16-credit course load without incurring extra tuition charges.

- *Students intending to take advantage of this opportunity must use the add form available in MyMount under Undergraduate Student Forms.*

The following table shows the standard sequence of honors courses over eight semesters. Departures from the standard course ordering are sometimes justified, especially for science students, but every effort should be made to follow this order wherever possible.

HONORS COURSES

FALL	SPRING
FRESHMAN YEAR	
FIRST YEAR SYMPOSIUM	ORIGINS OF THE WEST
	FOUNDATIONS OF PHILOSOPHY
SOPHOMORE YEAR	
ATLANTIC ENCOUNTERS	AMERICA IN THE WORLD
PHILOSOPHY IN THE MODERN AGE	BELIEF IN TODAY’S WORLD
JUNIOR YEAR	
ENCOUNTERING CHRIST	[Students secure mentors and submit Honors Project Proposals in this semester.]
SENIOR YEAR	
SENIOR HONORS PROJECT I <i>HP 470</i>	SENIOR HONORS PROJECT II <i>HP 471</i>

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, PROBATION, AND DISMISSAL

Honors students must maintain a career grade point average of 3.400 in order to remain members of the program in good standing. At the end of each semester, the Honors Director reviews honors students' GPAs. If a student's career GPA has fallen below 3.400 but is strong enough for the student to bring it up to 3.400 the following semester, then the student is placed on a one-semester probation regarding his or her membership in the program. In cases where the student's GPA is so low that it is mathematically impossible for it to be brought up to 3.400 by the end of the subsequent semester, however, the student may be dismissed from the program forthwith. In either case, the director sends a letter to the student and his or her advisor by e-mail alerting them of the student's status. In the case of dismissal, the director also informs the Registrar's Office.

Students on probation who have, by the end of the subsequent semester, raised their career GPA to 3.400 are relieved of their probation. If, on the other hand, a student on probation has not raised their career GPA to 3.400 by the end of the subsequent semester, they are dismissed from the program. The director sends a letter to the student and their advisor by e-mail alerting them of the student's dismissal, and also informs the Registrar's Office.

Evidence of extenuating circumstances, such as severe illness, a death in family, or other similarly grave hardship, that the student feels is relevant to their academic performance may be presented to the director and will be taken into account before a final decision about the dismissal is made. Ordinarily, students who have been dismissed from the program are not readmitted at a later date.

An **exception** to the policy outlined above is made for first-year honors students whose GPAs are below 3.400 at the end of their first semester. Such students are given a two-semester rather than a one-semester probation in recognition of the unique challenges students face in their first semester of college. Students placed on probation at the end of their first semester must raise their GPAs to 3.400 by the end of their third semester in order to remain in the program. If, however, at the end of the second semester the student's GPA is so low that it is mathematically impossible for it to be brought up to 3.400 by the end of the subsequent semester, the student may be dismissed from the program forthwith.

Students who wish to leave the Honors Program voluntarily should contact the Honors Director and may be asked to complete a brief survey concerning their experiences in the program. Ordinarily, students who leave the program voluntarily are not readmitted at a later date. Students who decline the offer to join the program as incoming freshmen are welcome to apply for admission at the end of their first year of study.

SENIOR HONORS PROJECT

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The honors experience culminates with a Senior Honors Project, which aims to produce a significant piece of scholarship or creative production in the student's major field of study. Work on this project begins during the spring semester of the junior year, giving students more than a year to formulate and thoroughly investigate a research question; identify, develop, and defend a thesis; or conceive and realize a creative production. Each student works closely with a faculty mentor chosen from among the members of the student's major department. If the project is interdisciplinary, the student works closely with two (or possibly more) mentors spanning the relevant disciplines. Honors senior projects often serve as a powerful transition to graduate school or a profession.

The hard work of senior honors students is showcased in April at the university's multi-day academic celebration known as the SPARC Festival. Not long after SPARC (which stands for Scholarship, Performance, Art, Research, and Creativity), students submit the final version of their projects to the Honors Director, and their success is celebrated at the Senior Honors Banquet.

Only students who have successfully completed the Senior Honors Project are recognized as completers of the Honors Program on their diplomas and transcripts, during the medal and certificate awards presentation at the Senior Honors Banquet, and at graduation. Some examples of recent honors project titles and abstracts are given in [Appendix I](#) of this handbook.

OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

Junior honors students submit a project proposal to the Honors Director in the spring semester.¹ The proposal is developed in consultation with the faculty mentor and is sent to the Honors Committee for evaluation. Proposals may be accepted, sent back for further work, or rejected outright.

Students complete an initial phase of their research over the summer before senior year. At the beginning of the fall semester, an "initial progress report" is submitted to the Honors Director for evaluation by the Honors Committee, which must approve the report before work may continue on the project.

A final progress report, consisting primarily of a full-length rough draft of the paper, is due either at the end of the fall semester or beginning of the spring semester, depending on the department in which the project is being done. This report, too, must be approved by the Honors Committee. It is also read by the mentor, who is expected to provide the student with a detailed response to it, leaving enough time for the student to make revisions before submitting a final draft to the mentor prior to the SPARC Festival. The student then, under the guidance of the mentor, prepares his or her oral presentation and takes it through a dry run with the mentor prior to the actual presentation at SPARC. Students are given a brief window of time after SPARC in which to make a last set of revisions before submitting the final version of their papers to the Honors Director for archiving.

¹ Honors students who plan to complete their degrees in less than the standard eight-semester timeframe should contact the Honors Director *as early as possible in their academic career* to begin mapping out a way to modify the honors project schedule described here to meet their circumstances.

Senior honors students register for honors project courses in both the fall and spring semesters. The two courses are worth a total of four (4) credits, and the same grade is given for each.

The due dates for the proposal, progress reports, and final version of the paper have been set by the various academic departments, as has the distribution of credits between the two semesters. This information can be found in a chart at the end of this part of the handbook. It can also be found in the various departmental [honors project timeline documents](#), which are posted on the Honors Program's portion of the university's website. These documents contain the full and definitive information about the requirements for honors projects within departments. These documents are very important, and students and mentors should consult them frequently. A sample project timeline is in [Appendix II](#).

PROJECT PROPOSAL

The most important piece by far that students must accomplish at the beginning of the honors project process is to secure the agreement of a faculty member in their major department to serve as project mentor. It is possible for a student to have more than one mentor; this is indeed encouraged when the project is interdisciplinary in nature. Students with more than one major are free to choose one, both, or all of their majors for their projects as befitting the scope of the project. For administrative purposes, however, one department should be chosen as the formal department in which the project is to be done. The project then follows the schedule for that department, as laid out in the department's timeline document.

- ❖ Ordinarily, honors projects are created by individual students. It is permissible, however, if rare, for two students to submit a proposal for a single, collaborative project. Acceptance of joint proposals will depend on the proposal's ability to convince the Honors Committee that (a) there are sufficient reasons, grounded in the nature of the project, for engaging in a joint project as opposed to two separate projects, (b) the size and scope of the collaborative project are equivalent to that of two standard honors projects (so that the project plausibly represents eight credits worth of work), and (c) the student's respective duties are evenly divided and clearly delineated.

Students are advised to approach faculty members who know them well and with whom they have a good working relationship when asking them to serve as their mentors. Indeed, they are encouraged to start early in their academic career at the Mount in cultivating the kind of relationship with faculty members that might lead to faculty service as honors project mentor.

Students should discuss with the mentor ideas they have about the kind of project they would like to do. The writing of the proposal should not begin until the student and mentor have agreed upon the nature of the project. The required elements for the proposal vary by department, as do due dates. These are specified in the various departmental [timeline documents](#). Due dates are also listed in a chart at the end of this part of the handbook.

The proposal should be read and approved by the mentor before being submitted to the Honors Project Workspace in Canvas.

Project proposals are evaluated by the Honors Committee using a "traffic light" system. Proposals that are given a **green light** means that the student is permitted to continue working on the project outlined in the proposal, when, in the judgment of the committee, the subject to be handled in the project is worthy of investigation, the project can be brought to completion within the allotted time, and the project is consistent with the mission of the university. A **yellow light** is

warranted if the committee is concerned that the subject to be handled in the project is not worthy of investigation, that the project might not be able to be brought to completion within the allotted time, or that it conflicts with the university's mission. A yellow light will also be given if any of the required elements are missing or are inadequate in some way. If, on the other hand, in the judgment of the committee, the project as proposed is simply not viable, the proposal will be given a **red light**, which means that work may no longer continue on the project as outlined in the proposal. Students receiving either a red or yellow light, if they wish to continue with the honors project and graduate with honors, must submit a revised, reworked, or, in the case of a red light, completely new proposal by the resubmission deadline specified in their department's timeline document or by the Honors Director.

PROGRESS REPORTS

In the fall of senior year, all students must submit an initial progress report. Later, in either the late fall or early spring semester (depending on the department in which the student is doing the project) students must submit a final progress report consisting primarily of a full-length rough draft of the final paper. Students engaging in projects in some departments are required to submit an intermediate or interim progress report in addition to these two major reports.

Detailed information about the precise required elements for each of these reports, as well as about the submission process, is given in the various [departmental timeline documents](#).

- ❖ **Mentors** are required to submit a Letter of Confidence to the Honors Director around the time when the student submits the final progress report and no later than when grades are due for that semester. This letter should indicate two things: (1) that the quantity of the work completed to that point is satisfactory and (2) that the project shows sufficient promise at its current stage to warrant the expectation that the student will produce a final project worthy of public presentation at SPARC. The Letter of Confidence will be forwarded to the Honors Committee and taken into consideration in the committee's evaluation of the final progress report.

Progress reports should be submitted to the Honors Project Workspace page in Canvas. They are reviewed and evaluated by the Honors Committee, which represents an interdisciplinary cross-section of the Mount's academic divisions. Utilizing broadly recognized norms for academic research projects, committee members evaluate these reports according to the following criteria:

- **Green Light:** In the judgment of the committee, the project is viable and consistent with the mission of the university; all the required elements for the report are present in adequate form. Work may proceed on the project.
- **Yellow Light:** This means that the committee has concerns about the project described in the report while still finding it to be viable, or that one (or more) of the required elements is missing or is inadequate in some way. Students receiving a yellow light are given the opportunity to submit a revised version of the report. Approval must be received from the Honors Committee before the final progress report can be submitted.
- **Red Light:** In the judgment of the committee, the project described in the report is not viable. Work on the project should not proceed, and the student should withdraw from HP 470.

Students are expected to submit their progress reports by the relevant due dates. These vary according to the department in which the student is doing the project and are given in the various timeline documents. They are also provided in a chart at the end of this part of the handbook.

The following policies govern late submissions of these reports:

1. If a student anticipates that he or she will have difficulty submitting any of the progress reports or final version of the project on time, he or she must formally request an extension of the relevant deadline from the Honors Director *before* that deadline. The request should be sent by e-mail and should contain an explanation of why the extension is required. *The project mentor should be copied on the message.*
2. The project mentor should send a separate request by e-mail to the Director, supporting the student's request.
3. No progress report will be accepted more than **three weeks** after the relevant deadline. If this deadline is not met, the project will receive an automatic red light, and the student will be dismissed from the Honors Program.

COURSE REGISTRATION

During the spring advising week, junior honors students should register for the first Senior Honors Project course, which carries the designation "HP 470" on the university course schedule. *All seniors who are completing an honors project and who intend to graduate from the Honors Program must be enrolled in this course for the fall semester.* Registering for HP 470 officially indicates that students intend to commit to completing the senior honors project.

Assuming the student's initial progress report has been approved by the Honors Committee, he or she should register during fall advising week for the second honors project course, HP 471, for the spring semester. As with HP 470, enrollment in HP 471 is *essential* if the student is to be recognized subsequently as having completed the Senior Honors Project and therewith the requirements for graduating from the Honors Program.

If, once enrolled, students decide to drop either HP 470 or HP 471 (and thereby to drop the honors project and exit the Honors Program), they must withdraw from the course by the university course withdrawal deadline to avoid receiving an "F" grade.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

All students are required to give a public presentation on their honors projects at the university's yearly academic festival, known as the SPARC Festival.² This event showcases the scholarly and creative work of (honors and non-honors) undergraduate students in all disciplines. Presentations are open to all members of the community (as well as the public at large) and are

² Students who are not following the standard honors project schedule are also required to give a presentation. If a student is planning to complete his or her degree prior to the standard May graduation date, he or she may elect to return to campus for the SPARC Festival and give a presentation along with the other members of his or her honors cohort. It should be born in mind, however, that such students will not have completed their honors requirements, including HP 471, until they have completed this presentation and have turned in the final version of their papers. We recommend, then, that students who intend to graduate prior to the spring semester of the cohort class's senior year make arrangements with the Honors Director to schedule a special public presentation in the semester they intend to graduate.

expected to last approximately 25 minutes, followed by a five- to ten-minute question and answer session.

Each presentation is assigned a member of the Honors Committee. The Honors Committee member begins the session by announcing the names of the student and mentor(s) and the title of the presentation. The mentor then briefly introduces the student, perhaps including some personal reflections on the student and the project. The Honors Committee member keeps time for the presentation. Both the Honors Committee member and the mentor evaluate the presentation; further details are given in the section “Grading” below.

FINAL SUBMISSION OF PROJECT AND SENIOR HONORS BANQUET

Students have until the second Friday after SPARC to complete a final set of revisions to their papers. This time should be used to incorporate any improvements resulting from the experience of presenting the paper publicly, and to put any other finishing touches on the paper. The final paper must be submitted to the Honors Project Workspace in Canvas by the due date.

Around this time the Senior Honors Banquet is also held. All seniors and their mentors are invited to attend this event, at which the students’ accomplishments are celebrated. At the ceremony, students receive a certificate for completing their honors projects and all the requirements of the Honors Program, as well as a medal honoring their achievement. The date for the final submission of the paper is given in the [timeline documents](#).

GRADING

For grading purposes, the final paper constitutes 75% of the total project, the public presentation 25%. The grade for the final paper is determined by the mentor who communicates it to the Honors Director. The grade for the presentation is divided evenly between the mentor and the member of the Honors Committee who has been assigned to evaluate the presentation; both communicate their grades to the Honors Director. The Director computes the final project grade and submits it to the Registrar’s Office.

Evaluation criteria, as regards both the paper and oral presentation, are determined by the mentor in accordance with the expectations governing scholarship in the relevant discipline. The rubric used by Honors Committee members in their evaluation of oral presentations is given in [Appendix III](#) of this handbook. We recommend that mentors use the same rubric for evaluating their students’ presentations.

When students successfully complete HP 470, a grade of “Pass” is communicated to the Registrar’s Office. When the entire project is completed and the project grade has been submitted to the Registrar’s Office, that grade is assigned to HP 471, and retroactively to HP 470. Thus, the student receives a single grade for the entire four-credit honors project.

SUMMARY OF STUDENT AND MENTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Honors projects are collaborative endeavors between the honors student and his or her mentor (or mentors). The following chart outlines some of the parties’ main responsibilities.

STUDENT LEAD ROLE	MENTOR SUPPORT ROLE
Become familiar with the project timeline as specified in the timeline document for the department in which the project is being done.	Become familiar with the project timeline as specified in the timeline document for the department in which the project is being done.
Work with mentor to develop project proposal.	Provide student with an honest assessment of the proposed project's value and "doability."
Schedule regular meetings with mentor.	Be available for regular meetings with student.
Work with mentor to establish a set of short- and medium-range targets that will enable the student to meet the relevant deadlines.	Help student generate a set of short- and medium-range targets that enable the student to meet the relevant deadlines.
Submit work to the mentor in compliance with the agreed-upon targets.	Provide student with consistent feedback on his or her work.
Submit proposal, progress reports, and final version of paper by the relevant due dates.	Review proposal, progress reports, and final version of the paper before student submits them officially.
Enroll in HP 470 and HP 471.	Provide the Honors Committee with an honest assessment of the project in a Letter of Confidence.

SUMMARY OF DUE DATES AND DISTRIBUTION OF COURSE CREDITS

As explained above, the due dates for the various parts of the Honors Project vary according to the department that holds the project's subject area. This information can be found in the [honors project timeline documents](#), which are posted on the honors website. The chart below collects this information for all departments.

Timeline documents are updated and reposted on the website yearly, and changes from year to year regarding due dates and requirements are possible. However, such changes are infrequent, and a department's timeline document for a given class year provides a generally accurate guide to the expectations that will govern projects in that department in subsequent years.

It should be noted that the timeline documents posted online contain the most up-to-date information about honors projects in the various departments, and any information given in them that conflicts with this handbook supersedes what is stated here.

SENIOR HONORS PROJECT DUE DATES AND CREDIT DISTRIBUTION

Department	Proposal	Initial progress report	Intermediate progress report	Final progress report (rough draft)	Final submission to mentor	HP 470 credits	HP 471 credits
Business	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
Communications	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
Education	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2

English	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
Foreign Language	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
History	15-Mar	1-Oct	15-Dec	15-Mar	10-May	2	2
Mathematics and Computer Science	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
Philosophy	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
Political Science	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
Psychology	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
Science	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
Sociology	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
Theology	15-Mar	1-Oct	19-Oct	19-Jan	10-May	2	2
Visual and Performing Arts	15-Mar	1-Oct	N/A	19-Jan	10-May	2	2

HONORS HOUSING

Honors students have several options for on-campus residence. Among these are two honors living and learning communities. These residential settings provide students in the Honors Program the opportunity to continue their collaborative learning experiences outside the classroom in a relaxed residential setting. Students are able to pursue both academic and social activities with like-minded colleagues, allowing them the chance to develop strong friendships through common goals, classes, conversation, and fun.

All current honors students are eligible for honors housing. Information about how to complete a housing application may be found in the [Residence Life section of the university's website](#).

CONTACT INFORMATION & HELP

HONORS COMMITTEE

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LEARNING SERVICES

Located on the first floor of Archbishop Borders Hall, Learning Services offers a large variety of programs designed to help students succeed in their studies. They provide Disability Support Services and Peer Tutoring, as well as individual Study Strategies instruction. Through Learning Services, students can gain skills in such areas as time management, organization, note taking, test taking, and learning and memory strategies. Students can meet individually with Learning Services staff members, who assess their individual strengths and needs and help them practice study techniques using notes and textbooks from their current classes.

THE WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center assists students in developing their skills in writing analytically and critically. Available to students from all disciplines at all levels of skill, the center offers instruction in a variety of forms, from tutorials to short courses to workshops. Through its flexibility, the center can help meet both the immediate and long-term needs of students involved in various writing projects. Contact the Writing Center to set an appointment for writing assistance. Tutoring is also offered on a walk-in basis at the Phillips Library several nights a week.

COUNSELING SERVICES

The Counseling Center provides services to enable students to address behavioral and emotional concerns so they are able to take full advantage of the academic and social opportunities of their college experience. The Counseling Center staff offers crisis intervention and short-term counseling. Students needing intensive counseling or medication will be referred to off-campus resources.

APPENDIX I: EXAMPLES OF RECENT HONORS PROJECT TITLES AND ABSTRACTS

Honors Class of 2023 Abstracts

Abstracts by Discipline:

Biology

Identification of Key Molecules in the HMGB1 Mediated Inflammatory Process in the Brain

HMGB-1 (high mobility group box 1) is a protein that has been shown to act as a pro-inflammatory cytokine when released from necrotic cells following stroke. This project examines the relationship of HMGB-1 with receptor for advanced glycation end products (RAGE) to regulate translocation of CEBP- β (CCAAT/enhancer-binding protein beta), and identifies potential downstream targets of this inflammatory pathway.

Economics

Sources of Income Stagnation and Inequality: Clarifying Positive, Negative, Personal, and External Factors

The first half of this paper deals with understanding measures of material well-being such as income and the historical context of today's inequality. The second part uses a unique framework to classify sources of rising inequality into four distinct categories. The results of this classification should have important implications for how policymakers seek to tackle income inequality in the United States.

English

A Vast, Vulgar, and Meretricious Beauty: The Interpretation of Jay Gatsby through the Eyes of Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

This project explores the relationship between interpretations of Jay Gatsby and twentieth-century literary criticism. The dominant schools of literary theory during the twentieth century offer a variety of approaches to critical theory and textual interpretation. Yet a close look at the character of Gatsby as interpreted by four critical approaches reveals that these schools may not be so different after all.

Philosophy

“Practice Rather than Theory”: The Role of Self-Knowledge in the Paradiso’s Sphere of the Fixed Stars

Scholars have argued whether *The Divine Comedy*'s genre is poetic philosophy or philosophical poetry. This project treats the question of genre as a way to understand philosophy's place in the pursuit of a well-ordered life. The *Comedy* may not be a work of “traditional” philosophy, but it has a philosophical argument; the center of this argument is self-knowledge.

Political Science/International Studies

(Dual) Executive Decision: Semi-Presidentialism as a Solution to the Presidential–Parliamentary Debate

When it comes to democratic governance, scholars generally agree that the system of government in place within a country can have a sizable effect on the performance of democracy. Presidentialism and parliamentarism have mixed track records in this regard, but a third regime type—semi-presidentialism, which attempts to fuse the best aspects of presidentialism and parliamentarism—holds some promise.

Psychology

Predicting End-of-Semester Professor Ratings before the First Class

Are professor evaluations fair? Research has suggested that they are not; non-teaching variables such as race, gender, attractiveness, and personality have been shown to influence student's evaluations. In the current study, data gathered from 83 undergraduate students at Mount St. Mary's before classes even met were able to predict end-of-semester evaluation scores with significant accuracy.

Sociology/Criminal Justice

Standing Your Ground: An Exploratory Look at the Origins, Applications, and Beliefs Regarding Stand Your Ground Laws and their Effects on Crime

This project explores the origins of Stand Your Ground Laws, the application of these laws in court cases, and the political ideologies of those for and against the laws. The project also consists of statistical analyses designed to determine the laws' effects on crime and suggest recommendations for future researchers.

Theology

Theology of Running

Running is sportive, and sport well done achieves excellence and exercises freedom. For these reasons, the Catholic intellectual tradition has asserted that sport can be a noble pursuit and a means to the final end of eternal, unitive life with God. In this project I imaginatively explore ways that running can be suited to this final end, especially as it relates to prayer.

Visual and Performing Arts

Unveiling the Fell Stitch

Embracing traditional methods of craft and utilizing casting and found objects, this art installation works to make the viewer aware of the generational gaps present in today's society. By highlighting the importance of making by hand, the installation enables the viewer to recognize the value of mending these bonds through the passing of fiber crafts from one individual to the next.

APPENDIX II: SAMPLE HONORS PROJECT TIMELINE DOCUMENT

Below is an **example** of an honors project timeline and requirements for completion of an honors project. Note that considerable variation can be found among timeline documents from different departments. The full set of timeline documents can be found on the [Honors Program Office page](#) on the university's website.

HONORS PROJECT TIMELINE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

Junior Year

This document outlines the standard timeline for honors students completing the Senior Honors Project in English and is designed for students who are pursuing a four-year course of study. Students following nonstandard graduation timelines are expected to consult with the Honors Director about how this timeline can be adapted to fit their circumstances.

JUNIOR YEAR: SPRING SEMESTER

I. Initial Steps

By no later than **February 15**, every junior honors student should secure the agreement of a faculty member to serve as honors project mentor. A one-paragraph anticipatory abstract of the envisioned project should be submitted to the mentor.

II. Project Proposal

A project proposal should be prepared in consultation with the mentor and submitted to Canvas by **March 15**. The project mentor must be given a copy.

The proposal must be 2–4 pages in length and should include the following elements:

- Name of faculty mentor
- Tentative title
- 2–4 paragraphs describing proposed topic
- Brief outline of research plan
- Summer reading list

If your proposed project deals with human participants or animals, a separate proposal must be submitted for approval to the Institutional Review Board prior to beginning your study. The necessary materials can be found at <http://irb.robertkeefe.us>.

The proposal will be reviewed and evaluated by the Honors Committee according to the following criteria:

Green Light: This means that the proposal has been judged acceptable by the committee. It has convinced the committee that the subject to be handled in the project is worthy of investigation, that the project can be brought to completion within the allotted time, and that the project is consistent with the mission of the university.

Yellow Light: If the committee is concerned that the subject to be handled in the project is not worthy of investigation, or that the project might not be able to be brought to completion within the allotted time, or that it conflicts with the university's mission, the proposal will be given a yellow light. A yellow light will also be given if any of the elements specified above are missing or are inadequate in some way. In the case of a yellow light, a revised proposal should be submitted by the resubmission deadline (given below).

Red Light: If, in the judgment of the committee, the project as proposed is not viable, the proposal will be given a red light. In that case, if the student wishes to continue with the Senior Honors Project, a completely re-worked proposal, perhaps on an entirely different topic, should be submitted by the resubmission deadline.

Resubmission (if necessary)

If the proposal has received a yellow or red light, a new or revised proposal, developed in response to the Honors Committee's feedback on the original proposal, may be submitted. The new proposal should be uploaded to Canvas and emailed to your mentor no later than **April 15**.

Special Advising Note: You must enroll in HP 470 (2 credits) for the fall of the senior year. *You will not be charged for this course, regardless of how many credits it gives you.*

HONORS PROJECT TIMELINE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

Senior Year

This document outlines the standard timeline for honors students completing the Senior Honors Project in English and is designed for students who are pursuing a four-year course of study. Students following nonstandard graduation timelines are expected to consult with the Honors Director about how this timeline can be adapted to fit their circumstances.

SENIOR YEAR: FALL SEMESTER

Students must be enrolled in HP 470 (2 credits). An initial grade of "P" (pass) will be given upon completion of this course in December. The final grade for this course will be determined at the end of the spring semester on the basis of an overall evaluation of the completed project. At that time, the grade for HP 470 will be changed to match the grade received for the spring-semester course (HP 471).

I. Initial Progress Report

An initial progress report should be uploaded to Canvas by **October 1**. The project mentor must be given a copy.

The report must be at least five pages in length and should include the following elements:

- Project title
- Abstract or summary of the project
- Tentative introduction to the paper *or* elaboration of the project based on the progress of summer research (2 page minimum)
- Detailed plan of action (in outline form), including dates
- Literature review (2 page minimum). Note: This is not simply a bibliographical listing but should contain some discussion of individual sources, including an indication of their usefulness for the project.

The progress report will be reviewed and evaluated by the Honors Committee according to the following criteria:

Green Light: In the judgment of the committee, the project is viable and consistent with the mission of the university; all the required elements for the report are present in adequate form. Work may proceed on the project.

Yellow Light: This means that the committee has concerns about the project described in the report while still finding it to be viable, or that one (or more) of the required elements is missing or is inadequate in some way. Students receiving a yellow light will be given the opportunity to submit a revised version of the report. Approval must be received from the Honors Committee before the final progress report can be submitted.

Red Light: In the judgment of the committee, the project described in the report is not viable. Work on the project should not proceed, and the student should withdraw from HP 470.

Important Note: If you decide during the fall semester not to complete your honors project and to exit the Honors Program, you must withdraw from HP 470 by the withdrawal deadline. Failure to withdraw by this date will result in a grade of “F” for HP 470.

II. Final Progress Report (Rough Draft)

A final progress report should be submitted to Canvas by **December 15**.

The report should be arranged in two sections:

- An abstract or executive summary of the project of no more than 200 words
- A full rough draft (20–25 pages) of the project, in term paper form.

The project mentor must also send a “letter of confidence” to Dr. Sarah K. Scott (sscott@msmary.edu) indicating (1) that the quantity of the work completed thus far is

satisfactory and (2) that the project shows sufficient promise at this stage to warrant an expectation that the student will produce a final project worthy of public presentation at the SPARC Festival.

The final progress report and mentor's letter will be reviewed by the Honors Committee, which will determine whether the project should proceed to the final stage. The report will be evaluated by the Honors Committee according to the following criteria:

Green Light: The committee believes the project can be brought to a successful conclusion in time for public presentation to the university community at SPARC.

Yellow Light: The committee has concerns about the project as described in the report while still believing that it can be brought to a successful conclusion in time for public presentation at SPARC. A yellow light will also be given if a required element is missing or inadequate. Students receiving a yellow light will be given the opportunity to submit a revised version of the report. Approval must be received from the Honors Committee before the project can proceed to the final stage.

Red Light: In the judgment of the committee, the project as presented in the report cannot reasonably be expected to be completed successfully in time for public presentation at SPARC. Work should not proceed on the project; the student must withdraw from the honors project and exit the Honors Program.

Special Advising Note: You must enroll in HP 471 (2 credits) for the spring semester. *You will not be charged for this course, regardless of how many credits it gives you.*

SENIOR YEAR: SPRING SEMESTER

Students must be enrolled in HP 471 (2 credits) during the spring semester. The grade for this course will be based on the mentor's evaluation of the completed project (75%) and an evaluation of the public presentation (25%); the latter evaluation will be divided equally between the mentor and a member of the Honors Committee. The final grade assigned to HP 471 will also be assigned retroactively to HP 470, as described above.

I. Deadlines for revisions of Final Paper

January 15, 2022: mentor's response (due to student)

The mentor will provide a thorough response to the rough draft.

April 20, 2022: presentation rehearsal

A rehearsal of the presentation with the mentor should occur no later than this date.

May 10, 2022: final version of paper due to mentor

II. Project Presentation / SPARC Festival: April 27-29

During this time, all senior honors students will present their projects to the Mount community. Presentations should last roughly 25 minutes, followed by a five-minute question and answer period. A podium, projector, computer, and screen will be available.

III. **Final Paper Submission**

The final paper must be uploaded to Canvas in .pdf format by 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 13, 2022. Be sure to email your final paper to your project mentor. Late papers will be assessed a penalty of a 10% grade deduction. You must submit a copy to your mentor.

IV. **Senior Honors Banquet**

At the Senior Honors Banquet, we will celebrate your success! Graduating seniors will receive certificates and medals for completing the Honors Program. Details about the date and time of the banquet will be announced as the date approaches.

Important Note: If you decide to withdraw from your honors project and the Honors Program during the spring semester, you must withdraw from HP 471 by the withdrawal deadline. Failure to withdraw by this date will result in a grade of “F” for HP 471.

APPENDIX III: RUBRIC USED BY THE HONORS COMMITTEE FOR EVALUATING HONORS PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

Rubric for Honors Project Presentations						
CONTENT	Poor 1	Fair 2	Good 3	Excellent 4	Score	Comments
Ideas and concepts explained clearly	Explanations muddled; explanations missing; very difficult to follow; no attempt to explain ideas.	Most explanations not clear; explanations missing; difficult to follow at times.	A few explanations missing; explanations are fairly clear; some explanations at too high a level.	All terms and concepts explained clearly with the appropriate level of complexity.		
Organization of presentation	No apparent structure; speaker rambles from one topic to another; many sections seem out of sequence.	Non-linear or illogical structure; some sections seem out of sequence.	Outline not presented to audience; deviates from outline; presentation simply ends without clear conclusion.	Clear structure that is made apparent to audience; logical progression; clear concluding summary/ statement; stimulating beginning.		
Delivery	Lacking in several areas throughout presentation.	Lacking in two areas.	Lacking in one area, distracting mannerism.	Good eye contact; loud, clear voice; good enunciation; confident manner.		
Visual aids (criteria may be modified as deemed appropriate)	Most slides illegible; many typos; poor formatting.	Several slides/images of poor quality; slides cluttered; typos present.	A few slides/images of poor quality; few or no creative elements.	Aids clear, legible; not cluttered; technically perfect; aesthetically pleasing; creative.		
Use of language	Much too informal; Many grammatical and pronunciation errors.	Most of the presentation was read; many incorrect pronunciations.	Some incorrect pronunciations; too formal; too informal.	Pronounces terms correctly; conversational style; somewhat formal.		
Timing and length	Finished several minutes too early or too late.	Finished a minute or two too early or too late.	Finished with time constraints but rushed or ad-libbed to stretch time.	Finished within time constraints; no rushing; no filler.		
				TOTAL (x/24)		