

THE HONORS COLLEGE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

# THE HANDBOOK

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A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS  
& ACADEMIC ADVISERS

UPDATED FEBRUARY 2009

# THE HONORS COLLEGE HANDBOOK

2008-2009

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## ABOUT THE HONORS COLLEGE

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The Honors College at Southern Miss is one of the oldest in the nation. The college was formally inaugurated in 1976 and offers special opportunities to students who demonstrate high academic potential, intellectual curiosity, and ambition. During the freshman and sophomore years, Honors undergraduates follow the same general education curriculum as other students but have the advantage of small classes led by experienced professors. Field trips and educational visits form an integral part of the learning experience. Juniors and seniors concentrate on research, taking a specially designed methodology class and preparing a thesis under the guidance of an adviser.

With the exception of the University Forum class (HON 321/322) in the freshman year, a prospectus writing class (HON 301) and the preparation of a thesis (HON 492) in the junior and senior years, Honors scholars take the same number of credit hours as non-Honors students (students may substitute a research class in their major field of study for the prospectus writing class). However, in order to ensure that they can compete for places in prestigious graduate, law and medical schools, they will be expected to hone their writing skills through essay work and to develop analytical talents through classroom discussion. Scholars must maintain a GPA of at least 3.25, and upon graduation they will be awarded the designation *cum laude*, *magna cum laude* or *summa cum laude*.

*The first Honors classes at the University of Southern Mississippi were taught in 1965 as part of an Honors program, which six years later was named in honor of George R. Olliphant, whose family still provides generous scholarships for high-ability students. The Honors College of today was founded in 1976.*

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## THE CURRICULUM: AN OVERVIEW

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The Honors Curriculum is divided into General Honors (for freshmen and sophomores) and Senior Honors (for juniors and seniors). Students normally enter the College as freshmen and remain through Senior Honors but may enter the program as a rising junior and take just Senior Honors classes. Students who enter as freshmen are expected to complete the curriculum and requirements for both General and Senior Honors. Students must complete Senior Honors in order to graduate with Latin designation.

General Honors scholars take the same general education curriculum as all other students in the university but must complete at least 22 hours in Honors sections during their freshman and sophomore years. Beginning fall 2010 scholars will be required to complete 20 Honors hours. Those Honors sections normally consist of 12 to 15 students and are taught by experienced instructors, allowing undergraduates regular and easy contact with their professors. Honors faculty promote discussion and emphasize writing in order to train classes in communication skills. Also, they incorporate active learning techniques into their teaching so that students get involved in their academic work and participate in off-campus visits. Data collection and role-playing exercises are an important part of many classes, and students may be required to attend sessions on weekends or in the evenings in order to take part in these activities. Compensatory free time will be allowed on other occasions. Normally, students must complete the general education curriculum before proceeding to Senior Honors.

Two of the 22 (20 for scholars entering fall '10) Honors hours required of General Honors scholars must be taken in the University Forum class (HON 321 and HON 322), which is offered every fall and every spring. This class, offered on a pass/fail basis and consisting of a series of events, including lectures by university faculty and by visiting speakers, is designed to broaden interests and provide intellectual stimulus in a different format from that of normal classes.

*In Senior Honors, the emphasis moves from classwork to independent research.*

Senior Honors scholars are required to take a class in prospectus writing (HON 301) or a research methodology course in their major field of study; however, the primary focus is on the Senior Thesis (for which credit is given in the 492H course of the student's major), which is written with the guidance of an academic adviser. In order to complete Senior Honors, students must also undertake a comprehensive examination in their major field of study. Those who are successful wear a distinctive Honors medallion with their commencement robes and receive a Latin designation on their diplomas (*cum laude* for those who graduate with a GPA of 3.25-3.49, *magna cum laude* for those who graduate with a GPA of 3.50-3.79 and *summa cum laude* for those who graduate with a GPA of 3.80 or higher).

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## GENERAL HONORS

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### ADMISSION

The limited number of places in the entering class of 100 to 150 freshmen each year and the high number of applicants make admission to the Honors College competitive. Admission is based on an excellent record of achievement on the ACT (or SAT) and in high school classes, extracurricular activities (including work experience and community service), honors, awards, elected offices and other achievements, an original essay, and in some cases an interview.

### ADVISEMENT AND COUNSELING

Entering students in General Honors are advised during a special preregistration day for Honors freshman in March/April or at a University orientation (Preview) the summer before their freshman year. During this advisement, students see an adviser from the Honors College as well as an adviser from the college or department of their proposed major. Subsequently, Honors scholars may request Honors advisement, as needed, during the term. Advisement of a general nature for all Honors freshmen and sophomores is undertaken about two weeks before registration each semester. Individual advisement, by appointment, takes place during the scheduled advisement period before registration each semester. Honors scholars who have not declared a major (that is, undeclared students) are advised in Honors. The Coordinator of General Honors usually advises students in General Honors, but students may also seek advice and counseling from the Dean or the Coordinator of Senior Honors.

### REQUIREMENTS FOR GOOD STANDING

Students in the Honors College are expected to recognize the implications of 'honor' and take term seriously. They should serve as leaders and role models in the University community. They are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity, personal conduct, and campus citizenship, at all times conforming to the University's code of student conduct. They must attend class regularly, submit timely, original assignments and exert a sustained effort to succeed in their academic work. Students found guilty of plagiarism or any academic dishonesty will be expelled from the Honors College.

In addition, students who accept a scholarship to attend the Honors College are expected to fulfill the terms of that scholarship (that is, timely graduation from the Honors College with successful completion of the General and Senior Honors programs).

To be in good standing in General Honors, a student must be on track within the curriculum and must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.25. Entering freshmen who fall below the required 3.25 average in their first semester are given the next (probationary) semester to bring the overall GPA to 3.25. However, students forfeit the probationary semester if their cumulative GPA is below 2.50 or if they earn an F in any course. Second-semester freshmen and sophomores whose GPA falls between 3.15 and 3.24 may receive probation for one semester, providing they have not already had a probationary semester. No Honors College student may receive more than one semester of probation with scholarship.

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Presidential Scholars must maintain an overall GPA of 3.25 or higher. Scholars who fall below 3.25 may be granted a one-time-only probation with scholarship. However, students forfeit the probationary semester if their cumulative GPA is below 2.50 or if they earn an F in any course. Also, students whose cumulative GPA remains below 3.25 after one semester's probation will not continue to receive the Presidential Scholarship. All Presidential Scholars in good standing wishing to live off campus after their sophomore year may apply to the Dean of the Honors College for permission to do so. Those permitted to live in a fraternity house, in Sorority Village, or off campus will receive a room-and-board allotment equal to the on-campus Honors housing and meal rate. Presidential Scholars who plan to work part-time jobs must seek formal permission to do so from the Dean.

It is expected that all Honors College students are full-time students at the University. A student who plans to take less than a full load of courses in a given semester should notify the Dean's Office of this intention; the Honors College scholarship will be adjusted to reflect the number of hours carried. To remain in good standing, Honors College scholars must make regular progress toward fulfilling the requirements of the Honors College curriculum. Students who take no Honors College courses in a given semester will not receive the Honors College scholarship for that semester without prior written approval from the Dean.

Honors College scholars should have completed university core requirements and General Honors requirements before admission to Senior Honors. In exceptional circumstances (for example, study abroad, major illness or change of major), General Honors scholars will be given the first semester of their junior year to complete core requirements.

#### **HONORS HOUSING**

Honors housing, Mississippi Hall for women and Hattiesburg Hall for men, is an option for freshmen in the Honors College. The Department of Residence Life will make assignments on a first-come, first-served basis. To learn more about the housing application process, please visit the Southern Miss Residence Life Web site at [www.usm.edu/reslife](http://www.usm.edu/reslife).

Honors College scholars who resign or are suspended from the Honors College must give up their space in Honors housing when the Honors College needs the room for another Honors scholar and, in any case, no later than the fall of the next academic year. Students should work with the Office of Residence Life to seek alternative on-campus housing.

#### **COLLEGE CREDIT THROUGH THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM, THE INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PROGRAM, AND THE COLLEGE LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM**

Freshmen entering General Honors often gain credit for lower-division courses through the Advanced Placement (AP) Program, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program or through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). For further information, including a brochure on AP, IB and CLEP credit, students may contact the Admissions Office, Room 110E, Kennard-

Washington Hall (Student Services Building), 118 College Drive #5166, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, or [admissions@usm.edu](mailto:admissions@usm.edu). Although this credit may apply towards the academic degree, it will not be allowed to substitute for a student's General Honors hours.

### **STUDY ABROAD**

Honors College scholars may apply, through the Office of International Programs, for international study in an exchange semester, or year abroad, in Swansea (Wales), Bonn (Germany), Paris (France), Victoria (Canada), London and Exeter (England), Merida (Mexico), Sydney (Australia), and Madrid (Spain). Students who plan to spend a semester or year abroad must meet with the Dean or Coordinator of General Honors (for freshmen or sophomores who plan to study abroad) or the Coordinator of Senior Honors (for juniors or seniors who plan to study abroad) before their departure to plan Honors course work after their return. Students may apply for travel awards to help cover the cost of summer, semester, or year-long study abroad programs. Summer, semester and year-long travel award applications should be submitted by the end of March. Travel award applications are available [here](#).

**REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED COURSES FOR GENERAL HONORS**

Specific requirements and suggestions for the Honors College general education curriculum are as follows:

**I. WRITING AND ORAL COMMUNICATION (6 hours)**

Composition  
 ENG 101, 102.....6  
 Required: 6 hours preferably in Honors sections.

**II. BASIC SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS (11 hours)**

Laboratory Sciences.....8  
 Required: 8 hours, preferably in Honors sections.  
 See list of laboratory sciences in general education curriculum.  
 Mathematics.....3  
 Required: 3 hours in Mathematics 101 or higher level course.

**III. GLOBAL HISTORY AND CULTURE (14 hours)**

Humanities.....12  
 Required: 12 hours in  
 a) ANT 101, GHY 101, or SOC 101;  
 b) ENG 203;  
 c) HIS 101 or HIS 102;  
 d) PHI 151, or REL 131,  
 preferably in Honors sections.  
 University Forum  
 Honors 321, 322.....2  
 Required: 2 hours in the first year.

**IV. AESTHETIC VALUES (3 hours)**

Required: 3 hours in ART 130, DAN 107, MUS 365, or  
 THE 100, preferably in Honors sections .....3

**V. DECISION-MAKING AND RESPONSIBILITY (3 hours)**

Required: 3 hours in ECO 101, PHI 171, PS 101,  
 PSY 110, or COH 101, preferably in Honors sections .....3

Note: Honors College scholars may also have to take additional or distinct core courses required specifically for their major and should consult their departmental advisers for details. In addition, each student must take two Writing Intensive courses, normally in the major or minor field. Such courses are designated in the annual Class Schedule Guide with the course suffix WI.

Honors College scholars should normally have completed university core requirements and General Honors requirements before admission to Senior Honors. In exceptional circumstances (for example, study abroad, major illness, or a change of major), General Honors scholars will be given the first semester of their junior year to complete core requirements.

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## SENIOR HONORS

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### ADMISSION

To enter Senior Honors, a student must

- a) have completed General Honors in good standing or
- b) have a GPA of 3.25 or higher on at least 40 hours, written recommendations from two professors, and the approval of the student's major department.

### ADVISEMENT AND COUNSELING

Senior Honors scholars should make an appointment for advisement during the scheduled advisement period each semester. The Coordinator of Senior Honors advises students in Senior Honors, but students may also seek individual advisement and counseling from the Dean or the Coordinator of General Honors.

### REQUIREMENTS FOR GOOD STANDING

Students in the Honors College are expected to recognize the implications of 'honor' and take them seriously. They should serve as leaders and role models in the University Community. They are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity, personal conduct, and campus citizenship, at all times conforming to the University's code of student conduct. They must attend class regularly, submit timely, original assignments, and exert a sustained effort to succeed in their academic work. Students found guilty of plagiarism or any academic dishonesty will be expelled from the Honors College.

In addition, students who accept a scholarship to attend the Honors College are expected to fulfill the terms of that scholarship (that is, timely graduation from the Honors College with successful completion of the Senior Honors program).

A student must be in good standing to receive scholarship aid from the Honors College and to be recognized as an Honors graduate at commencement. To be in good standing in Senior Honors, a student must be on track within the curriculum and must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.25. Senior Honors students who fall below the required 3.25 average in their first semester are given the next (probationary) semester to bring the overall GPA to 3.25. However, students forfeit the probationary semester if their cumulative falls below 3.00.

*To be in good standing in Senior Honors, a student must be on track within the curriculum and must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.25. Senior Honors students who fall below the required 3.25 average in their first semester are given the next (probationary) semester to bring the overall GPA to 3.25. However, students forfeit the probationary semester if their cumulative falls below 3.00 or if they earn an F in any course.*

Presidential Scholars must maintain an overall GPA of 3.25 or higher. Scholars who fall below 3.25 may be granted a one-time-only probation with scholarship. However, students forfeit the probationary semester if their cumulative GPA is below 3.00 or if they earn an F in any course. Also, students whose cumulative GPA remains below 3.25 after one semester's probation will not continue to receive the Presidential Scholarship. All Presidential Scholars in good standing wishing to live off campus after their sophomore year may apply to the Dean of the Honors College for permission to do so. Those permitted to live in a fraternity house, in Panhellenic, or off campus will

receive a room-and-board allotment equal to the on-campus Honors housing and meal rate. Presidential Scholars who plan to work part-time jobs must seek formal permission to do so from the Dean. No Honors College student may receive more than one semester of probation with scholarship.

It is expected that all Honors College scholars will be full-time students at the University. A student who plans to take less than a full load of courses in a given semester should notify the Dean's Office of this intention; the Honors College scholarship will be adjusted to reflect the number of hours carried. To remain in good standing, Honors College scholars must make regular progress toward fulfilling the requirements of the Honors College curriculum. Students who take no Honors College courses in a given semester will not receive the Honors College scholarship for that semester, without prior written approval from the Dean.

Honors College scholars should have completed university core requirements and General Honors requirements before admission to Senior Honors. In exceptional circumstances (for example, study abroad, major illness, or a change of major), General Honors students will be given the first semester of their junior year to complete core requirements.

### **HONORS HOUSING**

Honors housing, Scholarship Hall for women and McCurb Hall for men, is an option for students in the Honors College. The Department of Residence Life will make assignments on a first-come, first-served basis. For upper class students seeking to learn more about the housing application process, please visit the Southern Miss Residence Life Web site at [www.usm.edu/reslife](http://www.usm.edu/reslife).

### **STUDY ABROAD**

Honors College students may apply through the Office of International Programs for international study in an exchange semester or year abroad, offered in Swansea (Wales), Bonn (Germany), Paris, Orléans, or Perpignan (France), Victoria (Canada), Keele, or Exeter (England), Merida (Mexico), Sydney (Australia), and Madrid and Jaen (Spain). Students who plan to spend a semester or year abroad must meet with the Dean or Coordinator of Senior Honors before their departure to plan Honors course work after their return. Students may apply for travel awards to help cover the cost of summer, semester or year-long programs. Summer, semester and year-long travel award applications should be submitted by the end of March. Travel award applications are available here.

### **REQUIRED COURSES FOR SENIOR HONORS**

Because the Senior Honors program emphasizes independent study, research, and the writing of a Senior Honors thesis, the number of required courses within the curriculum is relatively modest. Students must complete prospectus writing (HON 301) or a research methodology course in their major field of study before beginning the senior year and must complete a senior thesis (HON 492).

SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR SENIOR HONORS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

HON 301 (Prospectus Writing or research methodology course in major department) (3 hours)

is course should be taken one year prior to the anticipated semester of graduation. Students should submit their prospectus to the Honors College for approval at the end of the semester in which they complete the HON 301 or major departmental research course. Note that, the approval page of the prospectus should be signed by the thesis adviser and department chairperson prior to

submitting the prospectus to the Honors College. Links to a guide for writing the prospectus and an example of the layout for the title and approval pages may be found in the Senior Honors To-Do List.

492H (Senior Thesis hours, taken in the department of the student's major) (3 hours)

Students should complete a total of three credit hours in this independent study course and those three hours should be taken over a period of two or three semesters rather than in a single semester. Most students register for one hour in the first semester of the senior year and two in the semester of graduation, while others choose to divide the hours over three semesters. Students are not required to register for thesis hours during summer semesters but may elect to do so. Links to a guide for writing the senior thesis and an example of the layout for the title and approval pages may be found in the Senior Honors To-Do List.

### **COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN THE MAJOR**

It is the responsibility of the student to contact the department chair and request that the comprehensive examination be designed and administered. These arrangements should be made, in writing, one semester in advance of the semester of graduation. A copy of the letter or e-mail message to the department chairperson must also be sent to the Coordinator of Senior Honors.

\*The Senior Thesis must be done in the student's major unless specific approval is given by the Dean of the Honors College for a project in the minor.

### **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SENIOR HONORS**

After identifying a thesis adviser, the student should submit a completed Notification of Thesis Adviser Selection and Agreement form to the Honors College. If the student changes thesis advisers, it is the student's responsibility to notify the Honors College of the change and submit an updated notification form. In addition, when enrolled in the HON 492 or departmental research course, students must submit a Progress Report on the thesis twice each semester:

- 1 On or before the last day to drop full-semester courses (Midsemester Report) and
- 2 On or before the last day of full-semester classes (End-of-semester Report)

However, in the semester of graduation, students will submit only the Midsemester Report, as the completed thesis should be delivered to the Honors College two weeks prior to commencement.

### **GRADUATING WITH SENIOR HONORS**

(Note the firm deadlines in the Senior Honors To-Do list, which includes links to all required forms, etc. Students who miss deadlines will jeopardize their graduation with Latin designation.)

Students wishing to graduate with Latin designation (summa cum laude, magna cum laude, or cum laude) must meet the following requirements:

#### **1. THE PROSPECTUS**

The Honors College requires students to submit to the Honors College, no later than two semesters prior to graduation, a prospectus acceptable to the thesis adviser and Dean of the Honors College. Honors 301 (Prospectus Writing) provides three hours of credit for an introduction to research methodology and is required of all Senior Honors students. However, with prior approval

of the Coordinator of Senior Honors, students may substitute their major departmental research methodology course. Students must take the course during the junior year. In the event that the thesis project is redefined, the student must submit for approval a revised prospectus.

## 2. THE THESIS

The exact nature of the thesis will be decided by the student and the proper representative of the major department. However, the following general guidelines should be observed:

a) The project should reflect significant individual effort that involves library research, laboratory research, or field research.

b) The project must conform to accepted scholarly procedure within the discipline of the major field. The project may be creative, as opposed to derivative, and subject to the discretion and specific prior approval of the department chair involved and the Dean of the Honors College. However, a creative project must be executed within the framework of accepted scholarly procedure (that is, a student who produces a creative effort should introduce that effort by adequate discussion of the nature of the creative form involved, including an indication of familiarity with other examples of the form).

c) The project must be done in the area of the student's major, unless specific approval is given by the Dean of the Honors College for a project in the area of the student's minor.

d) A joint project by two or more students is permissible if specifically approved in advance by the appropriate department chair and the Dean. Such a project should be defined in discussion with the project director, the appropriate chair, and the Honors Dean.

## 3. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The comprehensive examination must be taken no later than four weeks before the end of the semester in which the student will graduate. The examination may be written or oral, at the option of the major department. Although the exact nature of the examination will be determined by the department involved, there are general guidelines:

- a. The examination should be designed so that it does not exceed three hours.
- b. The examination should test the candidate's general knowledge of the field of the major rather than specialized information about some particular aspect of the major.
- c. The examination should be uniform for all candidates within a particular semester.

It is the responsibility of the student to contact the department chair and request that the comprehensive examination be designed and administered. These arrangements should be made one semester in advance. The Department must notify the Honors College, in writing, of the results of the comprehensive examination two weeks prior to graduation.

## 4. APPLICATION FOR DEGREE

Each student must print and complete an Application for Degree and submit it to the Dean's Office of the college of his or her major department one semester prior to the anticipated semester of graduation. The Application may be found on the University Registrar's website at [www.usm.edu/registrar](http://www.usm.edu/registrar). It is the responsibility of the student to meet the deadline for filing the application for degree form.

## 5. COMPLETING THE THESIS

The student must adhere to the thesis deadlines that correspond with the student's anticipated date of graduation. Those deadlines may be found on the Thesis Timeline link of the Honors College website. The original and at least one copy, together with the binding fee receipt (\$14.05/thesis), must be delivered to the Honors College office no later than two weeks prior to graduation. Students planning to graduate with Latin designation should check the Thesis Timeline link to the Honors College website or the calendar in the Honors College Handbook concerning specific, firm dates for completion of the comprehensive exam and submission of the approved thesis. In addition, students should carefully review and follow the guide for writing the senior thesis. (A link to the guide is found on the Senior Honors To-Do List.

## 6. LATIN DESIGNATIONS

Students completing requirements in Senior Honors with a cumulative GPA of 3.25 to 3.49 will graduate *cum laude*, those with a cumulative GPA of 3.50 to 3.79 will graduate *magna cum laude*, and those with an overall GPA of 3.80 or above will graduate *summa cum laude*.