

Basics on how to go about doing Honors

Why Do Honors?

Doing honors work in philosophy is a rewarding and highly personal way of deepening your passion for philosophy, an occasion of entering in a collegial relationship of mutual respect with the member of the faculty who supervises you, and a unique opportunity to perform real life research work in philosophy while you're still an undergraduate.

What's So Special About It?

The most salient thing that is special about honors is that it allows you to spend 2 quarters and the summer to work on a topic, method, figure or problem in philosophy that you choose for yourself in close cooperation with a faculty member of your choice. There are two sequences of quarters acceptable to the department: Spring of Junior and Fall of Senior year ("S/F") or Fall and Winter of the Senior year ("F/W"). You need permission for the latter, the former is our standard. During the process, you will not only reach new levels of expertise in collecting and researching philosophical evidence (secondary and primary literature, handbooks, reference books, thoughts and ideas from others), but also acquire a depth of penetration of your subject matter that is unique in your undergraduate career at the philosophy department. Moreover, all the abilities that you will acquire during the project will be all-purpose tools. They include

- managing large amounts of material,
- winnowing out the important hypotheses,
- elaborating, constructing, analyzing and evaluating arguments and dialectical conditions of forming a view on a matter,
- creating, checking, re-checking, revising, presenting,
- re-revising and finally
- polishing a sustained argument.

All these abilities are assets in any professional pursuit you might choose after you leave NU. Going through honors work in comparison to doing seminar work is like having a nice mellow watery coffee in comparison with pouring down a series of concentrated espressos made out of these abilities. It's definitely a kick when it's done!

What are the Formalities?

You can find all these in authoritative form (as well as the online form for applying) at

- <https://philosophy.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/honors-awards/index.html>

What Should I Expect? -- Ins and Outs of actually Doing Honors

Honors work can be split up in four phases:

- (1) Formation of the intention to do Honors.**
- (2) Preliminary planning, bringing oneself in the position to do it.**
- (3) Taking the required steps for successfully applying for Honors.**
- (4) Research and writing, managing the cooperation with your supervisor.**

(1) and (2): Bringing yourself in the position for honors

These steps are roughly simultaneous, and could begin in the **later parts of your Sophomore** year and should come to a **close during the Fall and (part of) the Winter of your Junior** year. It should include:

- noticing and identifying your interest to do challenging long-term work in philosophy
- focusing on a small array of candidate fields of your main interests
- thinking about who from our faculty might be a good supervisor
- roughly estimating and beginning to create a space for honors work among competing time-consumers like study abroad, science lab quarters, etc.
- seeking and selecting 300-level classes in philosophy in the fields you are contemplating for your honors work (you are required to have taken one in the field you finally select).

As a result, you should be able to

- know roughly what question you would like to raise in your honors project,
- know which sequence of quarters you will be able to use (S/F or F/W),
- know whom to ask for supervision.

(3) Performing the required steps for successfully applying for Honors.

(3) is obviously fundamental, and should begin at the start of the **Winter quarter, and be done by March 01 of your Junior year**. Here are the steps:

1. take a 300-level course in the field you wish to do honors in if you have not yet done so,
2. contact your desired supervisor (ideally someone who taught you in the field) with the following information for an informal first meeting:
 - a. Rough idea of a topic
 - b. The timetable you wish to follow, and with the information gathered in this meeting or exchange,
3. write up your project of 150 words, present, discuss and revise it with your supervisor, print it out and schedule a meeting with her or him,
4. Obtain and fill in an application form for honors available at the department,
5. Obtain GPA estimate, unofficial transcript from Caesar,
6. In the formal meeting, have her or him
 - sign and OK your project,
 - give written consent to the F/W sequence in case you'd want to choose it,
 - sign the Application form.

SUBMIT COMPLETE APPLICATION UNTIL MARCH 01 OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR TO THE DEPARTMENTAL UNDERGRADUATE ASSISTANT.

(4) Research and writing, managing the cooperation with your supervisor.

2 distinct steps: Research and Writing, reflected in your having to register for two honors courses, 398-1 and 398-2. For the S/F sequence, the steps in the process are these (F/W is the same, *mutatis mutandis*):

Research (Spring and Summer of Junior year):

1. After having been accepted as honors student by the department, meet your supervisor to elaborate a timeline for your research work and periodical meetings in the spring quarter of your junior year
2. Register for 398-1, and begin your work according to the timeline elaborated with your supervisors and keep to the schedule;
3. By the end of 398-1, you should have provided your supervisor with evidence that you are making good progress towards handing in a thesis by the **FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER** (the rule of thumb is 12 pages writing or equivalent research or other work)
4. Towards the end of the spring quarter, you should meet your supervisor and elaborate with her or him a clear, ambitious yet feasible reading list and research agenda for the summer.

Writing (Fall of Senior year):

1. Register for 398-2. Meet your supervisor at the beginning of Fall, present your current state of research in an informal fashion and tell her or him what you wish to write upon and how; ideally, hand in a sort of outline of a page or so for discussion.
2. Develop a clear writing-timetable in cooperation with your supervisor, and work according to it. **STAY ON SCHEDULE!**
3. During the Fall quarter of your senior year, you are expected to **PARTICIPATE IN THE HONORS COLLOQUIUM**, which will be held by the Honors Convenor and is a venue to discuss and reflect on your work in the group of honors students of the same year.
4. Write, polish and hand in your **FINAL DRAFT** of the honors thesis to your supervisor by the **SECOND HALF OF NOVEMBER** to get feedback. Then, finish the thesis and
5. Hand in 3 exemplars of your thesis to the departmental undergraduate assitant by the **FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER** (exact dates will be announced).

AT A GLANCE:

Sophomore Year			Junior Year			Senior Year		
Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter	Spr
•	Develop	interest	300course?	300 course?	398-1 (S/F)	398-2 (S/F)		
•	Focus		decide sequ.	contact superv.		398-1 (F/W)	398-2 (F/W)	
•	Think about	supervisor	GPA?	F/W OK?				
•	Preliminary	Planning		write project		HONKOL	INFONIGHT	PhilFEST
	(e.g.: Study	abroad?)		Get paperwork				
	Labs for Sci	Major?		APPLY:		S/F SUBMIT	F/W SUBM.	
	Marriage in	the family?)		Meet supervisor, get signatures		THESIS by 1st wk of DECEMBER	THESIS by 2nd wk of MARCH	
				SUBMIT 03-01				