

# Interdisciplinary Honors Studies

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## Special Programs

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In contemporary society, over-specialization has forced blinders upon many individuals. As a consequence, they have developed tunnel vision. In almost every field—medicine, education, business, politics, and economics—the majority of people are incapable of looking beyond the narrow confines of their particular area of interest and expertise to comprehend how the pieces of the puzzle of human existence fit together. As a result, they suffer the debilitating symptoms of dehumanization, social fragmentation and misdirection, personal meaninglessness, and the general loss of purpose in life. By enabling students to perceive a broader picture of how various fields of academic inquiry interrelate, the Interdisciplinary Honors Program enriches them intellectually and spiritually and helps them avoid the pitfalls and consequences of tunnel vision.

The Interdisciplinary Honors Program combines methods of teaching such as the Socratic method, logic and dialectic, tutorials, mentoring, lectures, seminars, and discussion groups in order to produce the highest degree of academic success. The program is designed to be four years in length to encourage a solid development of the student's knowledge base and critical thinking apparatus.

### **Mission Statement**

One goal of Honors/Interdisciplinary Program is to sharpen the student's ability to assess ideas and situations critically and to think about these creatively. A second goal is to encourage students to think freely and constructively across the various academic disciplines offered at the University. A third and all-encompassing goal is to help students understand how all truth is God's truth. Because our Christian confession holds that God is the creator and sustainer of the universe as well as the redeemer of humankind, this means that our pursuit of truth will always be governed by the context of this confession.

### **Program Acceptance Requirements and Standards**

Members of departments across the University serve as faculty and mentors for students in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program. The program is designed to be challenging and intensive. For this reason, only select persons are invited to participate: 1) Freshmen students with an enhanced ACT of 25 or higher and/or a record of excellence in academic work, and 2) second semester freshmen who have maintained a GPA of 3.5 during the first semester at the University. Transfer or other students who desire admission must petition the Director of the program. The final decision to admit any student rests with the Interdisciplinary Honors Council, which is appointed by the Provost for the purpose of determining the program's policies, standards, guidelines, and goals.

Students admitted into the Program are expected to maintain a grade average of "B" or better in all Honors courses. Students who fall below this expectation will be placed on probation, and their status in the program will be subject to review by the Interdisciplinary Honors Council. If the Council determines that a student's work fails to satisfy the program's standards, the Council may suggest that the student pursue the Interdisciplinary Studies Minor (see below) as an alternative to the Minor in Interdisciplinary Honors.

## Minor in Interdisciplinary Honors—18 hours

- I. Interdisciplinary Core Requirements—12 hours
  - A. HON 210 and 220—Freshmen year
  - B. HON 320 and 340—Sophomore year
- II. Electives—2 hours  
These include opportunities for travel and study abroad, study with the Scholar-in-Residence, and approved courses across the University that are of an interdisciplinary nature.
- III. HON 411—4 hours  
The capstone of the Interdisciplinary Honors Program is the writing of the Honors thesis, a major project that is expected to be of the highest quality.

## Minor in Interdisciplinary Studies—18 semester hours

The Interdisciplinary Studies minor was designed for students who determine in the course of pursuing the Interdisciplinary Honors minor that they are unable, for whatever reason, to undertake or complete the writing of a thesis. This minor is an alternative open only to students officially accepted into the Honors Program.

- I. Interdisciplinary Core Requirements—12 hours
  - A. HON 210 and 220—Freshmen year
  - B. HON 320 and 340—Sophomore year
- II. Electives—6 hours  
Opportunities for overseas travel and study, study with the Scholar-in-Residence, and approved courses across the University that are of an interdisciplinary nature.

## Scholar-in-Residence Program

A scholar of worldwide reputation is invited each year to deliver a series of lectures at the University. Students may take the Scholar-in-Residence course which involves research, writing, and tutorials. Prerequisites: HON 210 and 220.

## Student Organization

Incorporated into the Interdisciplinary Honors Program is the **Honors Student Association (HSA)** whose purpose is to serve as the social arm of the program. It functions as any social organization does, choosing its officers from among the student participants and organizing its functions to further the academic programs of the minor. Any student who has participated in any of the Honors classes is eligible for membership in HSA. Students interested in pursuing a minor in Interdisciplinary Honors are also invited to come to meetings but are not allowed to be voting members.

## Student Awards

**Academic Excellence Medal** is given to the graduating minor who has the highest academic average in the minor, provided the GPA in the subject is not less than 3.5 and provided the student has completed, before Awards Day, a minimum of 15 hours in the discipline at Union University in courses for which precise grades are computed as distinguished from courses graded pass or fail.

The **Honors Student of the Year** Awards are presented to the students active in the Program who have shown the most intellectual and perceptive growth in the year's time. The awards are determined by the Honors Council.

## **Course Offerings in Honors (HON)**

( )-Hours Credit; F-Fall; W-Winter; S-Spring; Su-Summer

### **210. Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies (3) F**

Influences and processes contributing to the formation of worldviews and their alteration through time. In order to accomplish this objective, students will be taught how to live appreciatively within given cultural and theoretical perspectives while at the same time learning how to evaluate these critically and constructively. Encouragement to think creatively about the interrelation between the various disciplines of the university, and about the implications of the fields of human inquiry for Christian faith and practice, will help students to develop a worldview that will prepare them to take their place as leaders in the twenty-first century.

### **220. Great Ideas (3) S**

Prerequisite: HON 210.

A survey of the interdisciplinary nature of the ideas, thoughts, and theories of human culture. This course will examine many of the great ideas of the Western cultural and intellectual heritage that are important for the humanities, natural sciences, social sciences arts and professional studies. The interdependence of ideas will be considered along with the way ideas operate in a variety of unique historical and cultural contexts. This course will progress from a survey of Western cultural and intellectual history to presentation of papers by students in a seminar fashion.

### **320. Great Books I (3) F**

Prerequisite: HON 220.

Seminal works from the fields of philosophy, theology, history, literature, the natural sciences, or the social sciences will be read and studied with special attention to ways these works reflect historical trends, political situations, philosophical ideas, cultural and religious traditions, and socioeconomic conditions. Students will be encouraged to think critically and creatively about these works by considering them from selected intellectual and cultural perspectives that lie outside the time-frame and thought world to which each work specifically belongs.

### **340. Great Books II (3) F**

Prerequisite: HON 320

Students will read and critically assess significant books related to their major field of study. Students in professional or technical studies may choose to read from great books that will help them to formulate ethical principles that will aid them in the practice of their profession. The Director of Interdisciplinary Honors will determine the book list for each student by consulting with the student and the department of the student's major. Students will meet for lectures during the early part of the semester, but for the most part they engage in self-motivated research and writing. Each student will present a paper focusing upon one book written during a particular period in the history of ideas. In the paper, students will discuss interdisciplinary connections that exist between the work they are considering and the thought world of the time period in which they are working. Professors from the department of the student's major will be invited to participate in the seminars and encouraged to give critical and constructive feedback to students.

### **411. Thesis (4) On Demand**

Prerequisite: Interdisciplinary Core—12 hours.

The thesis shall be presented and defended before a committee of three faculty members appointed by the Interdisciplinary Honors Council. Students planning to submit a thesis their senior year should choose a topic by the end of their sophomore year and

submit a proposal by the beginning of their junior year, leaving the junior and senior years open for the conducting of research and writing. Students will officially sign up for the thesis with the registrar during the first semester of their senior year. The thesis may be done in conjunction with senior performance requirements already established by such departments as Music, Art, Biology, Chemistry and others at the discretion of the Council and the department.

One or more of the following courses must be chosen to fulfill the requirements of the program. All are subject to the approval of the Interdisciplinary Honors Council unless otherwise stated in the published schedule of class offerings.

**395-6-7. Special Studies (2 or 3)**

Upperlevel group studies which do not appear in the regular departmental offerings. Includes, but not restricted to, offerings of the Scholar-in-Residence Program.

**495-6-7. Independent Studies (2-4)**

Individual research under the guidance of a faculty member(s).