The Undergraduate Honors Program  
Department of Human Development  
New York State College of Human Ecology  
Cornell University

**Purpose**

The honors program is a two-year program designed to allow a small number of talented undergraduates the opportunity to formulate and carry out an independent research investigation under the supervision of a member of the Human Development departmental faculty. The program is for students who want to prepare themselves for future graduate work. Students who successfully complete the program graduate with Honors in Human Development will have the Honors designation recorded on their official Cornell University academic record.

**Prerequisites**

HD majors who have a grade point average of 3.5 or higher are eligible for this program, although exceptions are considered for those students whose GPA is under 3.5. Previous research experience and an ongoing relationship with a faculty mentor are essential to assure student progress in the program. Successful execution of a thesis requires two courses in Statistics and one course in Research Methods and all must be taken for a letter grade. Students must also have experience using statistical analysis programs, such as SPSS, SAS, STATA, or Minitab.

**Required Preparation for Completing an Honors Thesis in Human Development**

1. A basic statistics class from the following list, completed during the sophomore year, which must be taken for a letter grade. PSYCH 3500 is strongly recommended.
   
   PAM 2100; ILRST/STSCI 2100; AEM 2100; PSYCH 3500; BTRY 3010; MATH 1710

2. A second advanced course in Statistics, completed no later than the second semester of the junior year, which must also be taken for a letter grade. HD 4750 or HD 4760 is strongly recommended.
   
   Possible choices for Statistics: HD 4750; HD 4760; PAM 3100; BTRY 3020; AEM 4100; ILRST 2110

3. HD 2830 Research Methods in Human Development, completed no later than the second semester of the junior year, also must be taken for a letter grade. Note: This course is only offered during the fall semester.

4. Experience using Excel (for data entry and preliminary analyses) and SPSS or another data analysis package, such as Minitab or SAS. HD 2830 provides experience using a data analysis program.

5. Research experience: HD 4010 directed by the professor who will supervise your honors thesis, begun no later than the fall semester of the junior year.

---

In rare instances, students may work with faculty outside the department of Human Development, e.g., members of the Graduate Field who are not HD department members. When this occurs, a member of the Human Development faculty will sign off on the necessary papers and assure the department that the study meets the quality required of our students.
Additional Recommended Courses and Experiences

6. Ethical issues in research: B&SOC/S&TS 2051; PHIL 2450;

7. Two 3000 and/or 4000 level classes relating to the topic of the honors thesis.

Application Procedure

Formal application to the program is in the fall semester of the student's junior year. Interested students should submit an application form no later than Oct. 15 of their junior year. Students may apply if they have not completed the required research methods class or second statistics class, but final admission to the program is contingent on completing entrance requirements. The courses are critical in conducting an honors thesis and no exceptions are made.

Application forms are available from Marianne Arcangeli (G77 MVR). The applicant should also arrange for a letter or email of recommendation from a faculty member who agrees to sponsor the student’s research, and to serve as his/her honors thesis advisor. Successful applicants will be informed by March 15 if they have been provisionally admitted to the program; final admission is contingent on completion of course requirements and will be issued on May 15 of the junior year.

Because of the courses that must be completed to earn honors, students will not be admitted to the program during the senior year.

Program Content

Students interested in the Honors program, and who plan to meet the course requirements for admission, should begin working with a faculty member no later than the first semester of the junior year, and earlier if feasible. Involvement with faculty in directed research is essential for timely completion of the honors thesis. Students should take HD 4010 (Empirical Research) and be graded for progress by their faculty supervisors. It is desirable that the student write a thesis proposal during the junior year.

During the fall and spring semester of the senior year, accepted students take part in the Senior Honors Seminar (HD 4980). In the class, students meet on a weekly basis with the director of the Honors program. The seminar, taken on an S/U basis, is structured to guide students through the steps in conducting an honors thesis. Weekly deadlines ensure that students make consistent progress on their thesis throughout the year. Students are expected to present their theses and discuss progress with other students in the program.

Students also enroll in Senior Honors Thesis (HD 4990) with their honors thesis advisor in the fall and spring of their senior year. The student and thesis advisor should discuss the number of credits of HD 4990 based on the number of hours the students will spend on their thesis each week. This document lists below a series of deadlines for the senior year, culminating in the submission of a thesis on April 1st. Each of these classes can only be added manually, with a paper add-drop form.

The Thesis Requirement

The core of the honors program is work on an honors thesis that usually involves independent empirical research. This research is on a problem conceived and formulated by the student in conjunction with a faculty advisor; uses a design developed by the student and the advisor; is carried out by the student, including data collection (if not secondary analysis), tabulation, and analysis; and is written by the student following the standard research report format as given in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (or another format accepted by the Director of the Honors program and the faculty advisor). All work is carried out under the continuing supervision of the student's faculty honors thesis advisor. Student research completed prior to admission to the honors program is not generally accepted as the basis for an honors thesis, except if it
involves further analysis of an existing dataset.

Acceptable empirical studies may use any established scientific methodology, e.g., experimental, survey, or observational. A thesis may take the form of an empirical or theoretical paper, a policy study, or an historical analysis. Content areas of study may range widely from topics in developmental psychology to those in sociology, education, or neuroscience. All thesis plans must be approved in advance, after admission to the program but before work begins on the study, by the selected faculty honors thesis supervisor and the director of the honors program.

The honors thesis is the most important part of the honors program. Students must ensure that they allocate time to completing the project and writing, editing, and editing again their manuscript. Students must register in HD 4990 (during the fall and spring of the senior year) with the selected faculty honors thesis advisor. The number of credits in this registration varies from a minimum of one credit to some larger number to be agreed upon by the student and the faculty honors thesis supervisor, reflecting the amount of work the student plans to devote to the thesis that semester. The faculty honors thesis supervisor submits the grade at the end of each semester. Honors students are eligible to apply for research funding from Human Ecology. For information regarding funding please visit the website:  [http://www.human.cornell.edu/research/undergraduate/funding.cfm](http://www.human.cornell.edu/research/undergraduate/funding.cfm)

**Timeline for the Thesis during the Senior Year**

**Late August.** Students who are accepted into the program enroll in HD 4980 (Senior Honors Seminar) and HD 4990 (Senior Honors Thesis). HD 4980 is taught by the director of the honors program. Each of these classes must be added manually, with a paper add-drop form.

During the **fall semester**, students complete:

- If the thesis will involve collecting original data, the student must submit an application to the Cornell Institutional Review Board for Human Participants ([irbhp@cornell.edu](mailto:irbhp@cornell.edu)). Review of the proposal will require a minimum of 2 weeks and up to 2 months if the data collection involves minors, persons under detention, pregnant women, or people whose decision-making capacity may be impaired. Participants may not be recruited for the study until the Cornell IRB approves the study.

- An APA Style Tutorial and submission of the thesis references in APA format

- Various exercises which enable students to develop an organized and cohesive draft of the introduction and methods sections of the thesis which must be submitted by the last full week of classes

**Late January.** Students who are accepted into the program enroll in HD 4980 (Senior Honors Seminar) and HD 4990 (Senior Honors Thesis). HD 4980 is taught by the director of the honors program. Each of these classes must be added manually, with a paper add-drop form.

During the **spring semester**, students complete:

- Readings, assignments and peer review exercises which support the development and completion of:
  - the outlines for and drafts of the results and discussion sections of the thesis,
  - the final full draft of the thesis,
  - an abstract, poster/talk, and presentation for CURB (TBD, usually end of April),
  - the oral defense of the thesis
  - corrections and final submission to eCommons by the beginning of the exam period.
**The Thesis Exam**

Students present their theses in an oral exam with the faculty supervisor and two other readers present. At this time, the thesis is evaluated to determine whether it constitutes successful completion of the student's honors program. The exam typically consists of a short 15-20 minute presentation by the student and a question and answer period by the faculty.

After successful completion of the exam, the student completes any requested changes to the manuscripts and submits an electronic copy of the completed thesis to the Director of the Honors Program for submission to the departmental archive, and one paper copy to the Administrator of the Honors Program for submission to the Cornell University Archive. A copy should also be given to the faculty thesis supervisor.

Honors students are required to present a poster, describing their research, at a time and place to be announced by the Cornell Undergraduate Research Board (CURB) in the spring semester (usually a Wednesday in April).

Successful completion of the program follows from the positive outcome of the oral examination and the vote of the evaluation committee to accept the student for honors.

*Please direct inquiries about this program to the honors program director or administrator.*

Dr. Anthony Ong (director) Marianne Arcangeli (administrator)
242 MVR G77 MVR
e-mail: ado4@cornell.edu e-mail: ma84@cornell.edu

Revised 7.18.13
MC/AO/ma