

Missouri Valley College
Honors College Handbook
[Updated March 2025]

Table of Contents

Mission and Description.....	2
Admission Guidelines and Process.....	2
Advantages of Participation.....	3
Curriculum.....	4
Introductory Seminar	
Honors Seminars, General Education Substitutions, and Student Learning Outcomes	
Honors Elective Courses	
Cultural Requirement	
Contract Projects	
Thesis	
Honors Minor in Applied Integrative Studies.....	9
Curriculum	
The Research Project	
Continuing in the College.....	12
Repeating Honors College Courses.....	12
People in the Honors College.....	13
Appendix A: Contract Course Form.....	14

Appendix B: HONR 400 Proposal Rubric.....	15
---	----

Appendix C: HONR 485 Thesis Rubric.....	16
---	----

Mission and Description

The Missouri Valley Honors College promotes the full potential of highly motivated students and enables them to distinguish themselves through challenging, enhanced academic experiences, meaningful co-curricular opportunities, and close collaboration with faculty and fellow students.

Students take Honors seminars in which they engage with primary texts as a means of understanding the historical development of significant movements in thought. As a means of acquiring multicultural knowledge, students take a foreign language, study abroad, or complete a contract course in Core 2A. The program encourages deeper exploration of particular disciplines through Honors contract classes, service learning, and an Honors thesis in the student's major.

Four-Year Honors track:

- HONR 180: Intro to Honors (1 credit)
- 5 Honors seminars (to replace 5 core Gen. Ed. courses)
- 2 contract projects in the major
- Two semesters of a foreign language **or** a study abroad experience **or** one contract course from an alternative approved list (waived for international students)
- HONR 400: Independent study/thesis proposal (1 credit)
- HONR 485: Honors thesis (1 credit)

Two-Year Honors track for AA-Transfer/Junior Start:

- HONR 180: Intro to Honors (1 credit)
- 2 Honors seminars of the student's choice
- 2 contract projects in the major
- Two semesters of a foreign language **or** a study abroad experience **or** one contract course from an alternative approved list (waived for international students)
- HONR 400: Independent study/thesis proposal (1 credit)
- HONR 485: Honors thesis (1 credit)

Admission Guidelines and Process

The typical Honors College student has a high school or (in the case of current MVC and transfer students) college g.p.a. around 3.5 or above and ACT or SAT scores (if submitted) around the

75th percentile or higher. However, higher than average scores do not guarantee admission and lower than average scores do not exclude one from admission. Every application is viewed holistically and admission decisions are based on an overall assessment of the applicant's motivation and preparedness to be a successful Honors student. Above all, we seek students who are curious, ready to be challenged, and eager for the enhanced academic experience the Honors College provides. Application deadline: October 1.

Applying to the Honors College

1. Complete the online MVC application for admission
2. Complete the online application form for the Honors College

Admission to the Honors College is contingent upon admission to MVC. The Honors College Dean reviews applications as they are received and students are admitted on a rolling, space-available basis.

Advantages of Participation

- Small classes designed and taught by Honors faculty
- Opportunities to enhance and refine writing skills by working closely with faculty
- Professional development opportunities with visiting scholars
- Field trips and hands-on learning opportunities
- Workshops for conference proposals, internship applications, and graduate school applications
- Service learning opportunities
- Special recognition at graduation and convocation
- 25% scholarship for study abroad (maximum of \$1500), maximum of one per student
- Extra \$20 printing money each academic year
- Priority housing beginning sophomore year
- Priority registration for courses each semester
- Overdue fines waived for Murrell Library materials (does not apply to items borrowed through Quest or MOBIUS, and charges for items not returned at the end of the semester cannot be waived)

Curriculum

1. **Introductory Seminar:** Required of all new students in the Honors College.

- **HONR 180: Introduction to the Honors Program:** (1 credit) An introductory course required for all new Honors students. This course seeks to foster student knowledge of the characteristics of disciplinary approaches in the liberal arts and sciences and the development of skills of interdisciplinary thinking. The goal of the course is to help students to develop skills of critical reading, writing, and thinking, and to develop their intellectual interests in ways that “connect the dots” between academic disciplines. This course is designed for all new Honors students.

Note: For students who entered the Honors College prior to Fall 2025, HONR 100/300 = HONR 180.

2. **Honors Seminars, General Education Substitutions, and Student Learning Outcomes:**

There are a total of eight thematic, interdisciplinary Honors Seminars. Students choose at least five three-credit Writing Intensive*, interdisciplinary seminars in which they read, discuss, and analyze primary texts. For students in the four-year track, these courses replace at least 15 hours of General Education course requirements as specified below.** For those completing the two-year track, at least two seminars (replacing 6 hours of General Education course requirements) are required.

If they choose, students may take more than the required number of Honors Seminars (up to eight total) required for the track they are on. Seminars taken in excess of the required number will continue to fulfill General Education requirements.

- **HONR 190: Humanity and Stories:** How do stories teach us how to be human and how do they shape the world around us? Rooted in art, folklore, drama, and/or music, this course uses narrative as the primary vehicle to interrogate enduring questions of human concern - such as gender, race, leadership, divinity, monstrosity, violence, and love. Specific topics chosen are subject to instructor discretion. WI Prerequisite, HONR 180. Spring. (replaces EN 160, counts towards Written Communication requirement)
Grade of C or higher required in HONR 190 in order to substitute for EN 160.
- **HONR 290: Humanity and Science:** Grounded in relevant scientific concepts and methodologies, this course engages in interdisciplinary examination of issues that arise at the intersection of humanity's engagement with, and relation to, the natural world, such as sustainability, the use of medical technologies, energy use and conservation, and so on.

Specific topics are chosen at the discretion of the instructor. WI Prerequisite, HONR 180. Fall. (counts towards Natural Science [non-lab] requirement)

- **HONR 291: Humanity and Creativity:** What is good? What is beautiful? What is creativity? This interdisciplinary course investigates connections between the fine arts disciplines of dance, music, theatre, and/or the visual arts and the social, political, economic, physical, and/or religious environment. WI Prerequisite, HONR 180. Spring. (counts towards Humanities & Fine Arts, Group 1 requirement)
- **HONR 2XX: Humanity, Rhetoric, and Advocacy:** In this interdisciplinary seminar, students will examine the use of communication theories and practices as tools of advocacy. Students will have the opportunity to develop an advocacy campaign of their choice and will present it publicly. WI Prerequisite, HONR 180. Fall. (fulfills Oral Communication requirement)
- **HONR 390: Humanity and Society:** This interdisciplinary course engages disciplines in the social sciences to investigate fundamental questions and issues concerning the nature and place of human beings in social contexts. Topics discussed may include, but are not limited to, the nature of power and freedom, the relationship between individuals and society, the formative nature of material culture, the nature and social functions of punishment, and so on. WI Prerequisite, HONR 180. Fall. (counts towards Social & Behavioral Science requirement; does **NOT** fulfill Constitution requirement)
- **HONR 395: Humanity and Difference:** An interdisciplinary, thematically-focused examination of how expressions of human social and cultural difference shape, challenge, and (possibly) reconfigure notions of reality, truth, moral obligation, and the like. Possible thematic examples include, but are not limited to, notions of death and the afterlife, family systems, social hierarchy and equality, individuality and community, etc. WI Prerequisite, HONR 180. Fall (counts toward Humanities and Fine Arts, Group 3 requirement)
- **HONR 3XX: Humanity and Meaning:** This interdisciplinary seminar examines how human beings find and create meaning in their lives and the world at large. The specific focus of the course will be determined by instructor preferences. Possible themes include, but are not limited to, the role of religion(s) in rendering and creating meaning; the performing and fine arts as expressions of meaning; perspectives on life, death, and the meaning of life; perspectives on the nature and meaning of evil and suffering, etc. Spring. (countes to Humanities and Fine Arts, Group 3 requirement).

- **HONR 490: Humanity and Moral Responsibility:** Informed by religious and/or philosophical approaches to ethics, this interdisciplinary course examines the nature of human moral responsibility with regard to one or more contemporary issues. Possible topics to be addressed may include, but are not limited to, the ethics of healthcare systems, climate change, criminal justice/the death penalty, and economic justice. WI Prerequisite, HONR 180. Spring. ((countes to Humanities and Fine Arts, Group 2 requirement)

**Writing Intensive: The six Honors Seminars follow the MVC Writing across the Curriculum criteria for WI courses. Students will be required to write at least 15 pages /4500 words per semester. Writing assignments should make up at least 50% of the overall grade. Instructors will be required to provide revision help and feedback on at least 5 pages/1500 words. Students should be given time to revise (after instructor feedback) before submitting those 5 pages of written work.*

3. **Honors Elective Courses:** These courses are not required, but may be taken as elective credit for further enrichment.

- **HONR 301. Honors Field Learning:** (1-3 hours) This field course offers hands-on research and/or service learning opportunities. Topics vary per instructor and term. Students engage in data collection, problem-solving, and research writing. Prerequisite: HONR 180. Intersession. Summer. (*elective*)
- **HONR 310: Highly Selective Application Springboard** (1 cr. hr.): This course prepares students to apply for
 - undergraduate research experiences (REUs),
 - highly competitive (i.e., acceptance rates \cong 10-20% or less) fellowships or scholarships (e.g., Goldwater, Truman, NSF/NIH, Fulbright, etc.), and
 - highly selective graduate programs (especially, but not only, MD, JD, & PhD programs, particularly at universities in the top 10-20).

The course will cover program identification and selection, the application process, core competencies, and principal application elements (in particular, personal/research statements and academic writing/research samples), among other topics. Non-Honors College students may enroll with permission of the Honors College Dean. It is highly recommended that enrolled students have a cumulative g.p.a. of at least 3.2. Fall, first eight weeks.

4. **Cultural Requirement:** Two semesters (6 credit hrs.) of a foreign language **or** a study abroad/study away experience **or** one contract course from the [Global Studies course list](#). This requirement is waived for international students.

5. **Contract Projects:** Within their major, students will also choose two courses (300 or 400 level) to complete additional work under “contract” with the faculty member. Students receive the same amount of credit for the course, but it will be marked on their transcript as an Honors Contract course. To determine if the faculty member wishes to “contract” with the student for Honors credit, the student should meet with the faculty member who will teach the course and request to take the course for Honors credit prior to registration. The faculty member and the student will work together to design the content that will constitute the Honors portion of the course and establish grading standards for the work. Students taking a contract course shall, with their advisor, fill out [the first page of this form](#) and submit it to the Honors Dean. The contract faculty member shall fill out and submit the [second page of the Contract Project Form](#) no later than the grading deadline of the semester in which the contract work is done.

Honors contract work should include:

- Research (whether original data collection, archival, or library research)
- Public presentation (Student Research Symposium or other conference, submission for publication or display, or in-class presentation)
- Significant student-faculty engagement throughout the semester
- Deeper professional or disciplinary engagement

Once the content has been designed, the student and faculty member should print and complete the Contract Course form (available on the MVC Honors College website and as an Appendix to this document) and return a signed copy with a course syllabus to the Honors Dean for approval. Failure to complete contract work will be reported by faculty to the Honors Dean and the Registrar’s Office; students who fail to complete satisfactory contract work will not receive Honors credit for the course.

6. **Honors Thesis:** (2 credits)

- **HONR 400: Independent Research** – 1 hour. Students work individually with a faculty member in their major to develop and write a thesis proposal for HONR 485. Prerequisites: HONR 180. Arranged.
- **HONR 485. Honors Thesis** – 1 hour. Taken in conjunction with the Senior Seminar/Thesis in their major. Honors students produce a publishable quality piece of writing that they also formally present to the campus community. WI Prerequisites: HONR 400. Arranged.

- **Other notes about the HONR 400 and HONR 485 Sequence:**

- The HONR 400/HONR 485 sequence is intended to help further prepare students for work in the next stage of their career after graduating with a Bachelor's Degree. As such, the nature of the project and form that it takes might vary depending upon the expectations in the specific field of study. In any case, the expectation is that the Honors thesis will be of "exceptional quality," as outlined below.
- In all cases a 3-faculty member Thesis Committee is convened. The primary advisor and the student should decide who the extra 2 people are during the HONR 400 semester. At least one thesis committee member must have a terminal degree. Near the end of the HONR 400 semester, the 3 faculty and the student should meet to discuss the progress of the project. During the HONR 485 semester, the other 2 faculty members should be available in a consultant capacity. At the end of the HONR 485 semester, all three faculty collectively evaluate the quality of the completed thesis project.
- The project is expected to be presented at the Student Research Symposium at the end of the semester.
- For majors without a Senior Seminar / Senior Thesis course, the HONR 400/HONR 485 sequence provides them the opportunity to develop an independent project relevant to their major.
- For majors with a Senior Seminar / Senior Thesis course, the HONR 400/HONR 485 sequence is intended to give the student the opportunity to expand upon what they are already doing for their major.
 - All students writing a thesis will complete HONR 400, usually in the semester prior to the semester they expect to graduate.
 - All students writing a thesis will complete HONR 485, usually in the semester they expect to graduate.
 - For students whose programs require a thesis or senior project, the addition of HONR 485 signals the expectation of work characterized by greater depth and sophistication than would be expected of non-Honors work.
 - For students whose programs do not require a thesis or senior project, HONR 485 provides an opportunity to research and explore a topic of interest. While the amount of work expected will be commensurately less than that expected of those in programs with a senior thesis/project, the quality expectations are similar.
 - The student's work is expected to evince a depth and sophistication that marks it as truly exceptional. Roughly, this means it should:
 - Be judged to be of publishable quality in an undergraduate journal or similar forum, or
 - Be suitable for submission in support of admission to a highly competitive graduate program in the student's field of study, or
 - Be award-worthy if submitted to a competition in the student's discipline.

The Honors Minor in Applied Integrative Studies

The Honors Minor in Applied Integrative Studies does not impose a new requirement on Honors students. Some may find that their intellectual and professional goals are best served through the already existing Honors curriculum. Such students are free to complete Honors College requirements as currently articulated. Others, however, may find that the minor provides them with significant and enriching opportunities. This option is for such students.

Curriculum

This minor builds upon core elements of the current Honors curriculum, while adding substitutes for other elements. Students pursuing the minor track will complete the common introductory course, aimed at fostering an understanding of and appreciation for the benefits of interdisciplinary thinking, followed by a series of four (rather than the current five) interdisciplinary seminars of their choice. Then, in lieu of completing contract courses and a thesis in their major, students will embark on an interdisciplinary research project, rooted in their major but engaged with other disciplines, spanning their final three semesters. The goal of the research project is to provide students with a culminating experience that enables them to engage in extensive holistic, interdisciplinary thinking that connects their chosen field of study with adjacent disciplines, concepts, and issues, thereby fostering deeper, more meaningful practical engagement with the world. The requirements for the research project are more extensive and substantive than those typically associated with the Honors thesis, as currently conceived.

What does this look like?

Freshman fall	Freshman spring - Junior fall	Junior spring (or summer)	Senior fall	Senior spring
Introductory seminar (HONR 180) 1 credit hour	Four interdisciplinary honors seminars 12 credit hours	Honors interdisciplinary research project - research HONR 400 (1 credit hour)	Honors interdisciplinary research project - analysis HONR 4XX 3 credit hours	Honors interdisciplinary research project - implementation & assessment HONR 4YY 1-2 credit hours = 18-19 credit hours total

A student who successfully completes all of the above elements (and the study abroad/language/multicultural requirement, if applicable) will complete the requirements for an Honors Minor in Applied Integrative Studies. Due to practical constraints of the two-year

curriculum, this minor track will be available only to students enrolled in the four-year Honors curriculum.

Key differences between the proposed minor four-year course of study and the original:

- Students enrolled in the four-year minor curriculum will be required to take four, rather than five, Honors seminars
- The minor curriculum eliminates the contract course requirement
- The research project in the minor curriculum replaces any major-specific senior seminar/project requirement

The Research Project

The research project, guided by a committee composed of relevant faculty (drawn from both within and outside of the student's major - see below), provides students with the opportunity to address an issue or problem and articulate a concrete, actionable response to that issue or problem. The primary orientation in approaching the chosen topic will originate in the student's major,¹ but it will engage with and be informed by relevant insights from *at least one* other distinct field of study.

The student's Research Project committee should be set by the time the student completes HONR 400. It shall consist of at least three faculty members and will be chaired by a faculty member in the student's major. In addition,

- Of the remaining faculty, at least one must be drawn from a discipline outside of the student's major and relevant to the Project.
- At least two of the committee members must be full-time faculty.
- At least one one of the committee members must have a terminal degree (typically, a PhD or EdD) with a substantive research component (e.g., a dissertation).

Hypothetical Project Examples:

- A history major might investigate local civil war history and develop an exhibit for the library, curriculum for local schools, or a film, podcast, or news story for the public (possible allied disciplines to be engaged: graphic design, education, mass communication, etc.)
- A nursing major might investigate how social determinants of health affect care for pregnant women in Marshall and develop a program to increase access to care for those within an identifiable population (possible allied disciplines to be engaged: sociology,

¹ In this regard, while students pursuing the minor will NOT complete a thesis or final project in their majors, the Honors Interdisciplinary Research Project WILL play a role functionally similar - if not equivalent - to a thesis or project in their majors.

economics, education, graphic design, non-profit/human services, communication studies, etc.)

New courses:

- **HONR 425: Honors Project - Analysis (3 cr. hr.):** In this course, the student will produce a journal article length document and/or visual/performative artifact (length, format, style, etc. determined by expectations and standards common to the primary discipline in which the project is rooted) that
 - Clearly and precisely identifies the nature, purpose, and scope of the student's project,
 - Provides an appropriately comprehensive discussion and understanding of the chosen topic,
 - Is explicitly and significantly informed by AT LEAST one additional disciplinary perspective outside of the student's broad major field of study, and
 - Is compatible with an actionable response to the student's chosen topic appropriate for public implementation, presentation, or demonstration.
 - Is of a quality appropriate for submission to an undergraduate journal or in support of admission to a highly competitive graduate program.

The student shall present their project publicly, either at an appropriate academic/professional conference or at the Student Research Symposium.

- **HONR 450: Honors Project - Implementation and Assessment (2 cr. hr.):** This course provides the student with the opportunity to implement the actionable response identified and outlined in HONR 4XX. The nature and scope of such implementation should be guided closely by the student's Honors Project Advisory Committee.

Examples:

- The history major who investigates local civil war history could produce a short film, podcast, or exhibit to be screened, broadcast, or displayed publicly, perhaps in the public library, local schools, or at the Student Research Symposium.
- The nursing major who examines social determinants of health may work with Fitzgibbon Hospital or a local social service agency to implement a plan of action to increase health care access or distribute health information to improve prenatal care.

Guided by their Committee and standards of assessment appropriate for their project, the student will produce an initial analysis of their project, in particular its actionable components. The student will produce a written document of no less than five pages outlining their

assessment.

Continuing in the College

Beginning fall 2025, new Honors students will be admitted to the Honors College each fall as **Honors Candidates**. This first year in the Honors College will provide students time to acclimate themselves to the Honors College and its expectations and offerings. **Honors Candidates** will progress to **Honors Scholar** status if they:

- Successfully complete HONR 180 in the fall,
- Earn a 3.2 gpa or higher during the fall semester of their first year in the Honors College,
- Successfully complete at least one Honors seminar in the spring of their first year in the Honors College, and
- Finish the academic year with at least a 3.4 cumulative gpa.

Once students have achieved **Honors Scholar** status, they must maintain at least a 3.5 cumulative gpa at the end of each academic year to remain in good standing in the Honors College.

In addition, the following apply to **ALL** Honors College students, regardless of status:

- Students must earn an A or B in all Honors College courses.
- Students may not receive a D or F in any course.

If any student at the end of either semester in their first year in the Honors College or at the end of the academic year in subsequent years in the Honors College fails to meet the thresholds for remaining in good standing, they will meet with the Honors Dean to determine whether and, if so, how it might be possible to remediate any deficiencies within one semester.

Repeating Honors College Courses

Students who earn a D or F in an Honors course will be allowed to repeat the course once to raise their GPA. They can resume the Honors sequence of courses after successfully passing that course. Repeating a course and earning a C would result in dismissal, as policies regarding continuing in the College still apply.)

People in the Honors College

Dr. Christopher Libby, Dean of the Honors College, libby@moval.edu, x. 4206

Honors Advisory Committee:

Dr. Daryl Chastain - School of Science and Agriculture, chastaind@moval.edu, x. 4204

Prof. Roberta Griffit - School of Nursing and Health Sciences, griffitr@moval.edu, x. 4055

Dr. Okey (Peter) Onyia - School of Business and Technology, onyiao@moval.edu, x. 4153

Dr. Minjin Park - School of Arts and Humanities, parkm@moval.edu, x. 4631

Dr. Marcus Venable - School of Education and Social Sciences, venablem@moval.edu, x. 4127

Appendix A: Contract Course Form

MVC Honors Program Contact Project Form, Page 1

Student Name: _____

Course Name and Number: _____

Credit Hours: _____

Instructor: _____

Semester/Year: _____

According to the Honors Handbook, the Honors contract work should include:

- Research (whether original data collection, archival, or library research)
- Public presentation (Student Research Symposium or other conference, submission for publication or display, or in-class presentation)
- Significant student-faculty engagement throughout the semester
- Deeper professional or disciplinary engagement

Brief description of the contract work:

The student agrees to complete the contract work described above.

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Instructor Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Honors Dean Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

MVC Honors Program Contact Project Form, Page 2

Faculty Evaluation Form - This form is to be completed and submitted to the Honors College Dean no later than the final grade submission deadline.

Contract course number and name: _____

Meeting and Deadlines Documentation

	Task(s) to be completed	Certification of completion (faculty initials are sufficient)	Notes or comments
Week 2	Initial discussion of requirements & project		
Week 4	Project proposal; P. 1 of contract project form must be submitted to Honors Dean by end of week		
Week 8	Outline of project; bibliography, if relevant		
Week 12	First draft of project		
Week 15	Final draft of project		
Finals Week	Presentation (certification of presentation is mandatory)		

If the contract project were graded, what grade would it receive (circle one):

A B C D F Incomplete

Contract advisor signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: HONR 400 Proposal Rubric

Rubric for Honors Program Thesis Proposal (HN400)

	(quite weak)		(quite strong)	
<u>Summary</u>	1	2	3	4
Synopsis of the lit review				
Brief outline of research proposed				
Anticipated results and their significance				
<u>Literature Review</u>	1	2	3	4
Persuasive case for research				
Evidence and references for research				
Proof that previous research has been understood				
<u>Research Proposed</u>	1	2	3	4
Why research idea is a good one				
What is going to be done/proven				
Details of proposed research				
Proof that the plan will work (if applicable)				
<u>Anticipated results</u>	1	2	3	4
Results will make a contribution to the problem				
<u>References</u>	1	2	3	4
Required format (MLA, APA, AP) used throughout proposal				

Total points

Comments and Feedback:

Appendix C: HONR 485 Thesis Rubric

HN 485 Honors Thesis Rubric*

This rubric, when the average of the three committee members is figured, will determine the course grade for HN 485 (1 credit). Honors Program students must earn an A or B in all of their honors courses in addition to maintaining a 3.5 g.p.a.

If a student earns an Unsatisfactory in any category from any member of his/her thesis committee, s/he will be required to revise and resubmit the relevant sections. The resubmission deadline will be determined by the major thesis advisor but will be due to the committee at least one week before the last day of regular classes.

	Unsatisfactory 1	Developing 2	Satisfactory 3	Outstanding 4
Research Question and Argument				
Articulates an original, clearly defined, discipline-appropriate question/thesis statement				
Provides a contextual framework for the argument/Frames the question within a scholarly conversation; identifies the key scholars working in this area and explains the significance of this question				

Demonstrates the logical steps in the argument or lays out the methodology				
Evidence				
Uses primary and secondary sources or data appropriate to the discipline				
Logically interprets and synthesizes evidence/results into a coherent narrative that supports the thesis				
Writer engages with and responds to possible criticism of his/her thesis.				
Writing Style and Conventions				
Language clearly and effectively communicates ideas				
Citation format is correct and appropriate to discipline				
Overall attention to detail--grammar and mechanics errors are minimal				
Publishability of Thesis				

Thesis is suitable for publication in a student journal or presentation at a student session of an academic conference				
--	--	--	--	--

*rubric is adapted from Portland State University Honors College and University of Maine Honors College websites

Total Points_____

A= 36-40

B= 32-35

C=28-31

D=24-27

Comments/Suggestions: