

Principles of Course Design and Recommended Practices for English Honors Courses

In addition to the standard learning objectives for the course, honors syllabi should reflect the enhancements made specifically for the benefit of honors students. Below are some additional principles of course design that may be used in adapting or creating English courses for honors students, and some sample practices that support those objectives. The practices noted are intended to foster the deeper engagement with the subject matter that defines honors-level work.

- **Establish a classroom environment that fosters intense student participation and a sense of responsibility for both individual and group learning.**

Sample practices that support a fully-engaged classroom environment:

- Maximize one-on-one work with students, as class size allows, and respond to students' individual interests and goals for learning.
- Make students responsible for presenting course materials on a regular basis.
- Assign students to read assignments ahead and to prepare reading questions for classmates in advance of class discussion.
- Require extensive participation in class discussion; consider extending the discussion beyond class meetings with the use of online tools.
- Assign collaborative projects and presentations that encourage students to account for the needs of others.

- **Ask honors students to consider their learning on an abstract level.**

Sample practices that support metal-level reflection:

- Invite students to write their own learning objectives for the course, or for particular assignments.
- Engage students in a discussion of what it means to be an honors student.
- Create an assignment in which students author a lesson plan with attention to learning objectives.
- Call upon students to contribute to and to evaluate course materials. (E.g., have students search out supplemental course readings, create an annotated bibliography, or assemble a collection of web resources related to the course or to particular assignments.)

- **Encourage or require honors students to take part in co-curricular enrichment activities outside of the classroom.**

Sample practices that support learning beyond the classroom:

- Ask students to attend on-and off-campus events (lectures, performances, films, installations, etc.) above and beyond the Honors Program requirement of E1 attendance.
- Arrange field trips to relevant sites where Honors Program funding allows.
- Create opportunities for students to connect course materials with current events or to frame course materials in a broader context.

- **Challenge honors students with enhanced course materials and assignments.**

Sample practices that support intellectual rigor:

- Give students more freedom to exercise more self-direction major projects; invite them to write proposals for alternative projects or give leeway on topics.
- Engage students in primary source or original research.
- Invite expert guest speakers into the classroom.
- Assign advanced readings.
- Develop an experiential- or service-learning component for the course that requires students to develop relationships with on- and off-campus entities.
- Encourage students to present their work in the Student Research Colloquium or other events that ask them to address a larger audience.