

The Honors Program in Psychology (2011-12)

The Honors Program is designed for exceptional students who wish to pursue an intensive and independent program of research in psychology during their senior year. Successful participation serves as evidence of the student's facility in the two most important skills required of an academic psychologist, namely the capacity to acquire and integrate a substantial body of theoretical and factual material, and the ability to devise and execute a creative empirical research project. The Honors Program offers students the closest contact and consultation with faculty they will likely experience while at Cornell, and all qualified majors who are planning graduate work in any academic field should consider applying. However, it should also be noted that conducting honors research and completing a thesis is an extremely demanding undertaking, both in time and effort. Due to the demands of both research and writing, it is expected that after the winter break, honors students will be returning to campus as early as possible to continue their work, as well as staying on campus through all of Spring Break.

Three criteria are used for admittance.

- 1) A solid record in psychology coursework is required. Although exceptions can be made, a minimum GPA of 3.5 in Psychology courses is the norm.
- 2) Previous independent-study research experience is required. The Honors Program is geared toward students who are currently involved in research and have an established working relationship with a faculty supervisor. The prospective supervisor must agree to sponsor honors research, providing a letter of commitment and recommendation at the time of initial application.
- 3) Following provisional acceptance to the program based on 1) and 2), the third requirement is completion of an 8 to 12 page research proposal. This proposal will include both a pertinent literature review with at least 10 citations of primary, empirical research articles, and an overview of the methods, anticipated results, and potential significance of the proposed work. The proposal must adhere to APA style, as outlined in the 6th edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

There two deadlines to meet in applying to the Honors Program. **Late submissions will not be considered.**

**Fri., Sept. 16
4:00 PM** The application form and letter of recommendation are due. The application is available in the Psychology Department office (Uris 211). Deliver both the application and letter to the Department office.

**Fri., Sept. 30
4:00 PM** The research proposal is due. Turn in two paper copies (stapled only, no covers or binders), one each to the Department office and one to the faculty supervisor.

See the other side for more information about the program and other important dates. For any other questions about the honors program, contact the Chair of the Honors Program, Prof. Vivian Zayas at vz29@cornell.edu.

The focus of the Honors Program is to conduct an experiment, analyze the resulting data, and describe the project in a thesis that closely approximates a professional-level research report both in form and quality. The research project is to be conducted under the close sponsorship of a faculty member. Subject to approval, the sponsor need not be in the Psychology department per se. Students who successfully complete the Honors Program graduate with one of three levels of honors, which is noted on their diplomas. The customary level is Cum Laude, awarded to approximately two-thirds of Psychology Honors graduates. Approximately one-third of the Honors students receive the next higher level of honors, which is Magna Cum Laude. A student who has both an unusually strong academic record in Psychology and completes a thesis of exceptionally high quality will be considered for Summa Cum Laude, the highest level of honors. However, those are unusual cases. Students in the program register for 3 or 4 credits of Psychology 4710: Independent Study in both Fall and Spring semesters. Format and binding of the thesis follows guidelines for the Doctoral Dissertation and Master's Thesis, outlined by the Cornell University Graduate School. Stylistic format is APA style. Alternative style formats are possible, if approved in advance.

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

- 3rd week in Oct.** **Informational meeting.** All honors students will meet together along with the director for the honors program to discuss deadlines, expectations, and tips surrounding thesis projects. The time and place of the meeting will be determined in early October.
- Fri., Dec. 9 4:00 PM** **Progress report is due.** A 2-4 page written report describing the work completed to date, for example, stimuli created, participants tested, and any preliminary results. Copies go to both the faculty sponsor and to the Department Office.
- By Fri., Mar. 30** **Thesis committee is formed.** Students find 2 additional faculty members to serve on their thesis committee along with their faculty sponsor. At least one (and usually both) are members of the Department of Psychology.
- Draft of thesis is due.** This draft should include the introduction (literature review), methods, results, discussion, and references; goes to faculty sponsor.
- Fri., Apr. 13 4:00 PM** **Thesis is revised and thesis defense is scheduled.** The thesis is revised, following the comments made by the faculty advisor and a complete, "defensible" version of the thesis is created. With the advisor's approval, a defense date is scheduled. The revised version of the thesis should be given to each committee member at least one week in advance of the thesis defense date. The defense is an oral examination, which students are responsible for scheduling in consultation with committee members.

How to schedule a defense

Email all members of the committee to ask when they would be able to attend the defense. One strategy is to offer three dates and see which one works for everyone. Once a date and time have been finalized, the student needs to reserve a room for the defense through the Psychology Office. The defense typically lasts about 60 minutes, but the room should be scheduled for 75-90 minutes, just in case. Make sure the room has appropriate A/V support.

Presenting for your defense

Prepare a power point presentation that includes a summary of the research question, relevant background literature, methods, hypotheses, results, and discussion. Talk with your advisor about the details of the presentation, but it

should be about 20 minutes or so. Committee members will either ask you questions during your talk, or will wait until you are finished.

- By Apr. 27** **Thesis defense completed.** Your oral examination should be complete by this date. Typically, the committee will require that you make additional revisions to the thesis before submitting the final version. All revisions must be completed by May 4th.
- Mon., April 30**
3:00 PM **Poster completed and submitted.** Students should complete their posters, which will be presented at the annual psychology honors poster session. Posters should be brought to the Psychology main office by the specified date and time. The staff will be responsible for setting up all the posters.
- Wed., May 2nd**
12:00-2:00 PM **Poster session and format check.** Students present their research to Psychology faculty and students in a professional-style poster session. Students should bring the approved but unbound hardcopy of their thesis for final format approval. Attendance is mandatory.
- Fri., May 4**
4:00 PM **Two bound copies due.** Thesis is due in final, bound (hardcover or soft-cover) form. One goes to the faculty sponsor and one to the Department Office and will be a permanent addition to the Psychology Department library. It is a courtesy to give other committee members copies, but not required.
- Sun., May 27** **Psychology Department graduation ceremony.** Students graduating with honors are recognized at the departmental graduation ceremony, with posters put on display for parents and other family attending the ceremony. The T. A. Ryan award, accompanied by a small prize, is given for the best research project. Attendance is not mandatory, but glorious.

Useful resources:

For help with writing your thesis:

- Writing Workshop
http://www.arts.cornell.edu/knight_institute/walkin/walkin.htm
174 Rockefeller Hall; 255-6349; 8:30 a.m. -5 p.m.
Offers seminars on improving writing skills. Call for appointment.
- Writing Workshop Walk-in Service
178 Rockefeller Hall: 3:30-5:30 and 7-10 p.m., Monday-Thursday; 2-8 p.m., Sunday.
222 Robert Purcell Community Center; 7-10 p.m., Sunday-Thursday.
320 Noyes Community Center, 7-10 p.m., Sunday-Thursday.

For help with statistics and graphs:

- Mathematics Support Center
<http://www.math.cornell.edu/Courses/FSM/support.html>
256 Malott Hall
255-4658
- Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research (CISER) offers workshops on general computing and various software programs (Matlab, SPSS, R, SAS, Stata). For more information go to:

<http://ciser.cornell.edu/beta/workshops/>

For undergraduate funding supported by the College of Arts and Sciences:

- The Undergraduate Research Fund: The Dean of the College has made some money available to defray out-of-pocket expenses that arise from students' projects. The maximum award is usually about \$300.00.
- The Einhorn Discovery Grant: The Einhorn Grant offers students from \$200 to \$800 per academic year to support research in faculty-approved projects.
- Applications for the Dean's Undergraduate Research Fund and the Einhorn Discovery Grants are available in 172 Goldwin Smith. You may also contact Sue Downes / David DeVries (5-3386).