

Philosophy Honors Program Description
Philosophy Department
Rhode Island College
November 1, 1999

Purpose: The purpose of the Honors Program in Philosophy is to encourage selected students to do more advanced research in concentrated philosophic topics than is typically available in the regular course work.

Departmental Honors Committee

A. Composition of the Honors Committee and Meetings

1. The Honors Committee of the Philosophy Department will consist of all full-time faculty members of the Philosophy Department.
2. The Chair of the Philosophy Department will serve as Chair of the Honors Committee.

B. Duties of the Members of the Honors Committee

1. Duties of the Chairperson

The chairperson will be responsible for:

- a. Sending letters of invitation to students to apply for admission to the Philosophy Department Honors Program.
- b. Receiving and presenting applications for Honors in Philosophy.
- c. Scheduling meetings of the Committee and providing agenda for meetings in a timely fashion.
- d. Informing students in writing of acceptance or rejection.
- e. Collecting and making available to members semester grade reports of students accepted.
- f. Informing students of adverse retention decisions and informing students of actions they can follow in the event of adverse retention decisions.

- g. Informing students and Thesis Advisors about problems with theses that can be ameliorated and providing deadlines for completion of revisions.
 - h. Informing department members of recommendations for graduation with Honors in Philosophy.
 - i. Other duties as necessary including, with the concurrence of the Honors Committee, granting rare exceptions to policies and procedures.
 - j. If the Chair is also an advisor on a particular Honors Thesis, the chair will not participate in decisions about that particular thesis. For the purpose of such decisions, the most senior member of the faculty in terms of service to the Department (or its predecessor), other than the Chair of the Honors Committee, will serve as Chair *pro tem* of the Honors Committee for the purposes of that decision only.
2. Duties of the Members of the Philosophy Department Honors Committee
- a. Decide who will be accepted into the program. This decision must be made unanimously among the full time members of the Department.
 - b. Assist Chair in monitoring the progress of students included in the program.
 - c. Participate in retention decisions. Such decisions must be made unanimously among the full time members of the Department.
 - d. Participate in the evaluation of the quality of the thesis proposal and make suggestions for revisions when appropriate.
 - e. Participate in the evaluation of the quality of the presentation of the Honors Thesis and make suggestions for revisions when appropriate.
 - f. Participate in decisions to recommend graduation with honors in the philosophy major. Such decisions must be made unanimously among the full time members of the Department.
 - g. Propose revisions to the program as needed and desirable.

- h. If a member of the committee is an advisor for a particular Honors Thesis, she or he will not participate in decisions concerning that particular thesis.

C. Conditions for Admission to the Honors Program in Philosophy:¹

1. Minimum Criteria:

- a. Enrollment in the College with a major, a joint major or a minor in Philosophy.
- b. At least an overall 3.5 GPA in all Philosophy courses (including transfer credits) taken prior to admission to the Honors Program.
- c. At least an overall 3.0 GPA in all courses (including transfer credits) taken prior to admission to the Honors Program.

2. Procedures:

- a. Admission to the Philosophy Department Honors Program is by invitation only.
- b. After accumulating at least 60 credits and before accumulating 90 credits toward the baccalaureate degree, invited students may be considered for admission to the program. Letters of invitation will go out in sufficient time for the current semester's application process.
- c. Application forms are available from the Department Secretary.
- d. The student must prepare a properly completed application.²

¹Any exceptions may be granted only by the Department Chair if the Department Honors Committee concurs. Such exceptions must be in writing with copies to each member of the department Honors Committee.

²Forms and instructions are available in the department offices.

- e. The student must prepare a completed proposal for enrollment in two Philosophy 39_ courses.
- f. The application should be submitted to the Chair of the Department who will have all applications duplicated and forwarded to other members of the Department Honors Committee.
- g. The student must obtain a letter of endorsement from a full-time faculty member of the Philosophy Department. The letter should indicate that the faculty member is willing to serve as a Thesis Advisor.
- h. Formal approval by a unanimous positive vote of members of the Department Honors Committee.
- i. Written approval of the 39_ proposal by the Dean's office.
- j. The Chair of the Honors Committee of the Philosophy Department of Rhode Island College will send a letter of acceptance on behalf of the Committee.
- k. Formal participation may begin the semester following receipt of the letter of acceptance.

D. Requirements while enrolled in the Honors Program in Philosophy:

1. In order to remain in good standing in the Honors Program of the Department, each student must receive at least a B- in each philosophy course taken while a member of the Honors Program.
2. In order to remain in good standing in the Honors Program of the Department, each student must receive at least a C in each other course taken while a member of the Honors Program.
3. Each student must provide his or her current transcript to the Chair of the Honors Committee for each semester while the student is a member of the Honors Program.

4. Under the direct supervision of a full-time member of the Philosophy Department, who will serve as the Thesis Advisor, each student must prepare and present an Honors Thesis as part of the two semester enrollment in Philosophy 39_. Three (3) copies of the Thesis must be placed on reserve in the Department Offices. It may be read by anyone interested and comments may be forwarded to the student and the Thesis Advisor.
5. All Honors Theses must be completed before April 1 of the year of graduation in the case of spring graduation or before November 1 of the calendar year prior to graduation in the case of winter graduation.
6. The thesis must be accepted by the Thesis Advisor and the Department Honors Committee. The Thesis Advisor is responsible for assigning the final grades for the 39_ courses. There is no grade given for the Thesis itself.
7. During the month of April of the year of graduation in the case of spring or during the month of November of the calendar year prior to graduation in the case of winter graduation, the student will present her or his thesis at a meeting of the Philosophy Club to which all members of the College community will be invited. The presentation will not be graded and will not be used in the determination of acceptance or rejection of the thesis or the grade for the 39_ courses. Its purpose is the continuing growth and development of the student and the sharing of the results of intensive research with members of a community of scholars.
8. In case the Committee does not accept the thesis, it may suggest revisions which, if completed in a timely fashion, may result in acceptance.³
9. Students may appeal an unsatisfactory evaluation of the thesis to (in order): the Department as a whole, the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs. The several levels of appeal may call upon additional help in reaching a determination. The determination of the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs will be final and binding on all parties.⁴

³Thus, students are well advised to complete the thesis well before the dates indicated in Item 5 above because if the Committee should require revisions, in order to meet College records requirements, the final thesis will still have to meet the Item 5 deadlines.

⁴In order to make an appeal credible, students should accompany it with clear and convincing evidence of an incorrect or unfair evaluation.

E. Dismissal from the Honors Program:

1. Failure to maintain required grades in philosophy courses or the required grades in other courses will result in dismissal from the Honors Program.
2. Credit and grades may be granted for the 39_ courses in which a dismissed student is enrolled based on the performance in these courses. Except in the case of plagiarism (for which, see Item #4, "Plagiarism," below), students who have been dismissed from the Honors Program will be allowed to complete their research in progress, but they will not be able to complete an Honors Thesis, and they will not be recommended for Honors at graduation.
3. If the student fails to achieve satisfactory evaluation of the Honors Thesis or to revise satisfactorily the thesis upon recommendation of the Honors Committee, grades assigned by the Thesis Advisor for the 39_ will be recorded on the student's transcript without an indication of Honors in Philosophy.
4. Plagiarism discovered and demonstrated in accordance with College policy will result in immediate dismissal from the Honors Program and a failing grade for the 39_ course (or courses).

F. Evaluation of Theses for Honors in Philosophy

1. Students who undertake to do an Honors Thesis move themselves away from local parochial standards and closer to the standards of the discipline itself. Any undergraduate Honors Thesis accepted by the Department Honors Committee on behalf of the Philosophy Department at Rhode Island College should be of high quality when evaluated in the context of national standards.⁵
2. The thesis of the Honors Thesis should be clear to readers and well supported by the author.

⁵Some may question why, given the prefatory comments in the first sentence of this paragraph, we have not suggested an international standard. The reason is that the kind of undergraduate education which maintains undergraduate liberal education as its central focus is peculiar to the United States and only a few other countries. The comparative criteria for undergraduate honors theses is relevant in that context. It seems too cumbersome to refer explicitly to the few other countries, so we have settled for reference to the United States. What we are indicating, however, is that if a Philosophy Honors Thesis accepted at Rhode Island College were presented to Philosophy Departments across the United States, it would be found acceptable as an Honors Thesis.

3. Honors Theses will be expected to be well and carefully argued. They should also be well written with clear section, paragraph and sentence structures and an absence of technical errors.
4. Honors Theses should be clearly presented.
5. Honors Theses should be reasonably complete in their references to other philosophers and thinkers. In addition, they should be judicious in their treatment of the thought of other people.
6. Honors Theses should anticipate likely criticisms of their important arguments and should show how the author would respond convincingly to such criticism.
7. Within the context of what is reasonable for high quality undergraduate Honors Theses throughout the country, they should demonstrate mastery of the relevant aspects of philosophy and acquaintance with the literature, both historic and contemporary.
8. Where thesis topics overlap with other disciplines, the student, advisor or committee may reasonably suggest that faculty from other departments or even other accredited institutions of higher education be included in advising for the research and writing. Where such faculty are willing to be involved, the department will welcome them and express its gratitude for their willingness to serve.
9. While faculty thesis advisors should be helpful to students in the process of the preparation of the thesis, it should be remembered that ultimately the Honors Thesis is the product of the student and he or she should take full responsibility for it.
10. Honors Theses should follow the citation conventions of one of the dominant style systems (for example, MLA, APA, etc.). Any questions about deviation should be referred to the Chair of the Honors Committee who may involve the Committee in making a decision.
11. An Honors Thesis should be a substantial work on a significant philosophical topic. It may, in some cases, constitute a "contribution to knowledge" within the discipline, but a work that brings thoughtful contemplation and analysis of one or more existing philosophical works will also be acceptable. The topic and methodology will be selected by the student in consultation with the thesis advisor. The primary criterion for this selection shall be the potential for educational growth by the student.