



# UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

The Honors Program

*Maius est illuminare quam lucere solum.*

“It is better to illuminate than merely to shine.”

– *Thomas Aquinas*



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For additional information and an application to the Honors Program,

please contact [honors@stthom.edu](mailto:honors@stthom.edu)

# INTRODUCTION

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The Honors Program at the University of St. Thomas provides a framework within which outstanding men and women can pursue excellence, leadership, and what the ancients called magnanimitas or “greatness of the soul.” The program’s unique design centers around a community of students and professors committed to the intellectual life. Placed in small classes that emphasize dialogue and conversation, Honors students enjoy the special interdisciplinary benefit of team-lead seminars that focus on original, classical texts.

The Honors Program is designed to fit seamlessly into a student’s major field of study. One Honors course is taken per semester, almost all of which substitute for classes in the core curriculum.

More than the accumulation of information, learning in the Honors Program is the development of intellectual habits or virtues through intensive study and practice. Aiming at the development of the whole person, the UST Honors Program prepares students to assume the responsibilities of leadership for a lifetime of service to the common good in their professions, local communities, the nation, and the world.



## TEAM TAUGHT SEMINARS

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The classes in the Honors Program are different from other classes on campus. Team-taught seminars, led by two professors from different disciplines, are designed to open up the discussion to competing views and to challenge students to reason and judge in an active learning environment.

The Honors Program begins with four such interdisciplinary seminars, one taken each semester, which draw on the canon of Great Books and the “great conversation” which forms the basis of society. From Greek and Roman antiquity, continuing through the Medieval period and culminating in the modern era, students confront the “big questions” that all thoughtful persons must consider sooner or later in their lives. These provide the student with an historical foundation for the proper judgement and critique of contemporary society.

## LEARNING COHORTS

Each incoming Honors class will progress through the Honors Course Sequence as a cohort. While many Honors events will bring together all students in the Honors Program, over the course of 6 semesters, each Honors student will especially come to know the other classmates in the cohort. The collaborative learning aspect of the Honors cohort system thus enables students to develop the skills vital to working well in social and professional endeavors.



# HONORS COURSE SEQUENCE

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1st Semester: [HNRS 1391 The Tribe and the City](#)

2nd Semester: [HNRS 1392 From Empire to Christendom](#)

3rd Semester: [HNRS 2391 Church and Nation](#)

4th Semester: [HNRS 2392 Revolution and New Empires](#)

5th Semester: [HNRS 3391 Community Service Project](#)

6th Semester: [HNRS 4392 Contemporary Problems](#)

HNRS 4391: Independent Research Project\*

\*The requirements for HNRS 4391 can be fulfilled by a research component in the student's major.

## INTERGRATION WITH THE MAJOR

The Honors Program integrates with any major program currently offered in the University. The 5 initial Honors courses fulfill 15 hours in the core curriculum. Successful completion of the Honors Program will be clearly noted on the student's diploma and transcript.

Upon completion of the four-course honors sequence (HNRS 1391, 1392, 2391, 2392) and the Contemporary Problems Seminar (HNRS 4395), the student will be credited with fulfilling 15 credit hours in the core curriculum in the following way:

English (ENGL 1341); History (any core course); Social science (any core course); either of the third courses in theology or philosophy; the Synthesis course. No course may be applied to the mathematics, natural science, language, oral communication, or fine arts block of the core curriculum.

# COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

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## HNRS 2391 THE TRIBE AND THE CITY

The goal of HNRS 1391 is to acquaint students with some of the most notable intellectual achievements of the ancient Greek and Hebrew cultures. The ideals of parent, prophet, king, lawgiver, sage, hero/heroine, poet, philosopher, and statesman are examined in this course. The reading list includes: From the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Kings, Job, and Psalms; from the Greeks: Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Aeschylus, and Sophocles. Over the course of the term, students will be initiated into the liberal arts of speaking, listening, forming critical judgements, and skillful writing: in short, to foster the intellectual virtues necessary to lead a free and worthwhile life.

## HNRS 1392 FROM EMPIRE TO CHRISTENDOM

HNRS 1392 acquaints students with the transition from classical Rome to early Christendom. The ideals of founder, soldier, martyr, bishop, monk, knight, lady, friar, and scholar are examined in this course. Readings include Virgil, Cicero, Beowulf, Acts of the Apostles, Lives of the Saints, St. Benedict, Augustine, Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, The Song of Roland, and Aquinas.

## HNRS 2391 CHURCH AND NATION

Church and Nation examines the ideals of monarch, mystic, reformer, missionary, explorer, artist, gentleman and gentlewoman, and scientist in the context of the transition from the later Middle Ages to the early modern period. Particular emphasis will be placed on issues of continuity and discontinuity and the definition of modernity in the movement from a world “more than half medieval” to one “more than half modern.” The reading list includes: Chaucer, Dante, More, Machiavelli, Galileo, Luther, Shakespeare, Milton, John of the Cross, Montaigne, and Bacon.

## HNRS 2392 **REVOLUTION AND THE NEW EMPIRES**

The goal of HNRS 2392 is to appreciate the character and causes of the revolutions that marked the beginning of the modern age in philosophy, the natural and social sciences, and political thought; and to examine the ideal of the individual as seen against the background of these revolutions in understanding. The ideals of scientist, philosopher, diplomat, revolutionary, entrepreneur, gentleman, social scientist, worker, and citizen are examined in this course. The reading list includes: Newton, Descartes, Rousseau, Franklin, Tocqueville, Smith, Marx and Engels, Darwin, Wollstonecraft, Newman, Mary Shelley, Fredrick Douglass, Mill, and Leo XIII.

## HNRS 3391 **COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT**

HNRS 3391 makes the vital connection between the “life of the mind” and the “business of life.” Grounded in the concept of “Christian work” or “reflective practical action,” this course combines reading and discussion with individual projects selected by the student and carried out in the Houston community. This rare opportunity to act upon values learned in the classroom strengthens determination, self-confidence, and a sense of purpose. The Honors Committee must approve the proposal before a student may register for the course. Readings on the meaning of work, service, and social justice from 20th century writers are assigned, including John Paul II, Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa, and Jan Vanier.

## HNRS 4392 **CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS**

Contemporary Problems is the capstone course for the Honors Program. Its topic, chosen according to the interests of the students, incorporates diverse dimensions of a problem facing contemporary society. The students form an interdisciplinary “task force” to analyze the problem and suggest viable solutions.

Pervious Contemporary Problems Seminar topics include the following:

“Person: The Endangered Species”

“Eating Away America”

“I Culture: A Study of American Individualism”

“ Moreover, a cursory glance at ancient history shows clearly how in different parts of the world, with their different cultures, there arise at the same time the fundamental questions which pervade human life: Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life? These are the questions which we find in the sacred writings of Israel, as also in the Veda and the Avesta; we find them in the writings of Confucius and Lao-Tze, and in the preaching of Tirthankara and Buddha; they appear in the poetry of Homer and in the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, as they do in the philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle. They are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives. ”

**St. John Paul II, Fides et Ratio**