DREXEL UNIVERSITY
Pennoni
Honors College
The Honors Program

Honors Colloquia

Guidelines for Proposals and Syllabi

Purpose of Honors Colloquia

Honors Colloquia are intended to enrich the undergraduate academic experience of Drexel's Honors students. They typically are three-credit courses taught in a seminar or workshop fashion. Although any Honors student may register for an Honors Colloquium, instructors may admit non-Honors students at the instructor's discretion.

Essentials of an Honors Colloquium

An Honors Colloquium should reflect the instructor's expertise, be accessible to non-majors, not duplicate an existing course offered in another Drexel School or College, and be sufficiently challenging to merit Honors credit.

Normally the expertise reflected in the Colloquium is that of the instructor's academic discipline, but in some cases it can reflect expertise developed as an avocation or secondary interest. For instance, an instructor in Digital Media is considering proposing a Colloquium on "Walking" (working title only), which will draw upon his numerous weeks-long treks in such locales as Nepal, China, Hokkaido, and Vietnam, and which, through guest lectures, include the perspectives of health scientists, physiologists, city planners, as well as literary scholars familiar with the large body of poetry inspired by walking.

Honors Colloquia should be designed in such a way that any bright student, regardless of major, can handle the course requirements. (A Drexel faculty member desiring to offer an Honors course restricted to certain majors should offer it through his or her own academic unit.) Almost any subject can be made accessible and still be intellectually stimulating and challenging.

An Honors Colloquium should not duplicate an existing regular course in an academic program. However, we recognize that a subject taught from, say, a literary perspective might be considerably different from the same subject taught from a sociological or economic perspective.

There is no easy-to-apply standard for deciding if an Honors Colloquium is sufficiently challenging for Honors students. A helpful rule of thumb is this: imagine the course were being offered as part of the discipline's normal academic program, ask what additional amount of work an Honors Option would entail, and set the course requirements at that level. It is important to bear in mind that an Honors Colloquium may require an amount of work comparable to that of a regular course yet still be more demanding if the material is more difficult and the discussions more challenging. Also bear in mind that Honors Colloquia should not be so demanding as to discourage grade-conscious students from exploring topics outside their majors. Deciding on a standard of difficulty is not always an obvious matter. For example, a Colloquium on Probability accessible to students from all majors may be too easy for a Statistics or Math major but quite challenging for the English or Film major who would be more likely to want to take it.

Proposing an Honors Colloquium

A faculty member who has an idea for an Honors Colloquium should first confer with the Director of the Honors Program about the suitability of the topic and the approach. The next step is to develop a Proposal for an Honors Colloquium (see below). This proposal should be submitted to the Director, who will review the proposal to ensure that it is clear and complete. The Director will then send the proposal to the Honors Faculty Advisory Committee for its review. The primary aim of the Advisory Committee's review is to gather comments, criticisms, and suggestions that will contribute to the effectiveness of the course. Approval of the proposal will be on the condition that the faculty member considers the Advisory Committee's suggestions. In some cases, the proposal may be returned for further work and resubmission. Once the Advisory Committee has reviewed and approved the proposal, the faculty member will develop a complete syllabus following the guidelines below. It will be the Honors Program's responsibility to ensure that the syllabus is clear, complete and consistent with the description in the proposal and that the faculty member has taken into consideration the Advisory Committee's advice.

Proposal Template

Colloquium proposals should be no more than two pages long and contain these elements:

- course title
- brief summary of the topic
- brief statement of the learning objective of the course
- approach
- brief description of course materials (texts, other)
- work requirements
- grading basis
- brief paragraph on the faculty member's relevant expertise