

Spring 2025 Honors Courses



Focus Courses

An honors focus course (HNR 219R) is a discussion-based course on a work or artist of significance to world civilization. It meets once a week for seven weeks—a half-semester or “block”—before a final exam. All Southern Virginia students, whether in the Honors Program or not, are welcome to enroll in focus courses. There are no prerequisites. Honors students must complete at least six focus courses for University Honors. Sign up through mySVU. First-year students should contact registrar@svu.edu or their academic advisor to add a focus course to their schedules.

SPRING 2025 BLOCK 1 (JAN. 15–MARCH 6)

HNR 219R 01 The Bible on Government (0.5)

The Bible has been highly influential in political thought in the Western world in spite of the fact that the most recent part of it, the New Testament, contains no detailed political program or lengthy discussion of political principles. The Bible as a whole, however, contains several profound reflections and teachings on law, justice, and good government. We will study a dozen key chapters on government from Genesis to Revelation.

Instructor & Time: Jeremiah John, M 1:30–2:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 02 Milton’s Non-Epic Poetry (0.5)

Best known for his epic poetry such as *Paradise Lost*, John Milton also left a body of shorter poetic works that warrant study. As he dealt with his impending blindness, Milton struggled with limitations, but he did not let them define his craft. Indeed, some of the most evocative poetry of the late Renaissance Period was written by a man who had lost his physical vision but not his spiritual sight.

Instructor & Time: Joseph Bouchelle, W 2:30–3:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 03 Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell (0.5)

We will accompany apostles, prophetesses, holy people, kings, and commoners as they explore the afterlife and describe fiery depths, angelic heights, valleys of ice, lakes of flame, bridges of judgement, and cities of gold and jewels. We will meet fallen kings, sinful popes, blessed saints, winged spirits, talking gates, strange animals, angels, and daemons, learning what Christians from the third to the twelfth centuries believed about what awaited them upon their deaths, including where they would go, how they would be treated, and what judgments, punishments, and pleasures awaited them. These descriptions influenced Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and arose from a rich variety of traditions regarding Heaven, Hell, and the many spaces between.

Instructor & Time: Andrew Sorber, Th 12:30–1:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 04 Essays of bell hooks (0.5)

bell hooks, a prolific poet, critic, memoirist, and essay writer, is known for the honest and insightful way she addresses race, class, love, education, gender, sexuality, and intersectionality in her works. A respected academic and self-described black queer feminist, hooks chose to write in an accessible, conversational style about complex and sometimes uncomfortable topics as a reflection of her own beliefs and values. hooks invites her readers into a conversation—all readers—regardless of background. hooks once said of herself, “If ... asked to define myself, I wouldn’t start with race; I wouldn’t start with blackness; I wouldn’t start with gender; I wouldn’t start with feminism. I would start with stripping down to what fundamentally informs my life, which is that I’m a seeker on the path. I think of feminism, and I think of anti-racist struggles as part of it. But where I stand spiritually is, steadfastly, on a path about love.”

Instructor & Time: Sarah Maitland, M 2:30–3:20 p.m.

SPRING 2025 BLOCK 2 (MARCH 7–MAY 8)

HNR 219R 05 Robinson’s *Housekeeping* (0.5)

Before *Gilead* earned her a Pulitzer and an interview with the president of the United States, Marilyn Robinson’s first novel was hailed as a modern masterpiece. *Housekeeping* arose from a mound of metaphors Robinson composed as a Ph.D. student. “I could see that I had created something that implied much more,” she has said. As achingly sincere as it is grave, the story follows two orphaned sisters and their aunt trapped in their hometown of Fingerbone and so surrounded by all they have lost. Like a poem, Robinson’s prose invites the reader to look and to look again. Each thing points to every other thing until her metaphors—the moon, an empty window, the swelling lake at Fingerbone—coalesce and haunt the reader as much as the girls of *Housekeeping* are haunted by their own abandonment. Robinson writes, “And here again is a foreshadowing—the world will be made whole. For to wish for a hand on one’s hair is all but to feel it. So whatever we may lose, very craving gives it back to us again.”

Instructor & Time: Ian Haver, T 8:30–9:20 a.m.

HNR 219R 06 Wharton’s *Ethan Frome* (0.5)

Set against the bleak winter landscape of New England, *Ethan Frome* tells the story of a poor farmer, lonely and downtrodden, his wife Zeena, and her cousin, the enchanting Mattie Silver. In this short novel’s powerful and engrossing drama, Edith Wharton constructed her least characteristic and most celebrated book. In its unyielding and shocking pessimism and its bleak demonstration of tragic waste, it is a masterpiece of psychological and emotional realism. We will investigate the composition of Wharton’s most successful novella and the reasons for its enduring success.

Instructor & Time: Ariel Silver, W 11:00–11:50 a.m.

HNR 219R 07 Kurosawa and Shakespeare (0.5)

Nothing speaks to William Shakespeare’s enduring, universal appeal more than the interest of film directors over the years and across the globe in adapting his plays to the screen. Few Shakespeare

adaptations have been as successful or as well-received as Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* and *Ran*, adaptations of *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, respectively. Kurosawa, the master of samurai films, transforms Shakespeare's tragedies into the world of Japanese courtly politics to devastating effect.

Instructor & Time: Dallin Lewis, W 2:30–3:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 08 Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War* (0.5)

In *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides tells the story of the cataclysmic conflict between Athens, Sparta, and their assorted allies that took place from 431–404 BCE. Thucydides pledges to tell the truth not just about the past, but about what “will recur in the future.” We will consider the enduring questions raised by Thucydides: What are the strengths and weaknesses of democracies at war? What qualities separate a good wartime leader from a bad one? Should states follow ethical limits during armed conflict, or does anything go? What, if anything, holds together the bonds of civilization in the face of pandemics, mass suffering, and war? What leads states into war and what conditions allow for the creation of a firm peace?

Instructor & Time: Francis MacDonnell, M 2:30–3:20 p.m.

Honors Seminars

An honors seminar (**HNR 395R**) is a discussion-based course on an interdisciplinary topic related to an issue treated in one or more of the university's core courses. Honors students must complete at least one honors seminar for University Honors. Prerequisites: junior or senior class standing. Sophomores with appropriate background studies will be considered.

SPRING 2025 SEMESTER

HNR 395R 01 The British Enlightenment Search for Human Nature (3)

The 1600s and 1700s in England—now sometimes known as the “British Enlightenment”—was a period of radical change. The English fought a civil war, unified with Scotland, and pursued colonial endeavors all around the globe. It was also a transformative period for philosophical ideas and literary forms as deference to the received wisdom and genres of the past were challenged by modern epistemology, social contract theory, and the rise of the English novel. Much of this intellectual ferment kept coming back to a fundamental question, one that we continue to grapple with today: What does it mean to be human? This seminar will explore philosophical and literary texts of the British Enlightenment, including Locke's *Essay*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Wollstonecraft's *Vindications*, and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, to see how they answered the question and consider how we might answer it today. Cross-listed with ENG 335R and PHI 365R.

Instructors & Time: Jan-Erik Jones & Dallin Lewis, MWF 1:30–2:20 p.m.

HNR 395R 02 Compassion (3)

This seminar explores compassion from philosophical and psychological perspectives, examining its evolutionary roots, biological underpinnings, and profound impact on mental health and social functioning. For most people, both competitiveness and compassion come naturally, each playing a crucial role in our survival. However, compassion holds special significance for social creatures like humans, as we tend to praise compassionate acts and condemn cold-heartedness. We will explore questions such as: For whom do humans feel compassion? Can one have too much of it? How is compassion different from empathy or altruism? Is compassion a trait or a skill? Drawing from classical Greek and Chinese philosophy, classical Greek tragedy, contemporary psychology, and primatology, we will investigate the impact of compassion on human behavior, relationships, mental health, happiness, and society. Through readings, discussions, and experiential practices, students will gain a deeper understanding of compassion's role in personal growth, strong social connections, and positive societal change. Cross-listed with PHI 345R and PSY 375R.

Instructors & Time: John Armstrong & Alison Caldwell-Andrews, TTh 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

HNR 395R 03 Peacemaking (3)

Jesus said, “And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (3 Nephi 12:8; cp. Matt. 5:9). President Russell M. Nelson said, “True disciples of Jesus Christ are peacemakers” (April 2023 General Conference). To become a peacemaker, it helps to understand the causes of conflict among individuals and groups and to act in ways that produce reconciliation and belonging. In this seminar, we will discuss peacemaking research in primatology, social psychology, international relations, and Latter-day Saint scripture and will apply what we learn in a peacemaking project. Cross-listed with BUS 375R.

Instructors & Time: John Armstrong & Todd Brotherson, MWF 9:00–9:50 a.m.

Honors Thesis

SPRING 2025 BLOCK 2 (MARCH 7–MAY 8)

HNR 375R 01 Choosing a Thesis Topic (0.5)

Receiving University Honors at graduation requires the completion of a satisfactory honors thesis. This requirement is completed over a full academic year, but choosing a compelling and feasible research topic can be challenging. This brief course is focused entirely on helping honors students, especially juniors, identify an appropriate thesis topic. This course is not required for University Honors. Prerequisite: honors student.

Instructor & Time: Jeremiah John, M 1:30–2:20 p.m.

SPRING 2025 SEMESTER

HNR 497 01 Honors Thesis Research (1), *weekly time by mutual arrangement*

A particular honors thesis might require a preliminary period of research. This optional course allows an honors student to conduct that research under the supervision of a faculty member knowledgeable in the field. The student's research proposal must be approved by that faculty member and the honors program director before the semester begins. The student meets weekly with the faculty supervisor to report on progress. The course may be approved for one, two, or three credit hours, depending on the scale of the student's project. This course is not required for University Honors. Prerequisites: honors student, junior or senior class standing, consent of instructor, and consent of the honors program director.

Instructor: John Armstrong and a faculty member in the discipline of the thesis

HNR 498 01 Honors Thesis (2), *weekly time by mutual arrangement*

The honors thesis is the capstone of the honors student's college education. It is a student-driven, faculty-supervised, research-based thesis. The course may be a supervised independent study or cross-listed with a senior paper course, although the honors thesis is more in-depth and usually longer than a senior paper. The student completes weekly assignments and meets at least weekly with the faculty supervisor. The course may be approved for two or three credit hours, depending on whether it is an independent study or a course that meets three hours per week. This course is required for University Honors. Prerequisites: honors student, senior class standing, consent of instructor, and consent of honors program director.

Instructor: John Armstrong and a faculty member in the discipline of the thesis

For more information about the Honors Program, visit svu.edu/honors.

