

Fall 2025 Honors Courses



Focus Courses

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

FALL 2025 BLOCK 1 (AUG. 27–OCT. 15)

HNR 219R 01 Thoreau's *Walden* (0.5)

First published in 1854, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* has inspired generations of readers around the world. His love of nature, Transcendentalism, and a contemplative life have led many to self-reflection and a desire to know what truly matters. As Thoreau himself famously wrote, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life ... and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. ... I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.”

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

HNR 219R 02 Jesus Christ and the Great O Antiphons (0.5)

Who is this Christ? Liturgical texts from the sixth century called the “Great O Antiphons” define who he is and what he was doing from creation through Christmas, as seen by early theologians. Their seven titles, drawn from Jewish backgrounds, reflect, and even influenced, Christian tradition ever since, notably in the hymn “O come, O come, Emmanuel.” Our textbook will be Prof. Cox's new study of the topic.

Instructor & Time: David Cox, W 1:30–2:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 03 King's *Strength to Love* (0.5)

Strength to Love is a collection of speeches and sermons by the late American civil rights icon and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Martin Luther King, Jr. It highlights King's philosophy of non-violence and his belief in the power of love to overcome hate and prejudice. Through his powerful words and personal anecdotes, King inspires us to look within ourselves and find the courage and determination to stand for what is right and to contribute towards a better and more just world.

Instructor & Time: Michael Gibbons, T 3:30–4:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 04 Poetry of Emily Dickinson (0.5)

Emily Dickinson is one of America's most distinctive and prolific poets, a thoughtful philosopher, and a brilliant Romantic ironist. Dickinson wrote nearly 2,000 poems but published few, opting instead to revisit and revise her works throughout her lifetime. Keeping this dynamic of self-revision in mind, we will consider her engagement with faith and doubt, nature, art, consciousness, death and the unknown, light and darkness, and inspiration and creativity in her poetic oeuvre. We will also note the special impact of her room, her education, and her garden on her work.

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

FALL 2025 BLOCK 2 (OCT. 16–DEC. 15)

HNR 219R 05 Cicero's *On Moral Ends* (0.5)

In the year before his assassination, the Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.) wrote about philosophical questions that had interested him ever since he had heard, in his twenties, the lectures of the Academic skeptic Philo of Larissa and his dissenting pupil, Antiochus of Ascalon. In *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* (*On the Ends*

of Goods and Evils), Cicero discusses the prominent ethical theories of his day, which centered on happiness. The Epicureans held that the goal is to live pleasantly, but Cicero doubted that this gave proper place to virtue and friendship. The Stoics held that the goal is to live virtuously, but Cicero questioned their refusal to call “good” some things that people naturally pursue, such as health, social status, and property. Some Platonists were willing to call such things “good” while holding that living virtuously was enough to make one happy, but Cicero wondered if the virtuous rich person is any happier than the virtuous poor person. As characters, Cicero's friends explain their preferred theories before being subjected to Cicero's withering criticisms. We readers rethink our own conceptions of happiness along the way.

Instructor & Time: John Armstrong, Th 8:30–9:20 a.m.

HNR 219R 06 Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (0.5)

The 1905 essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is the sociologist Max Weber's most famous argument and a classic text of modern social science. Though misunderstood as a simplistic argument that Protestants are stingy workhorses, Weber's analysis shows how religious ideas can have profound effects on the worldly plane of economics, even contrary to the intentions of religious innovators. This book is also one of the great accounts of the modern world: Weber argues that while our age was founded in part by Christian faith, it is now a time of disenchantment, a “shell as hard as steel” from which “spirit has fled.” In asking whether, in the future, “new prophets will emerge,” Weber invites us to consider how secular the modern world really is, and what spiritual possibilities it offers us.

Instructor & Time: Jeremiah John, M 2:30–3:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 07 Camus's *The Plague* (0.5)

Albert Camus's 1947 novel, *The Plague*, tells the story of a fictional epidemic of bubonic plague in the port city of Oran in what was then French Algeria. Those of us who experienced the Covid pandemic can identify with many of the conditions and emotions of the residents who endured fear, loss, anger, boredom, isolation, shortages, and a myriad of other irritations and dangers associated with living in the quarantined city. Like those trapped in Oran, we probably witnessed a range of official and individual responses to the crisis. It is an engaging tale on its face. But Camus also intended this story to serve as an allegory for humanity's responses to fascism—from denial, to theological explanations, to despair, to the resolute efforts of the Resistance against what seemed to be impossible odds. Finally, as we follow the various characters in the novel, we are invited to explore the choices that exist for us as we encounter evil in all its manifestations.

Instructor & Time: Lora Knight, M 12:30–1:20 p.m.

HNR 219R 08 James's *Psychology* (0.5)

William James's *Psychology: The Briefer Course* offers a foundational exploration of the human mind, covering topics such as consciousness, emotion, habit, and will. Often referred to as the “Father of American Psychology,” James stands prominent in the growth of the study of psychology. This text, as a condensed version of his monumental two-volume *Principles of Psychology*, provides a more accessible entry point into James's groundbreaking ideas, which continue to resonate with readers today. We will delve into James's pragmatic approach to psychology, examining his insights on the stream of consciousness, the role of habit in behavior, and the dynamic interplay between mind and body. Students will engage in close readings of the text, participate in

thoughtful discussions, and explore the enduring relevance of James's work to contemporary psychological thought and everyday life.

Instructor & Time: Alan Whitehead, W 8:00–8:50 a.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.

FALL 2025 SEMESTER

HNR 395R 01 Public Monuments and Memorials (3)

Political institutions are built to last. But out of stone, metal, and earth, nations and states also build enduring physical objects: to commemorate, to celebrate, and to mourn. Some, like the Mausoleum of Augustus or the Pyramids at Giza, seem to be attempts at immortality: great vehicles that turn rulers into gods. Others like the Lincoln Memorial represent more chastened triumphs: the celebration of a great leader and high ideals, tinged with the memory of civil war and the difficult end to the crime of slavery. Still others, like the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, attempt to combine sorrow with reconciliation, like a "scar that heals." This course considers the artistic and political meaning of national monuments and memorials: among the most tangible and yet also most symbolic features of the political landscape. Cross-listed with ART 375R and POL 375R.

Instructors & Time: Jeremiah John & Barbara Crawford, MWF 10:00–10:50 a.m.

HNR 395R 02 Monsters and Magic in the Medieval World (3)

Medieval thinkers used monsters to embody their fears or anxieties, demonstrate the limits of personal or group identity, express existential or category crises, and push beyond the limits of accepted knowledge and acceptable behavior. Ranging from vampires to draugr to dragons, from witches to djinn to demons, we will examine the rich variety of category-defying and anxiety-embodying creatures that inhabited the medieval imagination. Following our medieval authors who were rarely interested in debating the existence of monsters or of magic as such, we will ask two important questions: what role or function did these monsters play in the minds of these medieval thinkers, and what do these monsters reveal about the society that thought about them? We will examine textual and artifact evidence from medieval Europe, North Africa, and West Asia (ca. 500–1500) that includes historical records, philosophical and scientific treatises, medical records, architecture, manuscript illustration, and much more, allowing us to understand the medieval world as it was seen and experienced by those who lived in it and how cultures may be understood through the monsters they create. Cross-listed with HIS 335R.

Instructor & Time: Andrew Sorber, TR 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

Honors Thesis

FALL 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

Requirements for University Honors

... study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people.

— Doctrine & Covenants 90:15

To graduate with University Honors:

1. Complete at least six honors focus courses (HNR 219R). 3 credit hours.
2. Complete a course in calculus (MAT 241, 242, 341, or 344) according to placement by the mathematics program coordinator or demonstrate intermediate ability in a second language by completing a fourth-semester foreign language course such as FRE 202, GRK 202, LAT 202, or SPN 202 or by passing an examination. 3–12 credit hours.
3. Complete at least one honors seminar (HNR 395R). 3 credit hours.
4. Complete an honors thesis (HNR 498). 2–3 credit hours.
5. Earn a grade of at least a B in all HNR courses to be counted toward University Honors.
6. Earn a cumulative GPA of at least 3.30 at the time of graduation.

The Honors Program is open to all SVU students. For more information, visit svu.edu/honors.

