

Commonwealth Honors College Courses

As a University of Massachusetts Amherst student, you'll choose from among the 90 academic majors a large research university offers. As a member of Commonwealth Honors College, you'll enjoy the small classes, individual academic counseling, and strong sense of community a college provides.

In honors classes, you'll engage directly with faculty and peers in critical analysis and compelling dialogue. Limited to 25 students, these classes will challenge you to consider others' perspectives and then formulate and defend your own views. In-depth readings, oral presentations, group projects, field research, and other modes of learning will make for stimulating intellectual experiences.

Honors courses seamlessly integrate into your major, minor, certificate program, and General Education requirements. Students from all academic disciplines successfully meet the demands of both Commonwealth Honors College and their majors, and honors courses may be applied to General Education requirements. Most honors students easily negotiate multiple requirements and find that the honors curriculum complements and enhances their chosen field of study.

Honors 201H

The content of "Ideas that Change the World" is wide ranging but is united by the course's theme: great achievements in human thought. Ranging from Plato to Rachel Carson to Gandhi, the texts for the course put students in conversation with great intellectual figures, to learn from, agree with and disagree with. The point is for students to dive deeply into the texts and develop their passion for exploring big ideas. [Find out more](#)

Honors 391AH



Honors courses are about interaction

The honors experience is about engaging you, the student, in the learning process.

Honors courses are learner-centered, meaning that you aren't just here to receive facts; as an honors student, you'll participate in class discussions and small group work, sharing your own point of view.

Honors courses depend upon your voice and what you can add to the conversation.

Honors 391AH is a one-credit seminar in which students explore a specific topic in depth. Topics in these seminars are chosen by their professors and range from exploring the neurological connection between mind and body, to examining ancient engineering techniques, to investigating the complexities of Haiti. Every section is open to students of any major, and advanced knowledge of the topic is not necessary. While the subject matter of each section is different, the unifying goal is for honors students to have an engaging experience with a faculty member in a very small class on a topic that the professor is passionate about. [Find out more](#)

General education and elective honors courses

Gen Eds and elective honors courses introduce honors students to some of the major themes and approaches of various domains of human thought. They also engage them in understanding and evaluating the consequences of their choices and the implications of their actions. CHC values the gen ed experience greatly and encourages honors students to take gen eds as honors courses.

Discipline-based honors courses

Faculty members take many approaches when designing an honors version of a course. Common characteristics of honors courses are small class size, increased pace, graduate-level readings, lots of discussion, and a learner-centered approach, meaning that students are co-creators of their educational experience. Honors students are often eager participants in such a challenging and engaging format.

Honors research

Research is the culmination of the honors curriculum. When you pursue research activities in your major, you will be drawing upon the knowledge and skills you have developed over your time in the honors college. Thinking early and deeply about potential areas of research can be very helpful later on. Sophomore and junior honors students should familiarize themselves with faculty research to find potential good matches for their thesis or project committee. Students should use the resources available at <https://www.honors.umass.edu/research> to help them plan and carry out their research.

Honors is not just a list of requirements

While a list is a convenient way to explain what is expected of CHC students, there is much more to the honors curriculum than checking off boxes. Each honors course is an opportunity to



engage with course material in a special way. Honors courses encourage participation and consideration of material critically rather than passively.

Students should make the most of these special courses as they progress toward graduation.

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