

Course Overview

The University Honors Program experience provides its students a formative academic experience in a holistically developmental environment. This course will help students understand and specifically translate these experiences into the “real world.” Through an intentionally sequenced five-part series, students will give shape to the substance of their academic and personal lives and reflect on the character and meaning of their future work. Students will emerge from this course with both concrete professional skills and philosophical insights to aid in the job search or graduate school application process.

This is an alternative course format, intended to give self-starting Honors students a significant amount of autonomy for personal exploration and development. The class contact hours are therefore achieved through: five (5) 2.5 hour formal class sessions; two (2) guided sessions with a career development specialist; one (1) meeting with a Fellowship Advisor and/or Honors staff member; and one (1) meeting with a staff member from Mission and Ministry or the Center for Community Service and Engagement.

Honors Credit

Students who successfully complete the HR4860 course will earn one (1) “out-of-class” Honors credit, which will be documents on participants’ transcripts as SLU credit. Therefore, students will be billed for HR4860 enrollment if they exceed 18 enrolled hours.

Participant Guidelines

1. Attendance and active engagement at each session throughout the semester. Because this is a condensed course layout, it is imperative that you attend every session. If you have more than one absence, your final letter grade will be reduced by one half letter grade for each missed session or meeting. Participation points are a significant part of your grade and you are expected to come to class prepared to participate in discussions and class activities. Participation is a combination of offering your thoughts, opinions, and insights in class, as well as actively and appropriately participating in class activities.
2. Individual conversations with a Career Development Specialist.
3. A conference with Honors Director, Assistant Director, or Scholarship Advisor, as appropriate to students’ interests.
4. Individual conversation with staff from Mission and Ministry or Center for Service and Community Engagement.
5. Timely completion of formal written assignments, which include:
 - a. Résumé of educational, extra-curricular, and work experiences (1-2 pages)
 - b. Autobiographical narrative essay (8-10 pages), including 1-page prospectus
 - c. Post-session reflection papers which include references to text (2 pages each)
6. Completion of reading assignments corresponding to each session

Course Content

Session 1: Understanding Your Story

When you graduate from SLU, you will have amassed meaningful curricular and co-curricular experiences that have shaped your character and talents. How will you remember your time at SLU (in the Honors Program, in your major, in your campus involvement) and relate your experiences to others? By taking stock of our lives and the people, experiences, and ideas that comprise it, we can begin to identify themes that compose our own life story. Thoughtfully crafted life stories may organize our scattered experiences and, perhaps, provide a narrative that shapes who we are and the decisions we will make about who we become.

Session 2: Vocational Discernment

By the time SLU students reach their senior year, they have often identified a basic career plan. However, considering SLU's Jesuit mission, a paid occupation may not represent the ultimate end to which students are called. This workshop considers the possibility that we have multiple "callings" in life, and it encourages students to be thoughtful about how they define their vocation, both in terms of their career and their personal life. In light of the personal exploration achieved through the narrative autobiography, we will next consider questions such as, "Must my job be my primary source of my identity?", "Is a balanced life possible and preferable to a life focused on work?", and "Are some lives more significant than others?" This session will also compel students to consider how their developing sense of vocation "fits" in the context of prospective career, graduate schools, and competitive scholarships and fellowship opportunities. This session will be co-taught with a faculty member from Theology.

Session 3: Articulating Your Story through the Resume/ CV

Honors students complete their undergraduate careers with an impressive set of experiences and credentials. The challenge many students face, however, is relating this experience to prospective employers and graduate school admission committees in a manner that is concise and relevant. You've had a distinctive academic experience, but how do you translate this work into a tangible product that you can carry into a job or graduate school interview? Additionally, how do you examine your many talents to determine 1) whether you should follow these talents and 2) how to represent them best on your professional correspondence? This workshop will address these pressing and practical questions. This session will be led by a Career Development Specialist.

Session 4: Preparing for the Interview

You've examined your story and your talents. You understand how your personal mission fits within the mission of your prospective employer or school, and you have translated your varied experiences into compelling professional correspondence. Now, how do you discuss your work and your Honors experience in ways that resonate with employers and graduate admission committees? When and how do you invoke the lessons you've learned in your Crossroads class, your cross-listed seminars, and your senior capstone experience? Moreover, how do you confidently and tactfully apply your entire SLU experience in an interview to represent your best self? This session will discuss the daunting challenges and abundant opportunities of the professional interview experience. The session will also chart the ambiguous terrain of etiquette (with its uncertain and changing conventions) in interview and other professional settings. This session will be led by a Career Development Specialist.

Session 5: Closing

Our final group class meeting will help pull together the themes from the previous four class sessions as well as the meetings with the Career Development Specialists, Fellowship advisor, Community Engagement staff, and Honor staff. Each student will give a short presentation on one selected theme from their autobiographical narrative to the class, which will serve as practice for articulating your life story to others. To close, each student will create an Individual Development Plan to map out the steps s/he will take for the remainder of his/ her undergraduate career.

UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM