

Nisbet Honors Program

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The Nisbet Honors Program began in 2000 when Converse alumna Marian McGowan Nisbet '62 and her husband Olin established an endowment to support a full Honors Program.

The mission of the Nisbet Honors Program is to offer academically gifted students the challenge and community in which they may grow to their full potential. The Honors Program provides priority registration as well as opportunities to do independent research with faculty mentors, to take honors courses with other academically gifted students, to meet nationally known visiting scholars, to receive funding for study-travel, and to meet socially to discuss intellectually challenging topics. The program is designed to prepare academically gifted students for strong graduate programs in their chosen fields, for success in professional positions, and for balanced lives.

An unusual feature of the Nisbet Honors Program is its emphasis on interdisciplinary learning. Our interdisciplinary seminars have two faculty from different fields in the classroom throughout the entire course. While learning how different disciplines approach the tasks of collecting and interpreting evidence, students learn to make sense of our complex world.

Admission to the program is competitive and is by invitation only. A select number of entering freshmen are invited into the program based on their outstanding high school performance and their potential for success in college. Students who do well once they have begun their studies at Converse are also considered for the program; freshmen must complete at least 12 hours at Converse to be invited to apply.

Requirements

To complete the Nisbet Honors Program and be recognized at graduation, students must satisfy the following requirements in terms of academic achievement and coursework.

Achievement

The student must continue to perform well in his/her academic courses. Students who consistently achieve a GPA below 3.2 or who receive below a B- in two or more honors courses may be asked to leave the program. Students may not graduate from the Honors Program with a GPA below 3.2 and may not receive credit toward program completion for an honors course for which they receive a grade below C-.

Coursework

Because the Nisbet Honors Program is interdisciplinary and aims to give students a broad base of knowledge, students will not be allowed to take all of their coursework in only one department or with only one professor.

A student must take the following courses:

- **Freshman Honors Seminar** (or, if the student enters after the freshman fall, another honors course to replace it)
- **Interdisciplinary Honors Seminar** Students who successfully complete Freshman Honors course take these small interdisciplinary courses. Professors from different fields team teach these courses. Recent offerings include "Mental Illness through Musical Theater" and "The 1960's in History and Music."
- **Junior Honors Seminar** (HON 399H) One credit, pass/fail, open to upperclassmen, with priority given to juniors and seniors.

- **Either a Senior Honors Thesis** (see below) **or two more honors experiences** (such as two additional honors courses, an honors directed independent study, an honors module or some combination of the above). Generally only one honors directed independent study or honors module counts toward program completion.

Senior Honors Thesis

Completing a senior honors thesis allows a student to receive honors in the major area. It is one way that a student may complete the Nisbet Honors Program. Because of the distinction that honors in field conveys and the effort required, only exceptionally qualified and extremely committed students should attempt an honors project. To qualify, students must have an overall GPA of 3.25 and a GPA of 3.50 in the major field by the end of the Fall Term of the junior year.

The thesis enables qualified students to pursue additional independent and intensive work within their major area. Generally, the project will be a research paper that follows the discipline's guidelines for superior research. In creative fields, such as music, theater, and applied art, creative projects are appropriate. Interdisciplinary projects are also encouraged.

The project should be a substantial project planned so that it can be done in the time available using the resources available. The major evaluative criterion is the quality rather than the amount of work. A research paper should generally be from 20-40 pages. Departments using performance standards should establish criteria that require a substantial project of superior quality.

Because each department may have additional guidelines which supplement and further define the procedures and qualifications for honors work, no later than Fall Term of their junior year, honors students interested in an honors thesis must consult a faculty adviser and a Nisbet Honors Program co-director for additional guidance. Detailed guidelines and deadlines must be followed and are available from a program co-director. Music students should also consult with Petrie School of Music faculty.

Nisbet Honors Program students completing an Honors In Field project should register for six hours of "honors" or "thesis" credit during the senior year (usually split as three hours in fall and three hours in spring).

Many departments have a designated research course for this purpose; assigning grades for the thesis/honors courses is left to the department.

Required Courses

Late entrants must substitute 199H with another course.

Item #	Title	Credits
199H	FRESHMAN HONORS SEMINAR	3-4
299H	INTERDISCIPLINARY HONORS COURSE	3-4
HON 399H	JUNIOR HONORS SEMINAR	1
Sub-Total Credits		7-9

Electives

In addition to the required courses, students must choose one of the elective options below. Elective options consist of 6 - 8 credits.

Item #	Title	Credits
	Two Additional Honors Courses	6-8
	An Honors course and a DIS course	6-8
	Honors Module and an Honors Course	6-8
	Honors Thesis, two semesters	6-8
	Honors Thesis and Honors Module	6-7
	Sub-Total Credits	6-8
	Total Credits	13-17