

**OZARKS TECHNICAL  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**HONORS PROGRAM**

## **Honors Program Mission**

The OTC Honors Program provides academically motivated high-achieving students who conduct themselves in a responsible and respectful manner the opportunity to engage with a community of scholars through a variety of individualized or learner-directed experiences. These experiences may include collaboration with instructors and peers, enhanced or additional learning environments, and real-world experiences both in the classroom and beyond to explore learning that is broader, deeper, unique, or more complex than traditional educational experiences.

## **Honors Contract Explanation**

An Honors Contract is a unique individualized learner-centered educational experience where, based on need, a student may enroll in a regular OTC course/section and with the assistance of the course/section instructor complete additional readings/writings/presentations/etc. in the course to earn honors credit for that non-honors course/section. These additional “honors assignments” must be designed and agreed upon by the student and instructor in that non-honors course and submitted to the Honors Office in the form of the Honors Contract Application by the student no later than the deadline of the end of business at the end of the third week of the semester in which the course occurs.

These agreed upon/submitted/approved additional honors assignments as noted in the Honors Contract Application are the “Honors Contract” and the awarding of honors credit in the course is dependent upon a positive end of semester evaluation of the student and their work by the course instructor, in addition to the requirement to earn a grade of “A” or “B” in the course.

A faculty member may decline to participate in an Honors Contract. Faculty members who choose to participate in a student’s Honors Contract in their course are provided a \$100 stipend as a “thank you”.

Honors Contract Application approval is at the sole discretion of the Director of Honors.

The Honors Contract option is designed and available for students, as needed, who could not otherwise complete the required number of traditional honors courses to fulfill the requirements of the OTC Honors Program.

For more information on applying for an Honors Contract, please contact us at [Honors@otc.edu](mailto:Honors@otc.edu).

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## **Honors Student Conduct Code**

**Each student who enrolls in an honors course, or submits an application for an honors contract, is a part of the OTC Honors Program and thus agrees to the Honors Program Student Conduct code presented below.**

- I agree to abide by the policies of Ozarks Technical Community College as well as the Honors Program, and guidance from OTC faculty, staff, and/or the Honors Program Director.
- I agree that removal from the OTC Honors Program and/removal from an honors contract or honors course may occur due to behavior, grades, or lack of participation at the sole discretion of the Honors Program Director.
- I agree that that I am an adult and that being a member of the OTC Honors Program and/or being a participant in an honors course or honors contract is a privilege, not an entitlement. My words and actions will reflect this understanding. I am responsible to the OTC Honors Program, OTC, and myself to be an upstanding citizen and student.
- I agree to exhibit behavior indicative of an Honors Student at all times, both inside and outside of the classroom and confines of OTC. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action up to and including immediate dismissal from the OTC Honors Program and all honors courses or honors contract and loss of those privileges in the future.
- I agree to treat all members of the OTC Honors Program, OTC students, and OTC employees with respect at all times. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action up to and including immediate dismissal from the OTC Honors Program and/or removal from all honors courses and honors contracts at the sole discretion of the Honors Program Director.
- I agree that that honors courses and/or honors contracts will only be as valuable as I make them. It is my responsibility to put in the time and effort to make this experience a worthwhile educational venture.
- I agree that an honors course or honors contract is more challenging than a traditional non-honors course and joining/completing this honors course or honors contract and/or completing the OTC Honors Program will require a significant commitment of time and effort on my part.
- I agree that failure to comply with any of the guidelines provided herein will result in my removal from the OTC Honors Program and may result in being immediately dropped from all honors courses.

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**Honors Contract Application**

**Complete/sign and return to the Honors Office or [Honors@otc.edu](mailto:Honors@otc.edu) no later than the end of the third week of the semester in which the course occurs. Late Honors Contract application will not be accepted.**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID #: \_\_\_\_\_

Course/Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The design of an Honors Contract is crucial to ensuring that a student exceeds the expectations of a regular course section and attains the level of academic rigor necessary to receive honors credit through individualized learner-centered educational experiences. The elements listed below should be above-and-beyond the requirements of the regular section of the course. Furthermore, the elements listed below should not figure into the student's regular course grade, but rather are taken into consideration solely as requirements for receiving honors credit for the course, giving the student the ability to "drop" the Honors Contract if needed and still maintain a traditional course grade, thus not impeding their progress toward an Associate degree.

The traditional Honors Contract approach includes an additional 100-200 pages of reading as well as a 10-15 page research paper and 10-20 minute class presentation. Ultimately, the instructor of the course is the subject matter expert and alternate reading/assignment obligations are welcome suggestions to make the experience individualized and learner-centered based on the course content.

Additional Readings to be completed for Honors Contract (please use an additional page if needed)

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Additional Assignments/Projects to be completed for Honors Contract (please use an additional page if needed)

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## **Honors Contract Philosophy for Instructors**

I am very thankful that you are considering or have already chosen to help an Honors Program student complete an honors contract in your course/section. The honors contract process has proven to be a useful tool to help our students complete the Honors Program requirements and earn Honors Program distinction on their Associate degree. Without your help, many of our students would not be able to complete the requirements for the Honors Program. Below, please find information related to the honors contract process, as well as my philosophy regarding the design and evaluation of honors contracts.

- You and the student then have until the end of the third week of the semester to finalize the Honors Contract Application. When filling out the Honors Contract Application, the big thing you'll want to include is any additional assignments/readings/projects the student will complete to receive honors credit in the course. The design of these assignments is completely up to you. Give them enough to engage them but not so much as to overwhelm them. Don't add so much coursework that it makes it into an upper-level course (i.e., adding so much that it turns the workload of a 100-level course into a 200-level course) – that is neither good for you nor them.
- Focus on growth and exploration. Realize this may be the student's first semester in the Honors Program and first honors classroom experience; have high standards, but know there may be struggles, and work with the student to help them grow. This entire process is focused on growth, not necessarily the final output. Keep your expectations in line with a good freshman/sophomore student who is seeking to explore and learn more. I always worry that instructors expect honors upper-level work/output from their students and that simply isn't a reasonable expectation at times. My freshman year in college, I certainly didn't complete anything close to senior year quality work, but honors did help me grow and explore so that my senior level work was better than it would have otherwise been, by far. You're a step in that process, the student is getting honors credit for the extra work, above and beyond other students, that they and you designed and agreed upon in the course.
- Be clear in the Honors Contract Application. I want the Honors Contract Application to serve as a very straightforward guide that both you and the student agree to prior to the deadline. I want everyone involved to understand the workload and expectations.
- Know that we have a variety of students that excel in a variety of areas, but they may not specifically excel in your course subject – focus on growth. We have some students that excel at Math and are taking Calculus III as a freshman, but can't find a way to pass an English 101 class. We do our best to round them out, but each one often has one or more areas of talent, usually accompanied by one or more areas of deficiency. We don't just try to get them to excel in their strengths, but as importantly if not more so, we work to get them to face their challenges and overcome them. Instead of focusing on a set benchmark for all honors students across the board in all areas, we instead focus on growth.

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Sometimes they grow, sometimes they do not, they rarely grow as quickly as I would like, but slow and steady wins the race. The path to honors distinction on a student's degree is a long and winding one and through it we focus on continued growth. This growth ultimately allows them to meet the outcome that is expected of an honors student, but it often takes a lot of coaching to get there. I think our honors students all have the capacity to be exceptional; some produce exceptional results early, while others are working toward it and need a little push to grow at times. My goal is that if you see an honors student in their first semester vs. the same student in their fourth or fifth you will see a very different student, and one that has gained much more than just answers to remember, but instead has learned how to seek out problems to solve and how to solve them.

- The extra work proposed on the Honors Contract Application depends on you and the student. There are very generalized guidelines on the Honors Contract Application (100-200 pages of reading, 10-15 page research paper, 10-20 minute classroom presentation). These are very basic and generic guidelines simply to get the conversation started and the assignments/readings/projects you choose for the student is your decision and should be in the best interest of the student and the course.
  - As an example, below are the contract course specifications that have previously used for an Honors Contract in a COM 200 course I teach:
    - Read the book, “Never Split the Difference: Negotiating as if your life depended on it” by Chris Voss (by the end of September). Write a 5+ page reflection/analysis paper on the text. You are welcome to purchase a copy of the book (paperback roughly \$19.80 on Amazon) or a copy of the book is available in the Honors Program library in ICE 352.
    - Watch the Movie “Arrival” and write a 2+ page reflection/analysis paper describing how the movie relates to the “Sapir=Whorf” hypothesis (found in the textbook) (by the end of October).
    - Read the book, “The Like Switch: An Ex-FBI Agent's Guide to Influencing, Attracting, and Winning People Over” by Jack Schafer with Marvin Karlins. Write a 3+ page reflection/analysis paper on the text (by the end of November). You are welcome to purchase a copy of the book (paperback roughly \$12 on Amazon) or a copy of the book is available in the Honors Program library in ICE 352 for checkout.
    - Pick a set of concepts from the textbook (any concepts/any chapter: i.e. – steps of relationship formation) and illustrate those concepts through your favorite movie or sitcom. Write a 3+ page analysis paper illustrating the concepts and their overlay in the movie/sitcom. (by the last class day of the semester 12/14/20).
      - Additional Reading/Listening: Apprx. 600+ pages

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- Additional Watching: Apprx. 3+ hours
- Additional Writing: Apprx. 13+ pages
  - As you can see there's quite a bit of work in my proposed COM 200 Honors Contract, but it's all more interesting popular culture related work, and at least historically students have enjoyed doing it. If they're going to do extra work, I want it to be course related, but also interesting for both me and them. Additionally, it is extremely important to space assignments out throughout the semester and include deadlines.
- I think the contract course work, content, and experience should be an enjoyable opportunity for both you and the student. I'm not looking for a masterpiece – after all these are freshman/sophomore students not graduate students. Instead, I am focused on growth and exploration. If we can get them to grow now, they will be capable of producing masterpieces down the road.
- Many instructors ask, “How do I grade the extra honors contract related assignments.” Let's start by throwing out the grade aspect. As the honors contract components of the course do not relate to the student's overall grade in the course (that is they earn a course grade independently and the honors contract is only to solely add honors distinction to that earned grade). I try not to frame things in regard to grades in order to avoid confusion. Instead, I choose to refer to papers/assignments as average and above average, and that determination is all based upon the expectations provided by the instructor. If the assignment in question has standard 100-level expectations, I would anticipate that an honor's student should exceed an average outcome, that is they should produce above average “A” work. If the student is provided expectations more in line with a 200-level course for an assignment, I would anticipate they would produce an average “B” level work – as simply meeting the expectations of a course level above is in fact above average. Additionally, I always pose this question to myself in tough circumstances, “If I gave this assignment/these expectations to the average student in my course how would they perform?” I set that as the benchmark and expect honors students to outperform it. If they are taking on extra work, outperforming the average student, and making improvement/growth, those things combined in my opinion are satisfactory. Being satisfactory on those things through time and repetition leads students to ultimately excel. Do I hope they will initially exceed this benchmark, certainly, and they often do, depending on the class, student, etc. When they move on to 200 level courses the expectation gets a little higher, 300 level even higher, and 400 level much higher. It's a progressive movement down a path to excel. They've got to start somewhere, and this student may have very well started with you, possibly during their first semester at OTC, in an honors contract.
- Please do not forget that none of the work a student completes for the honors contract should factor into their course grade overall. Think of the course and the honors contract as separate entities. They get a regular grade in the course based on the regular assignments that all students in the course

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complete. Then, they separately do those extra honors contract related assignments solely for honors credit on their regular grade in the course.

- I have a philosophy that honors students should be proactive, but they do often need a nudge, and an honors student waiting until the last minute to turn in an assignment is often the norm rather than the exception, especially early in their academic career. This is unfortunate and something that we do strive to help them improve upon. We also lose a few students along the way because they won't improve upon it. Many honors students have been able to wait until the last minute their entire lives and then turn in something that is still better than most of their peers and gets good marks for that work. This previously developed bad habit all too often, unfortunately, creates a pattern of procrastination. The first time they do this and don't do well, often the first semester or two in college, can be a wake-up call if approached correctly and can save them a lot of future heartache academically and professionally. Though disappointing, as it would be with any student, these can be used as phenomenal teaching moments. Being an honors student doesn't necessarily mean that you're the smartest person in the room; it means that you're willing to grow and learn – which in a round-about way often means you are or will be the wisest person in the room, but not always at first. I am less interested in a student writing a phenomenal honors level paper and more interested that through honors courses a student learns how to write an honors level paper and improves. Especially in 100 level courses, it is often as much about the process as it is about the outcome.
- I often get questions related to using guidelines from other colleges/universities for your contract course assignments/expectations, as contract course instructors seek out standards/expectations for their student's contract course work. I am always a little hesitant of guidelines from other colleges/universities without knowing their exact origin/content. If those guidelines are specifically tailored to a 100-level intro honors course at another institution, then they are usually acceptable. However, I have found that college/university writing standards provided publicly for honors courses/students are often in regard to honors seminar or upper-level courses (junior/senior level), which certainly would be tough to accept as an expectation in a 100-level honors course. If they are found on the general honors site of a college/university, it is usually the expectations of upper-level students (juniors/seniors) and the aspirational goal/training model for lower level students (freshmen/sophomore). The classes in-between are used to get them to that level.
- At the end of the semester, you complete a quick 4 question evaluation form on the honors student's performance on the honors related assignments. If you run into issues throughout the course related to the honors assignments, please let me know, but my hope is that the student will do so as well. If issues occur regarding the student's performance, I always want to know sooner rather than later, in hopes that I can intervene when needed and help get things back on track. Finding out that a student is struggling with their honors contract in the last few days of the semester gives me limited options to help.

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