

Honors First-Year Experience

In anticipation of the requirement that all College of Charleston students participate in the First-Year Experience offerings, the Honors College has developed a plan to provide its students with a parallel experience that integrates the objectives and goals of the broader FYE initiative while remaining responsive to Honors students' unique curricular needs and extra-curricular opportunities. In devising this plan for a comparable first-year experience in the Honors College, we have drawn upon the original QEP document regarding the First Year Experience that was approved by the Faculty Senate (refer to attached document), and also looked to best practices in the Honors Colleges and Programs of peer institutions.

As a result, we propose that the First-Year Experience for honors students be structured as an Honors College Learning Community.

All incoming freshmen to the Honors College will take three honors courses:

- 1) Honors Academic Writing (unless they place out of it*)
- 2) Honors seminar reserved explicitly for freshmen

*Students who place out of Honors Academic Writing through AP/IB/Dual Credit will take a second Honors seminar or may choose to take one of the First-Year Seminars offered through the FYE program. These students will also take a designated section of Beyond George Street explicitly for students who are not in Honors 110.

*Beyond George Street (BGS) is a course for freshmen entering the Honors College at the College of Charleston (see attached course objectives). The course meets in the fall semester, one day each week for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Students receive 1 course credit. For students co-enrolled in Honors 110, some BGS assignments will be coordinated with 110 assignments. For students who place out of 110 and enroll in a two Honors seminars or a First-Year Seminar (approximately 50 of the 200 entering freshmen), special sections of BGS will be offered. In the attached FYE-QEP document, the creation of a separate 1-credit course is described. As this course has developed, we have strengthened the academic rigor and engagement of the course so that it better satisfies the needs of honors students.

These courses will not be formally linked as they are in the regular FYE Learning Communities - that is, the same cohort of students will not take linked sections of courses. Instead, the 200 students entering the Honors College will form a single cohort.

To foster a strong sense of community amongst this broad cohort, in addition to the courses designated above, students will be connected through a

1. A shared community engagement project
2. The opportunity to live together in the honors residence hall
3. A series of events planned specifically for honors freshmen
4. Shared advising.

Why this proposal is essential for honors students

- It acknowledges the natural living-learning community that exists in the Honors College. In addition to the fact that honors freshmen take three courses (Honors Academic Writing; one honors section of a science, social science, humanities, or business course; and BGS) as a cohort, approximately 60% of them live together in the honors residence hall. Additionally, they are all advised by two advisors who work collaboratively in the Honors College, and they participate in a series of academic and social events scheduled for students in the Honors College.
- The Honors BGS requirement ensures a cohesive academic experience that integrates students into the intellectual and social life of the Honors College and the College of Charleston, as well as guides them in the identification of opportunities (e.g., research, public service, internships) early enough so that they can fully prepare to take advantage of them. In specific terms, Honors BGS prepares students by:
 1. Introducing and incorporating them into the intellectual community of the Honors College
 2. Introducing them to three critical, high-impact learning experiences: meaningful community engagement, undergraduate research, and study abroad.
 3. Encouraging the development of portfolios that will be used as a basis for the intentional pursuit of the engaging, transformative, and nationally competitive opportunities that are expected of Honors College students.
 4. Providing an enhanced advising experience to ensure that honors students are on the right track academically from the start at CofC.
 5. Preparing them in general to take strategic and considered advantage of their academic experience
- From a logistical standpoint, Honors College students typically do not have room in their schedules for electives (i.e., First-Year Seminar course) in their first semester. They are already required to take Honors Academic Writing (4 credits) and an additional 3- or 4-hour honors course (honors science, humanities, social science, business) reserved for honors freshmen. Most take the Calculus course (4 credits) required for Honors students and a language (3 credits); many take two 4-credit science courses to begin satisfying pre-med requirements (more than 50% of students entering the Honors College are science majors). This 14-16 hour set of required/recommended courses does not leave room for an additional elective course.
- FYE Learning Communities typically do not fit the academic requirements of honors students and the scheduling parameters of honors students.
- Although the proposed Honors College Learning Community courses are not formally linked as they are in the First-Year Experience program, there is a formal link between BGS and Honors Academic Writing. All of the students in HONS 110 will also be in BGS, completing similar assignments and projects. Specifically, students in HONS 110 and BGS will all participate in a large-scale community engagement project managed by the Honors College. Furthermore, there are many opportunities for connection and collaboration within and among all of the courses designated for honors freshmen, in the residence hall, and through the academic and social programming that the Honors College offers.
- The peer mentors in BGS provide an important opportunity for new students to feel connected and nurtured in their transition to the College of Charleston. The peer mentors are well-trained to provide academic advising, feedback on elements of the portfolio, leadership in the community-engagement project, and emotional and social support to students.

- Other honors programs nationwide use a similar model for the honors first-year experience. We are following a recognized model used nationwide by Honors Programs and Colleges in schools such as Iowa State University, Kent State University, the University of Georgia, the University of Connecticut, the University of Florida, and the University of Alabama-Birmingham. These programs recognize the need for freshman experience courses designed specifically to address the academic aspirations and logistical requirements of Honors students.

Special Cases: Dealing with Transfer Students and Course Failures

The Honors Learning Community is structured to be in place the first semester of the freshman year and is an experience unique to CofC. Therefore, transfer credit is not possible. For students who place out of Hons 110 through AP/IB/dual credit, a special section of BGS will be offered. Regardless, all incoming honors students will take BGS in the first semester. For students who transfer into the Honors College after the first semester of their freshman year (4-5 students), BGS will not be required. If they were CofC students in the first semester, presumably they will have taken either a First-Year Seminar or Learning Community in the first semester. If they had planned to take a First-Year Seminar or Learning Community requirement second semester, they will still be required to do that. For students who transfer into the College in the sophomore year or beyond and are accepted into the Honors College (4-5 students per year), BGS will not be required (in alignment with the structure of the college-wide FYE program).

Students who fail BGS will be required to take a First-Year Seminar in the spring of their freshman year. If they fail the First-Year Seminar, they will be required to register for Learning Strategies in the fall of sophomore year (in alignment with the structure of the college-wide FYE program). Students who fail Honors Academic Writing will be required to re-take the course in fall of sophomore year if they are not dismissed from the Honors College. Students who fail the honors special topic seminar will be required to take another honors special topic seminar. In all cases of honors course failure, a student will be required to schedule a special session with an honors advisor to establish an academic probation plan.

Goals and Objectives of Honors Beyond George Street

Objective 1: BGS will introduce entering freshmen to honors faculty, staff, and students through a shared community engagement project. Using a service-learning approach, honors freshmen in both the BGS course and Honors 110 will participate in a cooperative, community-engagement activity that provides opportunities for leadership development, community outreach, team building, and reflection. In fall 2010, the project involved a literacy initiative that connected the College Reads! book selection—Greg Mortensen’s *Three Cups of Tea*—with a 3-day book festival and literacy activities in public schools. Students were divided into teams focused on various aspects of the initiative: outreach to public schools through a curriculum that engaged the main ideas of Mortensen’s book; humanitarian efforts through Mortensen’s *Pennies for Peace* program; and event planning, public relations and marketing for the Capital BookFest. At the culmination of the project, students wrote about their experiences in reflective essays and shared them in group discussions. Going forward, the community engagement project required by Honors College freshmen through BGS and Honors 110 will be structured in a similar manner.

Objective 2: BGS will engage students in personal reflection through writing assignments, small group discussion, and one-on-one mentoring. Across the semester, students write a series of reflective essays that help them identify their own intellectual interests and the pathways that will help them satisfy these areas of intellectual curiosity. In small groups and in one-on-one sessions with peers and faculty, they explore opportunities and build a sense of intellectual community that will form a strong foundation for their academic pursuits in the Honors College.

Objective 3: BGS will carefully guide students in the creation and development of a professional portfolio that they will build upon throughout their time at the College. The basic elements of the portfolio include an academic planning tool called the 4-year navigator; a reflective essay that addresses the student’s intellectual interests, the factors that have shaped these interests, and the student’s plans for directing these interests toward academic pursuits and career objectives; and a professional resume—a first draft that will be used as the basis to apply for internships, scholarships, study abroad programs, and, eventually, post-graduate education. Students are also encouraged to include in their portfolios other pieces of evidence (e.g., a paper written for a course, an abstract written for a conference presentation, a piece of artwork) that might be helpful in the pursuit of academic opportunities outside of the classroom, during the summer, and at the post-graduate level. They receive feedback both from faculty members (Academic Writing instructors and Honors College faculty) and from their peer mentors on these pieces. They are also encouraged to use the resources of the Writing Lab and the Career Center.

Objective 4: BGS will provide key peer-mentorship opportunities. For each section of the course, 4 upper-division honors students will serve as peer advisors, thus providing a unique chance for entering freshmen to draw from the experience and perspective of their peers. Each peer advisor is assigned to a group of 10 students with whom they work individually and in a group both during and outside of class. These peer advisors receive training during a 2-credit course in the spring semester each year. The training course, taught by the associate dean of the Honors College, incorporates all the information, tools, policies, and procedures that peer advisors would need to provide effective mentoring and guidance of the first-year honors students.

Objective 5: BGS will inspire connection and collaboration between honors students and faculty. To meet this objective, faculty from multiple disciplines are invited to spend a class period with the students through the “Life of the Scholar” series. During these meetings, the faculty member presents background on his or her scholarly work, shares with the students the ways in which

undergraduates collaborate in this work, and stimulates discussion among the class participants regarding the area of inquiry. The goal is to have honors students consider and discuss ideas simply because they are interesting and stimulate intellectual curiosity rather than because they will be required to remember them for a test or to write about them in a paper. This form of discussion reflects a core value of liberal education: learning for the sake of learning. For honors students, it introduces them to the level and style of intellectual inquiry that they will encounter throughout their time in the Honors College.

Honors BGS Scheduling and Staffing Plan

Five sections of the course are offered to accommodate the 200 entering freshmen in the Honors College. The Honors College Associate Dean serves as the faculty of record for all five sections. She/he is responsible for coordinating and teaching in the Life of the Scholar Series, for teaching the portfolio development portions of the course, for managing the community engagement project, and for supervising the peer advisors for the course. For each section, 4 upper-level honors students serve as peer advisors and discussion leaders, providing a unique opportunity for new students to become fully integrated into life in the Honors College. Also, the PAs allow for a division of the class into 4 advising and discussion groups that meet together during the designated class period and outside of class.

Beyond George Street
Honors FYE Learning Community Seminar
Fall 2011

Instructors:

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Briosha Sanders (Sophomore):
Matthew Gay (Sophomore):
Christine Heffron (Sophomore):
Megan Judd (Sophomore):
Lucia Mangione (Sophomore):
Jessica Dugan (Sophomore):
Meg Singleton (Sophomore):
Amanda Muirhead (Sophomore):
Sarah Veronis (Sophomore):
Anna Dierksheide (Sophomore):
Erika Tracey (Sophomore):
Hannah Albanesi (Junior):

Course Overview: A course offered to Honors Freshmen exclusively - provides a dynamic, interdisciplinary introduction to the life of a scholar and the fundamentals of the liberal arts and sciences experience in the Honors College at the College of Charleston. Class participants will discuss topics and experience events that vary from intellectual to practical. Collectively, across all sections of the class, students will participate in a large-scale 4-week community engagement project. Directed by the Associate Dean of the Honors College with the assistance of the Honors College Faculty Fellow and facilitated by 20 Honors College upper division students, this course

will introduce Honors freshman to outstanding faculty from across the campus, as well as to the opportunities and resources available to them at the College of Charleston and beyond. Through a series of reflective exercises and writing, students will formulate their ideas and strategies regarding potential majors, career paths, and life goals, culminating in the creation of a portfolio to be used throughout the college career. Students will bond as a learning community through collaborative assignments, small group discussion, and the community engagement project. BGS promises to be a stimulating, helpful, and compelling introduction to life in the Honors College!

Course Objectives

- To introduce students to the traditions of liberal education: learning for the simple joy of learning and intellectual development within a community of scholars
- To expose students to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary views on ideas or issues
- To introduce students to the life of the scholar by having faculty from multiple disciplines share their intellectual and practical analysis of an identified theme
- To have students experience the significance of community impact both at the local and global level through shared community outreach
- To discuss with students the academic purpose and expectations of the Honors College
- To integrate students into the intellectual and social life of the Honors College
- To create the opportunity for the development of mentoring relationships, both by faculty and peers, early in students' college experiences
- To form the foundation of a professional portfolio that includes course plans, plans for opportunities such as study abroad, internships, and research, and tools for successful pursuit of opportunities
- To give students introductory preparation for the professional world by exposing them to employer perspectives and resume building
- To expose students to the resources and opportunities available to them, particularly the Honors College, as well as beyond the boundaries of campus

Course Requirements:

Attendance: Attendance is required. Many required activities and assignments will be completed during scheduled class periods and will be dependent on your attendance. Resources made available during class will not necessarily be available outside of class.

Participation: Participation in all aspects of class is mandatory. You are expected to be actively engaged in class, to contribute meaningfully to discussions, and to display dedication and effort in exploring the class topics. Your level of participation will impact your overall grade in the course.

Advising Group Participation and Meetings: In many class periods, we will meet in small advising groups. Also, you will be asked to sign up for meetings with your peer advisor throughout the semester. Participation in the advising group discussions and attendance at the meetings is required.

Portfolio: Throughout the semester you will create a portfolio designed to benefit you throughout your college and professional career. There will be several required documents for your portfolio (described below); however, we will encourage you to add to your portfolio according to

your needs and interests. Because it is a semester long project, your portfolio will go through several revisions in response to peer edits, in-class workshops, outside input from Academic Writing instructors and Writing Lab staff, and feedback from ICE PAs and instructors.

- **4-year Navigator:** Every honors first-year student must complete and take a 4-year navigator to the honors advising appointment. The navigator assists students in preparing for their four years at the College of Charleston. We will spend class time discussing the best methods for long and short term planning on the navigator.
- **Resume:** You will generate a "draft" resume designed to fit an internship, job or competitive award of your choice. We will spend class time and advising time revising your resume.
- **Personal Essay:** You will write a one-to-two page single-spaced personal essay that reflects your emerging intellectual identity, academic aspirations, and plans for the future
- **Meet a Professor:** You will be asked to meet with one faculty member to discuss his/her work as a scholar and ways that students participate in it. For your portfolio, you will write a one-page summary of the faculty member's interests and ways that you might become involved in his or her research.
- **Handouts:** All resources handed out in class, such as brochures, information packets, and other helpful documents should be included in your portfolio.

Assigned Readings: You will be assigned short readings to complete in preparation for class discussion and exercises. These will generally be assigned one week in advance and will be made available electronically.

Oral Presentation: You will deliver a brief oral presentation during an assigned class period. In this presentation, you will summarize the content of an article from the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Economist or Scientific American. You should bring a copy of the first page of your article to turn in for full participation credit.

The College Reads!: *The Known World*, the College Reads! book by Edward P Jones is required reading for this class. If you have not done so already, you should complete the book by the second week of class. We will give you a set of discussion questions and will hold book discussions during and outside of class.

Community Engagement Project: You will be required to participate in a college-wide literacy project that is tied to *Known World* and several other literacy events around the city. You will have several options for how to engage with the project. At a minimum, you will be required to attend one planning meeting and to participate in a set of assigned activities. You will write an in-class reflective essay at the end of the semester that gives you the opportunity to process and share your experiences with the community engagement project.

You will be graded on the following weighted criteria:

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| • Attendance | 20% |
| • Class Discussion | 15% |
| • Advising Group Participation | 10% |
| • Portfolio | 30% |
| • Assignments | 10% |
| • Community Engagement | 15% |

Honor Code and Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the College of Charleston Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where a student's actions are clearly related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by Dr. Folds-Bennett. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed by both Dr. Folds-Bennett and the student will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by Dr. Folds-Bennett or one of the TA's who has knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive an XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless we specify that students may work together on an assignment, no collaboration is permitted. Papers written for other classes may not be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor. Students can find the complete Honor Code in the *Student Handbook* at http://www.cofc.edu/studentaffairs/general_info/studenthandbook.html.