



**Honors Explorations** are short-term, noncredit learning experiences that revolve around unique topics. Explorations go beyond the regular curriculum and investigate a specific interest/study that integrates discussion, experiential learning, current events, or pop culture.

Participation in an Honors Exploration involves approximately 15 hours of work by the student, which is comparable to other Honors Learning Experiences. This is achieved by meeting as a group for five, 2 hour gatherings, as well as individual preparation/follow-up activities and assignments outside of meeting times. In order to encourage student engagement and discussion, each Honors Exploration is limited to no more than 25 Honors students from any major.

Students are not assigned a letter grade for completion of an Honors Exploration. Instead, students are encouraged to learn and investigate new topics by actively participating in every session and fulfilling the suggested expectations provided in this overview. Similar to a Credit/No Credit course, students receive “Honors credit” for the semester if they successfully complete this Honors Learning Experience.

Instructor and student feedback from previous Honors Explorations has been overwhelmingly positive, and Honors Explorations fill quickly with high-caliber students who truly enjoy learning.

### **Student Expectations**

- Attendance is mandatory for each session.
  - ✓ In rare circumstances, one excused absence with a comparable 2 hour “make-up” assignment is permitted, at the discretion of the instructor. Students must contact the instructor in advance and their absence should be due to extenuating circumstances beyond the student’s control (e.g. conference presentation, recital performance, etc).
  - ✓ Students are expected to arrive on time and should not leave early. Students are not allowed to enroll in an Honors Exploration for which they have a time conflict (e.g. overlapping class).
- Active participation is expected.
  - ✓ Students should complete assigned readings prior to each session and be prepared to participate in discussions.
  - ✓ Assignments given by the instructor should be submitted in a timely fashion and no later than the stated due date.
- Completion of a culminating assignment is required.
  - ✓ Students are expected to create an original and reflective product in response to the topic(s) investigated during the Honors Exploration. The culminating assignment is determined by the instructor.
  - ✓ Similar to other Honors Learning Experiences, the created product should serve as evidence of the learning that occurred as a result of the Honors Exploration and to the greatest extent possible, incorporate one or more Dimensions of Honors Learning.
  - ✓ The instructor determines whether the culminating products are shared with other participants during the last session of the Exploration, or if the assignments are directly submitted to the instructor. Instructors are encouraged to provide feedback on final products whenever possible.

## Dimensions of Honors Learning

The Dimensions of Honors Learning are the 6 marketable skills students strengthen through their participation in the Honors Program.

- Critical Thinking: Go beyond your initial understanding to evaluate and make your own conclusions about what you are learning.
- Interdisciplinary Learning: Discover how what you are learning relates to other fields and the world around you.
- Information Fluency: Grapple with how to evaluate, create, and utilize information and technology, regardless of format or platform.
- Creative Productivity: Show your understanding by creating something unique. Go outside the box to make your ideas a reality.
- Leadership Development: Learn how to lead and identify your leadership skills by collaborating with others to make a difference.
- Cultural Intelligence: Understand how culture and context influence people's views and learn to value, adapt to, and interact with diverse populations.

## Recommended Structure of an Honors Exploration

Session 1: Introduction and initial content and connection(s) to the Dimensions of Honors Learning

Session 2: Content

Session 3: Content

Session 4: Content

Session 5: Student products and conclusion

Instructors can deviate from this structure; however, incorporating one or more of the Dimensions of Honors Learning is integral to the overall learning experience.

## Recommended Policies & Procedures

Instructors are asked to:

- Compose a brief and compelling description of the Honors Exploration to be used in for the Honors Program website and listserv;
- Create and provide an overview of the Honors Exploration (similar to a course syllabus) to participating students and the Honors Program;
- Send an email to students prior to the beginning of the Exploration to introduce yourself, remind them of the first meeting, and assign a reading prior to the first meeting (if applicable);
- Have a pre-determined absence plan (approximately 2 hours of independent work) in response to students who are unable to attend one session due to extenuating circumstances;
- Scope the overall experience to approximately 15 hours of work (a combination of Exploration sessions and independent work); and

- ❑ Develop a culminating assignment for students to complete that connects to the topic(s) investigated during the Honors Exploration and, to the greatest extent possible, incorporates one or more Dimensions of Honors Learning.

At the end of each Honors Exploration, Sarah Roth sends an electronic survey to students who have participated. Should you have specific questions you would like to contribute to the survey (related to the content, activities, and/or assignments associated with your specific Honors Exploration), you are encouraged to contact her at [sjroth@ilstu.edu](mailto:sjroth@ilstu.edu).

### **Honors Program – Staff Contacts**

Honors Explorations are primarily coordinated by Sarah Roth, Senior Honors Program Academic Advisor, in partnership with Dr. Linda Clemmons, Director of the Honors Program.

Please contact Dr. Clemmons with questions regarding...

- A proposed topic for a future Honors Exploration
- A contract/stipend for facilitating an Honors Exploration
- A brief and compelling description of the Honors Exploration to be used in for the Honors Program website and Listserv
- An overview of the Honors Exploration (similar to a course syllabus) for participating students and the Honors Program
- The culminating assignment for an Honors Exploration

Please contact Sarah Roth with questions regarding...

- Scheduling of Honors Exploration sessions
- Location(s) of Honors Exploration sessions
- Student enrollment/roster
- Attendance concerns
- Honors Exploration evaluation
- Determination of students' satisfactory completion of the Honors Exploration

Examples of past syllabi are available upon request.

Instructors can create a Canvas "Special Use Site" by visiting:

<https://prodev.illinoisstate.edu/canvas/special/> Please allow 7 business days for the Center for Integrated Professional Development (CIPD) to complete your request. Instructors are asked to add Sarah Roth to their Special Use Site, if they choose to create one.

Additional information regarding Honors Explorations can also be viewed by visiting:

[http://honors.illinoisstate.edu/academics/honors\\_learning/explorations/](http://honors.illinoisstate.edu/academics/honors_learning/explorations/)

A proposal for a future Honors Exploration can be submitted by visiting:

<https://honors.illinoisstate.edu/academics/honors-learning/explorations/proposal/>