

Chapter 16

Graduating *in cursu honorum*

with contributions by graduating seniors

In this chapter:

- The Mother of All *in cursu honorum* Checklists
- Reaching the Milestones
- Scheduling Your Exit Interview
- Writing Your Exit Essays
- Excerpts from Critical Thinking Essays
- Developmental Essay Excerpts



Spring 2007 Honors scholars

At the beginning of your senior year, before classes start if possible, pick up a graduation packet from the Honors Office and schedule an appointment with the Honors Director to make sure you've completed all the requirements for graduation *in cursu honorum*. Read on to see what's left to do.

The Mother of All in cursu honorum Checklists

Make an appoint with Dr. Barnes and bring this form with you to review any questions you may have.

Eligibility Checklist

- ___ Do you have a 3.5 cumulative QPA (all courses, not just Honors)?
- ___ Have you completed your Honors coursework? If you are not sure, check with the Honors Office.

- Honors 1010 (year): _____
- 15 hours in Honors course work in at least three different departments (This includes Honors contract classes, AP Calculus if you received Honors credit for it, and any approved honors transfer courses):

<u>Course</u>	<u># of hours</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Semester/year</u>
---------------	-------------------	-------------------	----------------------

- Two Honors Colloquia, or one Colloquium and one of the following: an Honors Directed Study (give course number) or the Honors Thesis Option:

<u>Course</u>	<u>Professor</u>	<u>Semester/year</u>
---------------	------------------	----------------------

Exit Interview Checklist

- ___ Ask a professor in your department to attend your exit interview.
- Professor's name: _____
 - Ask your professor for a list of three possible dates and times when they are available for the one-hour exit interview. E-mail this information to cbrown@tnitech.edu and ritabarnes@tnitech.edu, with the subject line "[Your Name]: exit interview scheduling." Dr. Barnes will respond letting you know when she is available. Send a copy to the professor.
- ___ Set a date for your final Honors interview. _____
- Exit interview dates and times must be confirmed with the Honors Office before spring break for May graduates (fall break for December graduates). If you're not sure if you'll graduate *in cursu*, schedule your interview anyway; you can always cancel if necessary.
 - Your exit interview must take place *at least* two weeks before the end of classes.
- ___ Turn in your Honors essays. (Essays must be received in hard copy by your professor and the Honors Office at least three working days before your interview.)
- Honors assessment/developmental essay (see later in this chapter)
 - Critical thinking essay (see later in this chapter)
- ___ Turn in an up-to-date resume.

Forms Checklist

- ___ Fill out the Honors graduates information form.
- ___ If you would like an announcement published in your hometown's newspaper, fill out the information sheet from the Public Affairs Office. (Form can be found at <http://www.tnitech.edu/publicaffairs/hmtownrel.html>.)

Reaching the Milestones

By now, you've probably finished most of your Honors courses, and kept up your GPA. Here's what's next on the *in cursu honorum* agenda:

- A developmental essay and an essay demonstrating maturity in critical thinking
- A final resume, spanning your entire undergraduate career
- An exit interview with a committee of Honors faculty
- A reception and ceremony for Honors graduates

Scheduling Your Exit Interview

The exit interview, formal though it sounds, is really a congenial meeting in which you meet with Dr. Barnes and a faculty member of your choice from your major field. Select a professor in your major field to participate in your exit interview. Ask *early* for some specific dates and times of day when they will be available. Include a choice of about five times that would work for you. After you've identified a few times when the two of you are available, send them both to Dr. Barnes and Carolyn Brown for confirmation.

Writing Your Exit Essays

Your essays are the basis for the exit interview. The two essays can offer you some important perspectives on your experiences—not only as an Honors student, but also as a person who has been thinking about your major and life as a whole. At the end of this chapter, you will find examples from *in cursu honorum* essays written by recent graduates. You are welcome to come in and read copies of other students' essays in the Honors Office.

Your essays (at least 500 words each) must be given to your faculty member and to Dr. Barnes *no later than three business days before* your scheduled exit interview. Please provide hard copies.

1. The critical thinking essay

The object of this essay is to demonstrate your critical thinking skills and apply them to an issue related to your major field. To do so, follow these steps:

- Select a topic that is debated—or at least, not generally agreed upon—by experts in your field of study. The topic should have interdisciplinary implications. For example, an engineering major might argue that the impact of using certain popular construction materials does less long-term damage to the environment than other, seemingly more efficient, materials that must be shipped long distances. A psychology major might address a controversial treatment plan. Every field has controversies. If you are not aware of them, talk to your faculty mentor.
- Your essay must grapple with actual and specific issues. It must deal with real-life, complex points of view, rather than setting up a straw man (see Chapter 9, “Critical Thinking”).
- Evidence needs supporting documentation from reliable academic studies (not Wikipedia or the dictionary.)
- The essay needs to be accessible to an audience outside of your field. Define your terms, carefully setting up what you are going to discuss.
- It's much more important in this essay to ask reasonable questions and explore them logically, than to emerge with a clear-cut answer. If the issue is black-and-white for you, it's not going to be a good avenue for demonstrating your critical thinking skills.

2. The developmental essay

This essay analyzes and reflects upon your growth during your time at TTU. Read through the materials in your portfolio, such as your Honors 1010 autobiography, resume, and world view project; evaluations and comments you've written about workshops, projects, and service activities; and copies of graded term papers from your Honors Colloquia, Directed Studies, and other Honors courses. As you think about some of the assumptions and viewpoints you have held during the last several years, make some notes of any specific examples that show changes in your perceptions. It might be helpful to refer to models of growth described by Perry, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Fowler, and others (see Chapter 11, "Models of Growth and Development," in your *Honors Handbook*). Describe any personal and critical thinking skills you have developed during college. In what ways have your Honors courses, colloquia, and tutorials helped you grow?

A Sampling of Excerpts from Critical Thinking Essays

If a couple is cohabitating as an alternative to marriage because they feel less of a commitment to the institution of marriage itself, then they will inevitably be less committed to the relationship as a whole and it will fizzle before a marriage comes about. Most cohabitating couples will break off an unstable relationship before marrying and subsequently divorcing later. If cohabitation is used in an intelligent way for adults to get more of a rewarding dating experience before marriage, then the marriage which follows will be a fulfilling one which has already been given some practice.

—Erin Lambdin (Soc '08)

To maintain ethical integrity, we must seek a better understanding of the biological basis of thought, and exert moderation in embryonic stem cell acquisition until we are able to make a more informed distinction regarding human life or discard the possibility of doing so altogether. Until a better ethical approach to life and death is found, it seems prudent to limit embryonic stem cell harvesting to only those cases where the embryo will certainly be destroyed regardless and the potential for ES cell harvesting has not influenced the embryo's fate in any way. It is clear that ES cell research has demonstrated potential for improving human knowledge and quality of life, and this area of investigation should not be abandoned so long as ES cells can be acquired ethically. However, safeguards must be developed and implemented to mitigate the risk of creating new diseases or spreading existing ones. If these ethical and practical conditions are met, embryonic stem cell research and development deserves the consideration and support due any legitimate subject of scientific inquiry.

—Nicholas Pate (CompE and EE '07)

The central problem revolves around the meaning of the word "equal." If "equal" means "identical," then perhaps special programs for gifted students are unfair. But if this is the case, then providing special services for handicapped students is also unfair. The practice of selecting the best candidates for sports teams, dramatic productions, and musical groups would also have to go. I believe that the position "equal means identical" is untenable because it ignores the essential differences that make us human. Instead, I propose the idea that equal treatment means appropriate treatment. Not all students have the same skills, background, and ability.

—Matt McBee (Psych '02)

Increased trade, as [free trade proponents] see it, will inevitably lead to human rights improvements. This view has been fashionable for roughly twenty years; the neoclassical school of economic theory was ushered in by the likes of President

Engineers principally work for the betterment of humanity by applying science as a tool to create, fix, or improve aspects of our daily lives. I view the engineer as a type of social worker; a person with an advanced skill set designed to improve society in aggregate and fundamental ways. Unfortunately, I don't know if my peers are really viewing engineering as a service job.

—Ben Eckart (CSC '02)

The Honors thesis was something I wanted to do in order to challenge myself as much as I possibly could academically while an undergraduate. It also allowed me to continue research in one of my areas of interest in a way that was actually more familiar to me than I realized when I began.

—Jennifer Woodward
(*PolSci* '05)

Reagan, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (and continued in the 1990s by Clinton). They stressed lowering trade barriers, liberalizing trade, and allowing direct investment by foreign firms as cornerstones of the Washington consensus, designed to accelerate the growth of developing countries.

But economic advancements and human rights advancements are not necessarily one and the same. Countries that have seen stellar economic progress may still have their share of human rights problems (South Africa and China come to mind), and countries with little or no known problems of human rights violations may be economic disasters (some peaceable African countries have stagnated or even declined economically in recent years).

—Jason Bledsoe (*Fin* '01)

For the most part, power is defined by masculine values, and, for the most part, women are still taught feminine values. But I don't think that means that women who want to be in positions of power need to drop all the feminine values that remain with them and embrace only masculine values. I think that a blending of feminine and masculine values offers the best solution for power for women.

Problems with gender inequities in the classroom have been publicized recently, and these problems are based, to a large extent, on the fact that girls are taught feminine values, including silence and good behavior, while boys are taught masculine values, like assertion and self-assurance. Feminine values combined with the American public education system often provide girls with an inferior education; they receive less attention from their teachers, are called on less frequently, and are encouraged not to ask questions. However, I'm sure no public school teachers would recommend that silence and good behavior should never be taught to children; the solution here would seem to be a combination of values. Boys and girls both need to learn the feminine values of silence and good behavior, but both also need to feel comfortable speaking out, asking questions, and becoming aggressive learners.

—Alison Piepmeier (*Engl* '94)

...And a Sampling of Developmental Essay Excerpts

The Honors Program has provided me with numerous opportunities to push myself beyond my own perceived limitations. I came into college expecting to receive—in return for a little hard work—a degree to prove my worth to any future employer. What I've found, however, is a supportive community that empowers students to look for those things which lie beyond textbooks.

—Dave Lane (*CSC* '08)

Being in Honors courses allowed me to branch out from my world of athletics and meet a lot of new and wonderful people. I have made the most connections, though, through the ASG committees. The social committee has been my favorite throughout the years. The chairs of the social committee have always kept the members informed and involved. I have been able to make lasting memories for all Honors students who attended the variety of formals and balls I helped to put on. I have also been able to develop creatively in designing tickets and decoration themes. I was able to explore different computer programs and methods for creating these public announcements. The publicity committee was always great in allowing me to keep “in the know” by having information about campus happenings before other people.

—Kristyn Castonozo (*Bio* '08)

I really didn't sleep the second semester of my freshman year because I was taking 19 hours of classes and was involved with so many different publications, councils, and special projects in the Honors Program and the ASG. I had great

I've learned that I shouldn't judge myself by what I'm not. It doesn't matter if I'm not a computer whiz, or a great public speaker, or really popular. It doesn't matter what people think I should be and am not. What I'm not isn't important. What is important is what I am. I'm alive. Everything else is negotiable.

—Cheryl Lowe (*Hist* '04)

experiences, but I resolved to spread out the responsibility for committees and projects throughout the Honors Program. I wanted to empower others to achieve things they never thought they could achieve, and the Honors Program allowed me to do that. As editor of the *Honors Handbook* I recruited more than 15 new members, and as the new Honors Council chair and ASG President, I actively recruited enough new committee chairs to fill all of the positions. This commitment to effective delegation and training my replacements led to discussions in Steering Committee meetings about developing training workshops that became the Leadership Extravaganza.

—Jenn Cloud (IE and PC '07)

The opportunities that Honors gave me, including Honors lab experience, teaching experience, and open thinking on presentations/teaching allowed me to extend creativity into my thinking about science. I had preconceived notions of certain fields of study, including English (my apologies to English; I had an immature freshman view of that field) that were totally incorrect, but Honors helped me to break down those personal barriers and prejudices so that I could grow into a well-rounded individual and integrate different points of view. What I am left with, I feel, is the goal of teaching, with well-developed and thought-out presentations which contain a smidgeon of humor.

—Jason Buckner (Biol and Chem '07)

Before I entered the Honors Program and college, I had really never been instructed how to ask the question “why.” From my former experience, answers to such questions as “who,” “what,” “when,” and “how” were satisfactory. Yet, while in Honors, I was forced in many of my classes to ask the more imperative question of “why.” By learning to ask why instead of simply settling for the norm, I have developed the wisdom that events and traditions and procedures do not always have to be executed in the same methodical way. I now always contemplate views on different controversial subjects. When we ask “why,” innumerable doors open to the imagination. The moment we begin to ask “why” creates an incessant chain reaction of analysis. This capability I’ve truly seen throughout the Honors Program more than any other segment of the university.

—Kellie Melton Rowland (Acct '04)

My ability to communicate has greatly improved. I was able to take the honors colloquium “Society and the Environment” with Dr. George. We were split into teams of five. We had specific roles unique to our team: engineer, economist, sociologist, biologist, etc. My role was as the sociologist, but I was also chosen as the team leader. This experience allowed me to see the extra, unseen work the leaders of teams usually have to go through. It also gave me great experience with working in interdisciplinary teams.

—Aaron Echols (ME '03)

Through actively participating in the Honors Program Service Committee as well as in other student organizations, my concept of what a *true leader* is has changed. Taking what I have learned by being at Tech, I know that a good leader succeeds when she or he listens to every idea, encourages participation from everyone, and facilitates the team’s success. When a project is completed, it becomes a product of everyone’s input. Thus, it belongs to no one individual. Leaders seize the opportunity to maximize all of the talents of the group so that each person feels like he or she has a stake in the project and a special talent to offer.

—Kalina Kwok (PC '01)

“To the fore!” In plain English, it means “to the front,” but musically “to the fore” means to bring out in fullness and soar above, but not so much as to be overpowering (unless it is in marching band, in which case the purpose is to shatter the glass in the press box). From the day I first learned what this notation meant, I adopted it as a personal motto. I do not have to be the loudest or the highest. I just have to be me to the fullest. I can soar above with my own melody as it fits with the symphony around me. Through Honors, I have honed my intonation and my fullness to a level where I am able to face the world with confidence.

—Donald E. Bailey, III
(ChemE '01)

