UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
History Department

Honours Programme

This information is also available on-line at the History Dept. website
http://www.history.ubc.ca/content/introduction-honours

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History Honours Programme

“As a history major, you will learn history. As a history honours student, you will learn how to be an historian.”  Yannick Thoraval (Former Honours Student)

In the History Honours Programme, students make the shift from being consumers of history to becoming producers of historical knowledge. Participation in small seminars and the preparation of a graduating essay helps them to develop skills in critical thinking, research and writing, and oral presentation and argument. Many Honours students go on to graduate school in history, but the programme is designed for all academically able and highly motivated students interested in a research-intensive programme. Many History Honours students have gone to law school, gotten education degrees, or pursued other forms of professional training. To help Honours students succeed in the programme, faculty mentors work closely with them throughout their two years. In addition, Honours students create their own close-knit intellectual and social community through shared seminars, dedicated study space, and infectious enthusiasm for the study of history.

The Essence of the Honours Programme

- a significant thesis project
- explicit training in historiography and methodology in HIST 333 and HIST 433
- small tutorials with like-minded and dedicated students
- a strong sense of intellectual community; an esprit du corps

Admission to Honours

Each year the History Department admits to the Programme about fifteen students, chosen on the basis of academic achievement and promise. To qualify, these students must complete 12 credits of lower-division history or the equivalent at UBC or another post-secondary institution, and should obtain at least an A-average in these courses. They must also meet the Faculty of Arts requirement of an overall average of 68% in the first two years. In addition, students' overall academic records and letters of recommendation will be taken into consideration. Students typically apply at the end of their second year in college or university. The deadline for applications is 11 May 2016, although in exceptional cases (such as for transfer students to UBC) applications may be considered after that date. The Honours Committee will begin selecting candidates soon after the deadline. Students who have been admitted to the Programme will receive a letter from the Honours chairperson by mid-June confirming their admission and telling them how to proceed with registration. Students with assigned registration time before mid-June should register for regular classes and then withdraw and register for Honours classes should they be accepted into the programme.
For more information on the Programme, please contact:

Chair of History Honours Programme  
Prof. Courtney Booker  
History Department  
University of British Columbia  
1297-1873 East Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1  
Telephone: 604.822.8810  
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Applications should be submitted on-line and can be found on the History Department’s website at: http://www.history.ubc.ca/documents/honours/honours_applications_form2010.pdf

Honours Classes

Honours seminars facilitate exploration and training in how to think historically. They bring students together to consider problems of wide import to the discipline. All incoming honours students take HIST 333, which introduces them to the philosophy and practice of history, as well as teaching them how to conceptualize and complete a research project. HIST 333 is a full-year course, but students who want to participate in an exchange or co-op programme may divide it and take half in their third year and half in their fourth year.

In their graduating year, students take HIST 433 in which they will discuss the research and writing of the senior thesis, as well as study a broad issue of current concern to the discipline.

The one semester-long honours tutorials present large units of history in terms of region, period or, most often, theme. Each tutorial, small in size, is open to both third- and fourth-year honours students. Students are required to take one tutorial each year. To account for their intensity, they are worth twice the usual number of credits.

History honours students are required to take a history department “capstone” course as well as nine credits of upper division history courses, which should include an upper division history course in a field related to their thesis topic.

Language Requirement

A requirement of the Programme is that before graduation, students must demonstrate a reading knowledge of French or a foreign language appropriate to their field of interest. Students hoping to write a thesis which requires languages other than English are encouraged to complete their language preparation as early as possible. All students are required to demonstrate their competence in a language other than English by passing a translation exam. In the exam, Honours students will be asked to translate an unseen passage from the language of their choice.
into English with the help of a dictionary. The History Department administers these translation exams in March and November each year. Students need to pass only one translation exam and may make more than one attempt.

**Senior Thesis**

The senior thesis is both the main challenge and the main reward of the last year of Honours. It is the capstone achievement of the undergraduate experience. Students undertake substantial pieces of independent research on topics of their choice and under the direction of faculty members’ expert in the various fields.

By the end of their first year in Honours, students should have decided on what most interests them and have consulted with department members who are knowledgeable in the field. Students are strongly urged to pick a topic in a field with which they are already broadly familiar and to that end are encouraged to have taken classes relevant to the topic of their thesis (for example, a student interested in questions of empire and race in Mexico should ideally have taken classes in the history of Mexico or Latin America as well as classes exploring questions of empire and/or race.)

Prof. Booker, the programme chair and faculty advisor will help you shape a thesis topic congruent with your interests, your existing knowledge of the field, and the faculty member’s own knowledge and interests. The length of the thesis should be approximately 60 typed double-spaced pages.

The minimum acceptable standing on the graduating thesis for an Honours degree is 68%. The standing is established by a panel of History Department members, including the adviser, who jointly judge the thesis and also examine the student orally on the written work and on the general subject of which it is a part.

**Honours in History with Arts Co-op**

History Honours can be combined with the Arts Co-op Programme. The Arts Co-op Programme has one intake period annually in September. Applications are normally available on the Arts Co-op web site in August. We recommend that students interested in combining History Honours with Arts Co-op apply for the Co-op programme in their second year and do their first co-op term prior to the start of third year. However, it is also possible to apply to the Arts Co-op Programme in your third year after you have entered the Honours Programme. You can find out more about the Arts Co-op programme at [http://artscoop.ubc.ca/](http://artscoop.ubc.ca/).

If you want to pursue this option, you should speak to the Honours Chair (currently Courtney Booker) and to Julie Walchi, the Director of Arts Co-op ([Julie.walchi@ubc.ca](mailto:Julie.walchi@ubc.ca)) in order to work out a schedule for your co-op terms.
Honours in History with Go-Global International Learning Programmes

We encourage students interested in studying abroad to combine History Honours with one of the many exciting international exchange opportunities available through UBC’s Go-Global Programme. A one-semester exchange can be incorporated into your History Honours Programme without delaying graduation. A two-semester exchange is also possible but in most cases will require adding at least one semester to your studies at UBC. You can find out more about Go-Global Programmes at http://www.students.ubc.ca/global/

If you want to pursue this option, you should speak to the Honours chair (currently Prof. Courtney Booker, cbooker@mail.ubc.ca) and contact Carol Zachs at Go-Global (go.global@ubc.ca).

Honours in History with International Relations

Another variant of History Honours accommodates students especially interested in International Relations. This requires the successful completion of 120 credits. Students considering this option should consult the History Honours adviser (currently Prof. Courtney Booker) and the International Relations advisor (currently Prof. Steven Lee) in their first or second year of undergraduate studies. For more details, please see the course and credit requirements listed below.

Standing

Honours students are expected to maintain high standing over the two-year period of the Programme. Third year students who cannot maintain a good B average in their honours courses may be asked, for their fourth year, to revert to the majors Programme. Those students who receive less than 68% in any of their honours courses will not be granted an honours degree. Normally, they will graduate with a majors degree in history.

Advising

The programmes of all honours students must be approved during the summer or at the beginning of each year by the chair of the Honours Committee, who represents the department in these matters and is available for advice throughout the student’s course of study.
Summary

The Honours degree in History requires the successful completion of 120 credits, 60 of which are in History courses and 54 of which must be in upper level courses. Of these 54 credits, 48 must be in upper level history courses. Students must also complete Faculty of Arts programme requirements for a B.A. Students considering the Honours programme should consult the History Honours advisor (currently Courtney Booker) in their first or second year.

Course and Credit Requirements for Honours History

First and Second Years

- must take 12 credits of lower-level History courses (or the equivalent taken in other institutions), of which 6 credits must be at the 200-level. The 12 credits may include up to 6 credits of MDVL 200, Arts One, or a relevant Coordinated Arts Program (CAP) course.
- should have an average of at least 80% in History courses.

In the regular honours stream, students take:

Third Year

- HIST 333 (3/6 credits): year-long course in historiography and methodology (can also be taken as two 3-credit courses)
- HIST 321 (6 credits): intensive one-term honours tutorial

Fourth Year

- HIST 433 (6 credits): year-long course devoted to a topic of broad interest and to working collaboratively on skills relevant to writing the honours essay.
- HIST 421 (6 credits): intensive one-term honours tutorial
- HIST 449 (12 credits): Honours Graduating Essay
- an oral examination on the graduating essay.

Third or Fourth Year

In addition to the requirements specific to the third year and the fourth year, students must complete in either the third or fourth year:

- HIST 490 (3 credits): a History department “capstone” course
- 9 upper division history credits which must include an upper division history course in a field related to essay topic; and
- an exam confirming reading knowledge of French or a foreign language.
Course and Credit Requirements for Honours in History with International Relations

First and Second Years

- must take 12 credits of lower-level History courses (or the equivalent taken in other institutions), of which 6 credits must be at the 200-level. The 12 credits may include up to 6 credits of MDVL 200, Arts One, or a relevant Coordinated Arts Program (CAP) course.
- should have an average of at least 80% in History courses.
- must have POLI 260 (3 credits)
- must keep in mind prerequisites for any upper-level courses in affiliated fields to be taken in the upper years

Third Year

- HIST 333 (3/6 credits): year-long course in historiography and methodology (can also be taken as two 3-credit courses)
- HIST 321 (6 credits): intensive one-term honours tutorial
- 6 credits in History
- in consultation with an advisor, 12 credits selected from courses listed in the International Relations Major programme

Fourth Year

- HIST 433 (6 credits): year-long course devoted to a topic of broad interest and to working collaboratively on skills relevant to writing the honours essay
- HIST 421 (6 credits): intensive one-term honours tutorial
- HIST 449 (12 credits): Honours Graduating Essay
- IR seminar (3 credits)
- 3 additional credits in IR
- an oral examination on the graduating essay

Third or Fourth Year

- an exam confirming reading knowledge of French or a foreign language.
What Students Say about the Honours Programme…

- I am so indebted to the History Honours programme I find it difficult to distil the experience to its core virtues. Beyond the breadth of historical knowledge instilled in me through the programme’s broad, critical focus, the experience profoundly changed my view of what I was capable of achieving both academically and personally. What previously seemed insurmountable, whether it be the unpacking of a complex theory or the challenge of expressing myself verbally and in print, is now not only possible but an absolute pleasure. This confidence is the direct result of the careful, close, and honest guidance I received from the faculty, who continuously and uncompromisingly challenged me to produce nothing short of my best work at all times. My fondest memories are undoubtedly reserved for my peers in the programme, whose intelligence, wit, and passion were, and continue to be, an inspiration to me. To perspective students of the programme: all of this can be yours. Even if you don’t think you have the skills or the grades, still apply – I was at best a ‘marginal’ candidate when I started out. Whether you want to continue in academia or not, the important thing to remember is that the skills you learn in Honours History are life skills, so take the opportunity and challenge yourself – you won’t regret it. (Arran Walshe, former honours student).

- I think that it is safe to say that my time in UBC’s Honors History programme was one of the most academically transformative of my life. In this community, I found an outlet for my passion to think critically and, for the first time in university, really felt like I was being invited to engage with the thinkers I read as an intellectual in my own right. In place of a single field of knowledge fit only for rote memorization, the intellectual world became for me a complex, textured and beautiful set of sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing, sometimes mutually reinforcing intellectual and political projects and I was invited, through the seminars and my thesis project, to explore these projects and situate myself among them in the scholarly community. As a masters student in divinity at Yale, I often tell people that the single biggest factor in preparing me for the work I currently do was the formative education I received in this space. Regardless of future education plans or vocational aspirations, I think that the Honors History programme at UBC offers an incredible resource to any undergraduate and that the chance to participate in this community is not to be passed up. (Greg Williams, former honour student)

- There are two main qualities that distinguish the honors programme from the regular history major. The first divergence is that honors students are offered an in-depth explanation of what history is, and how to write a good history paper. In our private honors seminars, our professors taught us how to read beyond a source’s explicit message by questioning its origins, and the authors motivations for producing the work in question. I found this to be greatly beneficial, because with a clearer sense of what history was, I had a clearer sense of what my professors expected of me. This led me to produce better work, and get higher grades. The second major divergence between our experience and that of our non-honors peers was that we got to write real history as part of our undergraduate programme. Instead of rushing through projects to meet paper deadlines, our second year in the programme was devoted almost entirely to a single 60 page thesis. This project was foreboding at first, but I quickly overcame my hesitation. There was nothing to fear because our professors were incredibly supportive spending countless hours working one on one with us. This project, though frustrating at times, was the most stimulating and exciting of my undergraduate career. I cannot overstate how beneficial the UBC Honors History Programme was for my academic development. (Ely Golvin, former honours student)

- The Honours Programme was the most valuable part of my undergraduate experience at UBC. My fellow classmates never ceased to amaze me with the depth of their ideas and I am lucky I learned as much from them as I did from the course material. The programme is also unique in
that it gives students at the undergraduate level a chance to work closely with faculty. The professors I had were very supportive and they motivated me to refine and develop my ideas. The most rewarding part of writing the graduating thesis was not only completing it. The process changed the way I ask questions and synthesize information. I am grateful to have gained so much from an undergraduate programme. (Lara Wigdor, former honours student)

- The Honours History Programme encouraged me to take responsibility for my education and to do things that scare me. For example, this last term I presented two honours papers and conferences, where I was able to share ideas with an exciting community of researchers, from undergraduates to tenured professors. I continue to explore ideas introduced to me by professors and classmates that change the way I interact with the world. As a historian and as a human, I struggle with making ethical choices while respecting other peoples’ agency. In one of my honours seminars, we repeatedly asked what work a particular idea performs, rather than trying to judge it as inherently good or bad. Such questions help me navigate conflict and diversity on a daily basis. (Erika Robertson, former honours student.)

- I found the Honours Programme exceptional. It keenly developed my research, writing, critical thinking, oral communication, and independent study skills. I really appreciated the close relationships with faculty: they believed in us and held us to a high standard, a standard we were all able to meet because of the program’s support and stimulation. I still feel incredibly lucky to have been a student in Honours. I am currently finishing a Masters in Social Work at Columbia University in the City of New York. My Honours training is a large part why I am here: academically, I had the best possible preparation for graduate school; professionally, the critical thinking and local/global perspective I gained in Honours inspires my practice and programming work with individuals, families, and communities. Whether you pursue academia or professions outside academia, I strongly feel the Honours programme will serve as a rock-solid foundation, as it did for me. (Tao-Yee Lau, former honours student)