

THE HONORS COURSE CONTRACT

The honors contract is a mutually agreed upon proposal of work that will allow the student to substitute your class for an Honors Program class requirement. For the Honors student, the contract should involve a project or activity that takes one deeper into the course subject and results in an experience highly relevant to one's preparation as a professional. For the faculty member, the contract work should be an opportunity to try innovative or professionally interesting projects or activities that would be difficult to do for an entire class.

As the course instructor, you are responsible for determining the final grade; the program director's role is to approve the initial contract proposal and file the course exception paperwork to have the class substituted for an honors requirement. You will be asked to sign at the start of the semester and again at the end of class to indicate that the student met the expectations outlined in the contract.

Honors Program Goals Please keep these in mind as you develop your contract experience. You will be asked to complete a brief assessment rubric for the student at the end of class. The goals of the MSUM Honors Program are to help students develop in three areas:

1. Critical thinking across disciplines
2. Communication of professional or scholarly work
3. Personal growth through leadership and intellectual independence

Contract Ideas Honors contracts provide students with alternative, not just additional assignments. These projects could require more creative thinking or hands-on activities with clear practical application.

- Replace an existing requirement such as an exam with an alternative project
- Provide additional or expanded coverage for a required assignment
- Replace an in class exam with a take home or assignment that goes beyond the requirements
- Complete new or original assignments that encourage interdisciplinary learning of the material such as screening a related film, writing a poem or script, having a performance, etc.
- Use internship or field experience to augment classroom learning
- Include a service learning component that relates to a class assignment
- Complete additional readings from a trade book or related material to connect themes in class
- Have additional one-on-one meetings with the instructor to further explore a topic of theme
- Start a book club using a related text and possibly schedule a few outside of class meetings
- Compile a reading list or annotated bibliography that investigates a topic in more detail
- Include a short term study abroad experience
- Prepare materials to lead a classroom discussion or present a lecture
- Require the student to present at the Student Academic Conference or other
- Meet during the semester with other faculty and students engaged with an Honors Contract

Related Research (downloads available online)

- Hochel, S., & Wilson, C. E. (1996). Challenging the Superior Student Using Honors Contracts.
- DiLauro, A., Meyers, T., & Guertin, L. (2010). The value of extending the honors contract beyond one semester: A case study with Smithsonian dinosaurs.