

Philosophy Honors Concentration

The Philosophy Department has created the Honors program for our majors for several reasons.

- To give students who excel in Philosophy an opportunity to pursue additional courses in philosophical topics of their choice.
- To enable students to pursue more advanced philosophical research and develop their writing by completing an Honors Thesis with the personal guidance of a faculty expert in the field.
- To enhance the preparation and competitiveness of those students who wish to go on to graduate studies in philosophy, law, or other fields.
- To expand students' knowledge of a wider range of philosophical sub-disciplines.
- To allow the department to recognize outstanding student achievement.

What is the Honors Concentration?

Students who qualify for the Honors Concentration and who are interested should:

- 1) Fill out an Honors Concentration Application form--available in the Philosophy Dept. Office in MND 3000 or download [here](#), and
- 2) Submit that form to the Department Honors Committee (Chair: Prof. McCormick) in MND 3020, or his mailbox in MND 3000.

Those students who qualify and who are accepted will then be notified by the Honors Committee and can then start their Honors Concentration. They will take 10 units above and beyond the requirements for the General Philosophy major, the Applied Ethics and Law concentration, or the Logic and Philosophy of Science concentration:

- two upper division Philosophy courses. (6 units)
- either a Phil 190 or Phil 192 course. (3 units)
- Phil 197 Honors Thesis (1 unit).

The requirements for the program are also listed in the course catalog [here](#).

Who is eligible for the Honors concentration?

To qualify for the Honors Concentration, students must have and maintain:

1. a current, overall GPA of 3.5 or higher, and
2. a Philosophy GPA of 3.7 or better.

And, they must get a B or better (not a B-) in each of the courses taken for Honors. Failure to meet these requirements will result in a denial of the Honors designation at graduation.

What is the Honors Thesis?

The Honors thesis is intended to be a more in-depth, advanced exploration of some philosophical issue than students can pursue in their regular major courses. The thesis should be either an original research essay or a substantially revised and researched existing essay from one of their major classes.

During the late stages of their course completion, preferably during their penultimate semester at CSUS, Honors Concentration students will enroll in Phil 197 Honors Thesis. (Completing the thesis in this semester will help make it possible to use it for a graduate school application writing sample.) The thesis must be completed within the semester when Phil 197 is taken.

Within the first two weeks of that semester, and with the guidance of a supervising faculty member, Honors Concentration students will write and submit an Honors Thesis Proposal. It should include

1. a set of philosophical questions or topics that the student is interested in pursuing of appropriate scope and character, and
2. a bibliography of articles (preferably peer reviewed Philosophy articles), books, and sources that address the questions or topics being studied. Their supervising faculty member can assist students in finding appropriate, relevant, timely, and useful sources for this bibliography.

This Honors Thesis Proposal should be submitted to the supervising faculty member and to the Honors Program Committee (Chair: Prof. McCormick mccormick@csus.edu) no later than two weeks from the beginning of the Phil 197 semester. The Honors Program committee and supervising faculty member will approve the proposal and the student can then begin work on the thesis.

Then, during the semester, Honors students, in consultation with their thesis supervisor, will write and revise their thesis. We encourage them to submit drafts, get feedback, make revisions, and use the time to improve the thesis. In many cases, this thesis will serve as an excellent writing sample for graduate school applications.

The Honors Thesis will then be due at the end of the semester and it will be submitted to the supervising faculty member for grading and approval.

All three of the Philosophy major programs require students to complete Phil 189 Senior Seminar in Philosophy which has a senior seminar essay submission. The Honors Thesis can be submitted for your senior seminar in Phil 189.

How do Honors students get a supervising faculty member for their thesis?

The Philosophy Department has faculty members with a wide range of disciplinary expertise and interests. Some of these can be judged by the classes they are teaching, the papers and talks they present, and other indications on their websites (linked to the Department website.) We are all happy to talk about your ideas, suggest directions, or guide you toward faculty members with relevant interests and expertise. In particular, schedule time with Prof.

McCormick (mccormick@csus.edu, MND 3020) and he can offer some guidance about who might be best to help Honors students with their theses. We encourage students to seek out tenured or tenure-track faculty first, although in some cases, a lecturer may be willing to help.

What is the benefit of completing the Honors concentration?

- Students in the Honors program will have the opportunity to pursue their philosophical interests in more depth, develop their writing, and expand their knowledge of the discipline.
- The program is excellent preparation for graduate studies in Philosophy, law school, or other graduate programs.
- Honors students have the opportunity to work closely with one of the Philosophy Department Professors on a research topic of their interest and choosing.
- Honors students get the opportunity to develop their writing, reasoning, argumentative, and analysis skills beyond the typical undergraduate level.
- Honors students will be recognized for their work with a designation of Honors on their transcripts and diploma.
- Faculty members who write letters of recommendation for Honors students will be able to point to their Honors Concentration work as evidence for their advanced abilities and their preparedness for graduate studies, fellowship programs, and work positions.
- Honors students should have a high quality essay to submit for graduate school, for submission for publication in an undergraduate philosophy journal, or for presentation at an undergraduate philosophy conference.

How do I apply for the Honors concentration?

Here are the steps:

- Download the application linked [here](#), read it carefully (know what you're signing up for and plan accordingly.)
- Talk to your major advisor, the director of the Honors concentration, or the Department Chair about your desire to apply.
- Fill out the application form completely, including obtaining all the required signatures.
- Submit your application to the Philosophy Department Office or to the Chair of the Honors Program. (Prof. McCormick, mccormick@csus.edu)
- You will be notified whether your application has been approved within three weeks of submission.
- Upon acceptance into the Honors concentration, you will be required to resubmit your graduation application (if already submitted) or complete your graduation application to reflect the addition of the Honors concentration to your degree program. Failure to do so will result in your not receiving the Honors designation on your transcript and diploma.