

Honors College Reading Seminars

A Quick Guide

What are Reading Seminars?

UH 2124: Honors Reading Seminars are small, active, collaborative, discussion-based classes in which students meet for 50 minutes, once a week, to read about and explore topics of common interest. Peer educators propose the topics for their individual seminars, create the reading lists and schedules, and facilitate the group's class meetings. Reading seminar participants earn 1 honors credit, and the course is Pass/Fail grading only.

Pro-Tip: Students can take more than one Reading Seminar per semester.

Why should I take a Reading Seminar?

Honors College reading seminars help students explore topics they care about in a small, supportive community that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and the sharing of diverse perspectives. These courses allow honors students to examine these topics in great depth with a group of engaged colleagues. Moreover, these classes help students develop confidence in their ideas, interpretations, and public speaking abilities. Finally, reading seminars help students meet and learn about other honors students they might not otherwise get to know and gain a larger sense of what it means to be an honors student at Virginia Tech. They are thus especially beneficial for students not living in Honors housing.

What work is involved in a Reading Seminar?

- 1) Reading and discussion of three or more book-length works and supplementary materials (approximately 1,000 pages)
- 2) Creation and delivery of one context presentation: students identify historical or cultural material related to the course topic or the day's reading and bring it to their classmates' attention via a presentation or in-class activity of some kind (approximately 10 minutes).
- 3) Creation and execution of one discussion starter: students generate a series of questions on the reading for the week which they use to lead that week's in-class discussion.

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How do I sign up for a Reading Seminar?

1) Download and read the descriptions of the approved reading seminar topics for the upcoming semester to find one or more that appeal to you. You can find the link to that list here:

<http://www.honorscollege.vt.edu/reading-seminar.html>

2) Note the CRNs, titles, and instructor email addresses of the seminars that interest you.

3) Follow the normal processes in Hokie Spa you use to request/enroll in any class at VT.

4) If you find that the reading seminar you wish to take is full, you can email the instructor directly and request a force-add. Please note that since we aim to keep the class sizes small in these seminars, such force-adds are at the discretion of the individual instructor.

How Can I Create My Own Reading Seminar?

If you would like to create your own reading seminar, the Honors College would be very happy to have you do so. Each semester, a request for reading seminar proposals is sent via email to all honors students. Complete the application and return to Dr. Heilker by the deadline for full consideration.

Reading seminar leaders' responsibilities include --

- 1) attending a one-day peer educator training session the Friday before classes begin for that semester;
- 2) preparing for and leading 15 weekly 50-minute class sessions;
- 3) evaluation of students' performance in their seminars;
- 4) enrolling in UH 4104: Honors Peer Educator Practicum in the semester(s) when they are teaching their seminars, attending six 75-minute meetings of the course spaced out over the semester, and completing reflective writing assignments to help them capitalize on their strengths and troubleshoot difficulties in their seminars. This course earns students 2 honors credits and is Pass/Fail only.

Pro-Tip: Dr. Heilker will be happy to consult with you about your seminar ideas and the challenges and benefits of being an honors peer educator. Write to him at pheilker@vt.edu to set up an appointment.

