The Sociology Department’s Honors Program provides an opportunity for students to develop independent scholarship that goes beyond the requirements of the major. The purpose of the Honors Program is to encourage students with exemplary academic records to achieve mastery of a particular topic within the major by conducting extensive study and research during the course of the fall and spring semester of the senior year. An applicant to the Honors Program must have a 3.75 GPA in the major and a 3.5 overall GPA. Applicants are also expected to have completed all of their general distribution requirements before the senior year.

Successful applicants must complete a two-semester research project during their senior year. The project consists of a written thesis and an oral presentation of the thesis in late April or early May as part of the Colby Undergraduate Research Symposium. Honors theses in Sociology are typically between fifty and eighty pages in length. Successful completion of the thesis enables a student to graduate with “Honors in Sociology.” In addition, students who produce a thesis of exceptional quality will be nominated for the American Sociological Association Honors Program and earn the opportunity to present their scholarship at the discipline’s annual professional meeting.

Students interested in pursuing honors should consult in their junior year with the chair of the department regarding standards and procedures for the honors project. Applications of intent to pursue honors must include names of the faculty advisor and reader who have agreed to participate in the student’s project. The application is due at the end of spring semester of the junior year. In the initial two weeks of the senior year and before the closing date for adding courses for that term, applicants must submit to the honors advisor and reader a more formal proposal that contains a timeline of completion dates. A faculty panel will review proposals and notify candidates of acceptance. During the year, the honors candidate will meet with his or her advisor and reader on a regular basis, working closely together on the project. In December of the senior year, there will be a preliminary evaluation of the project. After reviewing their progress with their thesis advisor and reader at that time, the candidate will present to the faculty panel a written and oral summary of their work to date, as well as a plan for the project’s completion. Projects that cannot meet the timetable for completion, or those that are deemed to be problematic, for any reason, will end in December and be converted to an Independent Study project. By early April, candidates who continue with their thesis work will present it for evaluation by their thesis advisor and reader. If the work is deemed problematic or of less than acceptable quality and cannot be completed by the stated target date, the course designation will be changed to an Independent Study and the honors work ended. Candidates who present a thesis that qualifies for honors will present their work during the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

We intend these guidelines to clarify our honors granting program and we encourage academically qualified students who are interested in earning honors and who have an interest in a particular project (even if it is somewhat vague initially) to discuss the possibilities with a sociology faculty member, the department chair, or your major advisor. The honors program offers a rich opportunity to pursue independent work and to engage in a challenging and rewarding enterprise.