



As the Director of the Honors Program at MCLA, I'm writing to introduce you to our program and to invite you to consider joining Honors, if you are interested in undertaking exciting and ambitious work during your time at MCLA. Regardless of your past academic record, MCLA offers a "Fresh Start" policy, which permits any student to elect into Honors as incoming freshmen, if indeed they are committed to accepting the challenges and taking on the rigor of Honors-level work.

Each semester, we offer a number of Honors-designated courses taught by faculty in various departments across the College. These courses explore important questions from an interdisciplinary perspective and encourage you to do creative research and critical scholarship around these topics. This past year, we have offered dozens of interesting courses for Honors credit, including "Creativity and Survival," "Introduction to Community and Public Health," "The Nature of Human Nature," "Calling Bullshit," "Environmental Justice," and "Women in American Art," among others. Each semester, the Honors Director also leads a small seminar called the "Director's Book Course" in which we read closely a single text and discuss it once per week. During your senior year, Honors students are eligible to do a Commonwealth Honors Thesis—a two-semester independent study project in which you'll work closely with a faculty sponsor on a project of your own design. Honors students are also eligible to apply for two special Honors scholarships which offer financial aid to high achieving students.

Generally Honors students try to enroll in one Honors course per semester—and no less than one Honors course per year—as part of their normal course load. If you complete six Honors courses during your time at MCLA, with a B or higher in each and a cumulative GPA of at least 3.4, then you will earn the distinction of Honors upon graduation, one of the highest academic achievements at the college. It is important to note that being an Honors student does not entail taking "extra" courses; ideally, you're just doing more interesting work. A number of Honors courses fulfill other requirements too, such as Core Curriculum requirements; indeed, Honors is designed to be compatible with whatever major or combination of majors you are considering.

Beyond academic work, we aim to make the Honors Program a vibrant community—whether this be through occasional field trips, group meals, special lectures, or regular meetings of the student-run Honors Council, held in the Honors Center, a study and social space available 24/7 exclusively for the use of Honors students. Over the past year, for instance, Honors students have gathered for guest lectures by Dr. Kimberly Juanita Brown of Mt. Holyoke College, who gave a talk called "Of Thee I Sing: Black Performances of a Possible Freedom" and by Dr. Kevin

Escudero of Brown University, who offered a lecture entitled "Organizing While Undocumented: Immigrant Youth's Political Activism Under the Law."

If you would like to join the Honors Program and/or to express your interest in the Honors Program, please complete the [New Student Course Registration Survey](#).

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at d.zachary.finch@mcla.edu. You can also visit the [Honors webpage](#) for more information. I look forward to meeting you in the fall!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zachary Finch', with a stylized, cursive script.

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