

Unique Soph Honors Program At Oregon Nears Second Birthday

by Joe Gardner
Emerald News Editor

At the end of this term sophomore honors will be able to light two candles on its birthday cake. The program in general education for students of superior ability is now completing its second year at the University of Oregon.

While honors programs are not new to American colleges and universities (nor even to Oregon), sophomore honors is a unique educational experiment, according to Hoyt Trowbridge, professor of English and chairman of the sophomore honors committee. Other honors programs are on the junior and senior level for study in a student's major, while sophomore honors is a lower-division program in general education.

Open only to the upper 20 percent of each entering freshman class, the program is designed to provide a profitable and stimulating general education for the more able student. It fills that part of the student's schedule normally devoted to the fulfillment of group requirements—four courses in the first two years for a total of 39 term hours.

High School Record Used

Eligibility for honors courses is measured by high school records and scholastic aptitude tests taken at the time of admission to the University. The program is also open to students who have completed more than 15 but less than 3 term hours at the University with a minimum grade point average of 2.75.

Honors are awarded on the basis of comprehensive examinations in four subjects. The exams, offered fall and spring, must be taken before the end of the student's second year. Students normally prepare for the exams through special honors courses, but may also do so through other lower division courses in the same field or by independent study. Full college credit in the corresponding honors course is granted for each exam passed regardless of method of preparation.

Sophomore honors courses are offered in five fields. To complete the program the student must take the courses in literature, history and social science, while a choice is allowed between biological and physical science. The social science course, the study of society, is being offered this year for the first time.

Courses Are Broad

The courses are broad, interdepartmental and planned as an integrated whole with many cross references and interconnections among them. For instance, embraces elements of physics, chemistry, geology, astronomy and mathematics, while the study of society includes the fields of political science, sociology and economics.

The classes are purposely kept small, about 25 students to a section. This allows for a "give-and-take between teacher and student, and informal and intimate relationships," as Trowbridge has put it.

Some of Oregon's best teachers are to be found in the sophomore honors program. E. G. Moll, professor of English, and F. M. Combellack, associate professor of classical languages, teach two of the literature sections, while E. S. Wengert, head of the department of political science, teaches a social science section.

Instruction an Innovation

One of the major innovations in the program is the method of instruction. V. F. Snow, instructor in history, who teaches one of the history sections, finds the program more interesting for the teacher. "But it takes more work to prepare for the course," he added.

Factual knowledge in the course

can be gained from the text, but the student is also responsible for outside reading of cultural and philosophical matter which can be fitted into their proper historical context, Snow said. Thus in studying about capitalism, the students read Adam Smith, and in studying communism they read Karl Marx.

Snow limits actual lecture in his classes, preferring to conduct the class in discussions interlaced with his own knowledge on a certain subject. Debates and panel discussions are used in the class so that the pros and cons of a certain topic can be aired.

Not Technical

F. E. Dart, assistant professor of physics, who instructs the section in physical science, does not teach his course on a technical level. "We are not trying to train students to be scientists in this section," he said, pointing out that the class is composed mainly of students from other than scientific fields who are interested in a general knowledge of the subject. Physics majors will take the more complicated and technical upper division courses, he stated.

"We aren't dealing with formulas and methods of scientific investigation in this course so much as

Exams May 18

Comprehensive examinations for sophomore honors candidates will be given beginning May 18. All exams will be given in Fenton 3.

Reading lists for the exams have been distributed to students in sophomore honors courses. Others wishing to take the exams may pick up the lists in the office of the department of English in Friendly Hall.

Schedule of the exams is as follows: history, May 18; study of society, May 20; physical science and biological science, May 25, and literature, May 27. Each of the exams will last two hours with half an hour additional time being allowed if needed.

the ideas behind these formulas and methods," Dart declared. "The emphasis is on ideas and how they came to be developed in the field of physical science."

Discussion Encouraged

Dart uses both lecture and discussion in his sophomore honors class, often raising some provocative question to start an argument among the students. In these arguments, Dart often supports the illogical side and lets students prove him wrong. Once discussion is ended, he goes back over the argument to point out what types of evidence are valid in dealing with scientific facts.

In the physical science laboratory sessions the student is allowed to do his own exploring with no set lab manual to follow, Dart continued. Lab classes are as small as ten, and with two instructors—Dart and a graduate assistant—there is an even better opportunity for an interplay of ideas than in the classroom, according to Dart.

The entire sophomore honors program is designed for the exceptional student, often neglected in the classroom where the average student sets the pace of instruction. Student reaction to the plan is generally favorable.

Students Comment

Marcia Mauney, freshman in liberal arts, said she felt the courses were "definitely more stimulating." One advantage to the program, according to Miss Mauney, is that professors and students get to know one another better in the smaller classes.

"Sophomore honors courses make the student think more and give him a chance to work on his own initiative," Les Bergeron,

sophomore in pre-med, said.

Bob Maier, sophomore in business, said he thought that the level of instruction was much higher in sophomore honors sections than in other University courses. "Discussion forces the student to make his own analysis of the subject matter and introduces a wealth of material the student would otherwise be unaware of," he added.

Committee Supervises

Each course in the program is supervised by a committee of representatives from each department included in that field. In addition to working out plans for the course, this group draws up and grades the comprehensive exams and is responsible for the awarding of honors. The individual honors instructors prepare their own course tests, however, and determine the term grade of students in their courses. The general sophomore honors committee, which Trowbridge heads, is made up of the chairmen of these subcommittees.

The plan is promoted on the high school level by administration figures such as Ray Hawk and Mrs. Golda Wickham, associate directors of student affairs, who speak to high school groups throughout the year. Trowbridge, however, would like to see this method supplemented by correspondence with high school principals in the state. At the University, promotion is handled by dormitory counselors, living organization scholastic chairmen and faculty advisers, working under Trowbridge's committee.

The program is an outgrowth of study by the committee on curricular revision, which presented its report to the faculty in November, 1950. Included in the re-

Supreme Court Ruling May Delay Building

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would be started by July.

Circuit Justice Walter L. Tooze upheld the contention of the dental association that the dental

port was the proposed sophomore honors program. After faculty approval had been secured in the spring of 1951, the sophomores honors committee began working out details that would put the plan in action. The program was introduced in the fall of 1952.

Only 50 Expected

It was planned to make the program available to the upper one fifth of the entering freshman class, which would have meant some 200 to 250 students. Of this number, only 50 or 60 were expected to elect the program. Yet at the end of the 1952 fall term registration, nearly twice that number—over 100—had signed up for sophomore honors courses, and additional sections had to be provided in both history and literature.

This year, with two classes participating in the program, some 200 Oregon freshmen and sophomores are enrolled in sophomore honors courses. Of this number, 75 are sophomore holdovers from last year, and 125 are freshman new to the program this year. Three new instructors, whose assignments are partly in sophomore honors, were added to the University faculty this fall.

A success? Trowbridge can't answer that question until the returns from the spring comprehensive exams have been learned. He will say, though, that he is pleased with the response to the program in its first two years, a response evidenced by the high percentage of eligible students who elect the honors courses.

school is a separate and distinct department of the state's higher educational system and should be administered directly by the state board and not the University.

Judge Tooze, in his opinion, pointed out that "the only important part played by the University of Oregon in connection with the dental school is furnishing a name, as it furnished a name to the medical school. Except indirectly, the University itself has nothing to do with the conferring of degrees, as that is left to the State Board of Higher Education, upon the recommendation of the dental school faculty. The State Board of Higher Education and not the University of Oregon appoints the dean of the dental school and its entire faculty.

"From the clear wording of the statute, it is apparent that the dental school is a separate and distinct department of the system of higher education and not a subsidiary or subdivision of the University of Oregon," the opinion concluded.

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