



SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION: HONORS PROGRAM 2021-2022

The Annenberg School of Communication Honors Program offers an exciting opportunity for students with outstanding academic records and serious intellectual curiosity. Participation in this program prepares and guides students in the pursuit of original, independent research under the supervision of Annenberg faculty members. Producing an honors thesis is a challenging academic experience that can reap many benefits, including close mentorship from a faculty member, the opportunity to further explore a specific intellectual question or issue that piques your curiosity, and the development of strong research, writing, and critical thinking skills that can strengthen your portfolio for future career endeavors (e.g., professional or graduate school). A program of this caliber often represents the most defining and culminating experience of one's undergraduate study and can synthesize the knowledge developed over the course of the major. In the fall, the thesis seminar (COMM 495) will bring together independent minded, project-inspired honors students to address shared research and project design strategies. In the spring, you will work with an Annenberg faculty mentor (COMM 497) to see project completion, dissemination, and publicity.

1. PROCESS TO APPLY

Please submit your application to Annenberg Advisement and Academic Services via email ascjadv@usc.edu by or before **May 14, 2021**. Selection is merit based and you will be notified about admission by email by May 21, 2021.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The Catalogue requires that you meet the following requirements:

- 1.1 Must be a declared Communication major.
- 1.2 Must have a 3.5 cumulative USC GPA and a 3.5 in all Communication courses taken.
- 1.3 Must have completed the core and methods requirements. Core courses are based on the catalogue year you entered USC. Please refer to the USC catalogue for specific list of courses.

Note: Students who are completing the core and methods requirements in spring 2021 are eligible to apply.

2. WHAT TO DO?

Sign this form (see below), write a short paper and turn in via email by May 14, 2021.

Write a **concise two to three-page statement** that answers these three questions:

- What **research question or topic** would you focus on in your honors thesis? Describe what you want to study or investigate, and why the question or topic matters. *E.g.*, is there a social practice, cultural group, health community, technological phenomenon, economic principle, or historical event that you're motivated to understand or impact? The answer to this question can be speculative and we understand that you may not yet have a fully developed proposal, but we should understand what your thesis would focus on why the project is significant. See below for sample project topics, areas, and keywords. These are *examples* – you are free to combine them and think beyond this list.

- Which **three Communication professors** would be potential mentors/advisors for your thesis project? Additionally, which **two or three Annenberg research groups, centers, or initiative** do you think might be relevant to your interests? You do not have to have had experience working with them yet, but please describe potential links you see between them and your proposed thesis project. Many of Annenberg's groups, centers, and initiatives are listed here: <https://annenberg.usc.edu/research>.
- **Why do you want to do an honors thesis?** What motivates you to apply, why is now the right time for you, what experiences and curiosities bring you to be interested in the program? The honors thesis is a year-long commitment that requires individual initiative, self-motivation, and intellectual maturity. Please give us a sense of why you are ready to join the program and complete a thesis project.

Sample keywords / topics / areas (not exhaustive, feel free to combine or expand)

- Media and communication technologies (e.g., mobile phones, social media platforms, infrastructures, computational algorithms, big data, artificial intelligence, etc.) as they relate to questions of cultural production, labor, social power, community life, economic markets, politics, emotion, cities, audiences, economics, fandom, and more.
- Cultural studies of sports, fashion, comics, film, television, games, music, mobile media, and other forms of popular culture
- Social justice studies of power, inequality, diversity, gender, identity, race, sexuality, ethnicity, feminism, nationality, religion, class, age.
- Political communication studies of social movements, collective organizing, participation, imagination, mobilization, argument, and public deliberation
- Communication between people, within groups, across cultures, among geographies, places, borders.
- Communication and health, wellness, resilience, individual and collective and public senses of wellbeing, trauma and illness, emotional and physical development
- Narrative, storytelling, performance, argumentation, production within and across media
- Networks, political economy, and socioeconomic structures of communication
- Communication histories, tradition, memory, nostalgia, place & space.

2.3 OPTIONAL. If you feel that your application or GPA has been compromised by the COVID-19 crisis, please include a one paragraph explanation and list a faculty reference, who knows and can vouch for your work.

3. COMPLETION REQUIREMENT:

3.1 COMM 495– Honors Seminar (4 units, fall)

Recommended Preparation: COMM 301

The seminar will meet weekly. Discussions will be oriented to a range of topics and include gathering information, archiving artifacts, designing projects, conducting secondary research, positioning research questions, placing the project within field methods and literature, evolving research structures, projects, collaboration, and outcomes. By the end of the fall term, students will develop a proposal, research plan, and schedule for consideration by prospective advisors.

3.2 COMM 497– Honors Thesis (4 units, spring)

Honors Program Director, Mike Ananny, will arrange productive relationships with faculty

mentors to assure best prospects for successful completion, and will direct honors theses as needed. Typically, a final honors project will match a written thesis with a ‘making’ outcome. “Making” outcomes may include short-films, archives, sound, oral interviews, f[r]ictional narratives, activist programs.

Note:

- Required courses cannot be taken concurrently.
- Students may also work with a professor to customize a 400-level COMM course for honors status in place of COMM 495. This will be addressed after the applicant is admitted to the program and chooses to pursue this option.
- Students must receive at least a B+ or higher in the two honors courses.
- Completion of these courses does not guarantee departmental honors. You must also maintain a 3.5 cumulative and COMM GPA in order to graduate with Communication honors.

Name: _____

Student I.D. #: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Expected Graduation Date: Fall ☐ Spring ☐ Summer ☐ 20 _____

This application form and your essay should be turned in to Annenberg Advisement and Academic Services via email ascjadv@usc.edu by May 14, 2021.