

## HONORS COURSES

*What are Honors level classes? How will they help my student? How can I make sure we are doing them right? How is the GPA affected?*

Students and parents don't always understand how much weight college admissions officers place on advanced or honors level courses on an applicant's transcript. Colleges are not easily impressed by straight A's when they were all earned in easy courses. Honors level courses are also given an added boost in "weight". For example, a Standard A is worth 4.0, but an Honors A is worth 4.5, a Standard B is worth 3.0, but an Honors B is worth 3.5, and so forth.

### **What exactly is an Honors level course?**

According to the Education Reform Council, *"It is important to note that there are no specific standards or universal definition for "honors courses." Consequently, honors courses may vary greatly in design, content, quality, or academic challenge from school to school, and even from course to course within a school. The term **honors course** is a common label applied to courses, predominantly at the high school level, that are considered to be more academically challenging and prestigious, are given weighted grades, a numerical advantage when it comes to grading. Historically, honors courses have entailed more demanding college-preparatory coursework, and they were intended for the academically accelerated students in a school."*

According to Collegeboard.org (the makers of the SAT), *"Honors classes often offer the same curriculum as regular classes but are tailored for high-achieving students — covering additional topics or some topics in greater depth."*

According to Collegedata.com, *"Honors classes proceed at a faster pace and cover material in more depth than regular classes."*

An example of a World Lit course from Calvary Chapel High School, Costa Mesa, website course descriptions, the first taught at the standard level followed by an Honors level course:

### **WORLD LITERATURE (10 credits)**

Students continue grammar work and extensive vocabulary study. Composition skills will be shaped by topics that demonstrate range and diversity. Literature from Classical Greece to the present parallels the 10th grade World History course. Great emphasis is placed on the expansion and practical integration of students' higher vocabulary. Poetry, literary analysis and composition skills will continue to be developed.

### **WORLD LITERATURE HONORS (10 credits)**

This course extends the reading and language study of English, with more complex issues of rhetoric and style being introduced. Students begin a critical analysis of literature in order to formulate an argumentative thesis and to generate textual evidence. Greater emphasis is placed on the writing of clear, insightful and well-written essays. This course examines selections from World Literature and with a more comprehensive study of poetry.

Honors courses *can be created by the parent or by a tutor*, or taken through a formal program such as Biola Youth Academics (Torrey Honors), Spirit Academy (Honors), or other. Sometimes even a regular BYA or other class can be called "honors" when the tutor adds assignments, reading, field trips, or other dimension. It's sometimes worth asking.