

Sample Honors Course Enrichment Contract Proposal

Question 1

What is the academic rationale for undertaking this course enrichment contract rather than taking an Honors elective course?

I am a second-year Honors student, majoring in Economics and Geology and minoring in Spanish. I am one course away from finishing my lower-division Honors courses. For Cultural Visions, I took Dr. Sola-Corbacho's European History course and Dr. Hampton's US Schooling and American Society class. My two electives were in Dr. John's Writing in the Arts course and Geology with Provost Donovan. I am two writing emphasis courses away from completing my TCU core curriculum. My course schedule this spring is focused on making progress in both of my majors: two ECON courses, two GEOL courses (1 with a lab), and a Spanish class (to help with my minor).

I want to pursue this Honors enrichment contract for my final Honors elective because it would allow me to make significant progress toward my double major (and to avoid having to take two 18-hour semesters to finish my minor and both majors and having to take more than the standard four courses during my study abroad in Spain) and to get an early start with a set of ideas – on economics and philanthropy – I want to explore in my upper-division Honors thesis.

Question 2

Provide a detailed description of the course enrichment work you will undertake and how it will add value to your learning experience in the course. Specifically:

- *What do you propose to do? Be specific about your goals, methods, and timeline.*
- *How will this work enrich your learning, beyond the learning you would otherwise achieve in the course itself?*
- *What work products will you submit as evidence of your enriched learning?*

I want to complete an Honors enrichment contract in Dr. Rob Garnett's ECON 30253: History of Economic Thought. The course studies the biblical texts of economics, classic works that continue to define and *redefine* (in their evolving interpretations) the discipline of economics. I want to build on this course to study how [past and present interpretations of] these texts and ideas shape the practices of philanthropists.

In the course we focus on Adam Smith's and Karl Marx's writings on self-interest, competition, beneficence, cooperation, and exploitation. I want to enrich the course by studying how Smith and Marx influence the work of serious philanthropists who must think and work strategically to ideally "improve" a societal problem. My first goal is to understand how philanthropists build a thorough understanding of community's social needs, issues, and dynamics. I want to know how philanthropists—in both the past and present—identify the leverage points and needs, build relationships with stakeholders, negotiate donor interests and community need, and balance innovation and experience. My second goal is analyze when this works well and to

identify potential pitfalls in the process. My third goal is to understand how philanthropists evaluate their philanthropic investments and the social consequences of these evaluations.

I will read the following additional texts:

- Olivier Zunz's *Philanthropy in America* (2014), a book that will help me to gain a better understanding of how philanthropy has evolved in US history.
- *Creative Capitalism: A Conversation with Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, and Other Economic Leaders* (2008), a book that will help me understand the current climate philanthropists face when creating foundations and making gifts.
- "An Analysis of Adam Smith's Theory of Charity and the Problems of the Poor" by Thomas Birch (1998), an article that links Adam Smith's ideas directly to philanthropy.
- "The Principle of Self-Emancipation in Marx and Engels" by Hal Draper (1971), an article that examines Marx's thinking about poverty and his rejection of humanitarian-philanthropic elitism.

I will also watch the following TED Talks to better understand philanthropic practices and thinking:

- Sasha Dichter, "The Generosity Experiment"
- Dan Palotta, "The Way We Think About Charity is Dead Wrong"
- Christine Sherry, "Strategic Philanthropy for Beginners"
- Peter Singer, "The Why and How of Effective Altruism"

I will use what I learned from the above sources to develop questions about economic philosophy and philanthropy. I will use some of these questions when I interview three individuals: a foundation leader and two local philanthropists

- Dr. Joe Turk, Executive Vice President for Grant Administration, Pebworth Foundation
- Evelyn Jones, local philanthropist who heads a family foundation
- Mike Riggs, local philanthropist who gives to over 20 causes annually

I will complete all of the readings and viewings by October 20. For each book, I will compose a 4-5-page essay – a summary of the author's central argument, a discussion of the ideas I found most valuable or surprising in the book, and a set of questions I generated in response to the book (questions about the book, about the subject matter, or all of the above). For each article and TED Talk, I will provide a one-page paper in which I summarize the central argument of the author/speaker and identify the ideas or questions I found most valuable or surprising. To keep me accountable and to enrich my learning, I will meet with Dr. Garnett outside of class every other week to discuss what I am studying. At each meeting I will turn in at least one piece of writing, and our discussion will begin with this work.

Between October 21 and November 17, I will develop questions for my interviews, conduct my interviews, and compose transcripts of the interviews. On November 30, I will give a 20-minute presentation to my class examining how certain ideas from Adam Smith and Karl Marx continue to influence philanthropic practices and thinking in the US; I will also turn in a transcript of my

presentation to Dr. Garnett on this day. This presentation will require me to explore the connections between theory and practice, and this exploration will push me beyond the assigned readings and topics of Dr. Garnett's course.

Question 3

With whom do you propose to work and why? How will the supervising professor support you in the proposed learning process?

I have a good working relationship with Dr. Garnett. I took his Introductory Macroeconomics course and worked diligently to earn an "A." I plan to ask Dr. Garnett to chair my Honors thesis and would like to use this Honors enrichment contract to build our relationship and to show him my personal commitment to the project. Dr. Garnett is a well-known researcher in economics and philanthropy. His research examines the relationship between commercial and philanthropic forms of economic cooperation and the contributions of Adam Smith and Karl Marx to 21st century theories and practices of economics and philanthropy. Much of his recent work is directly relevant to my proposed Honors enrichment contract and my Honors thesis topic as I currently envision it. Dr. Garnett and I have talked about my project on several occasions and he has agreed to meet with me every two weeks during the fall semester and to provide timely written and oral feedback on my work throughout the semester.

Question 4

Why is this project important to you personally? How does it speak to your research or creative interests?

I want to write an Honors thesis on the philanthropic sector and its effectiveness. At this moment, I do not know what questions or problems my thesis will address. Working with Dr. Garnett on this honors enrichment contract would help me begin to explore the literature on philanthropy and economics and to give me a better sense of where my interests lie and what questions I might want to investigate further.

Personally, I have always been interested in philanthropy. I walked door-to-door raising funds for Jerry's Kids and sold cookies in my front yard for the Girls Scouts. I was the kid who managed a neighborhood lemonade stand for social causes. I now volunteer at two local agencies for several hours each week. Ultimately I want to work in the field of philanthropy, either for a private foundation or for the philanthropic wing of a company like Google. In fact, my dream would be to earn an advanced degree in philanthropy and to teach courses in philanthropy.

Question 5

Please explain in detail (based on the information shown on the last page of the contract form):

- *which honors learning outcome you will achieve through your course enrichment activities;*
and
- *which action step will be used to accomplish this learning outcome*

This Honors enrichment contract will require me to **synthesize ideas across disciplines or within a discipline**. In the case of my contract, I am working mostly in economics but extending that study to philanthropy; I am also synthesizing ideas from different major thinkers and traditions of thought within economics (namely, the ideas/traditions of Adam Smith and Karl Marx). To do this **I will explain disciplinary ideas in context and evaluate relevance** using contemporary writings and lectures on economics and philanthropy and evidence from first-person interviews.

To achieve the learning outcomes specified above, I will **use close reading and/or research to identify both abstract and “real-life” problems**. Specifically, I will complete the described readings, viewings, and assignments to develop a presentation that traces the influence of Marx and Smith on philanthropic thinking and practices. I will consider the consequences of this influence to define where philanthropy works and the problems philanthropists face.