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UNION HONORS



35+

Programs of study to choose from

40+

Classes offered as honors sections

3.64

Average GPA of current Union Honors students



Union Honors is a program for high-achieving, academically motivated students who attend and graduate from UCNJ and then transfer to a four-year institution.

UNION  **Honors**



Students in this program enroll in a UCNJ degree program and take honors courses to fulfill their general education and program requirements. Honors classes are limited to 20 students and are taught by dedicated faculty who emphasize critical thinking, analytical writing, and effective communication. Students who take these classes are exceptionally well prepared to transfer to four-year colleges and universities, to earn scholarships, and to be successful at their transfer institutions.



Union Honors students receive personalized advising and wrap-around professional support to ensure their success in the classroom and in the college community. Students in the Union Honors program are engaged with a community of scholars. They collaborate daily with

similarly focused peers in the Honors Lounge, at Honors events, and on projects in and out of the classroom.

Union Honors students serve as leaders of on-campus organizations, including the Academic Learning Center and Phi Theta Kappa. They frequently take advantage of research opportunities with faculty and staff. Union Honors students have also participated in Princeton University's Transfer Scholars Initiative. This engagement helps students build strong resumes and competitive applications when they apply to transfer institutions. Many Union Honors students have received scholarships, including the highly selective Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, to support their studies.

For more information, visit www.ucc.edu/honors or contact a Union Honors Admissions Officer at honors@ucc.edu



@UCNJ_Honors #UCNJ_Honors

www.ucc.edu/honors



ACADEMICS

Honors classes are small, seminar style classes that promote student engagement. Classes are limited to 20 students and are taught by UCNJ's most distinguished faculty. Honors classes focus on a learner-centered pedagogy, enhancing critical thinking and inquiry.

Students are invited to present their work at an Honors Symposium held each Fall.



COMMUNITY

The Honors Lounge serves as the center of the Honors program. Students gather here for study sessions, game nights, meetings, and events.

Workshops, social events, alumni transfer panels, and faculty meet and greets are just a few ways that students can build relationships with faculty and peers.



ADVISING

Honors students have a dedicated advisor who offers personalized guidance to support their success. The advisor assists students from registration through graduation, helping them navigate campus resources and the transfer process.

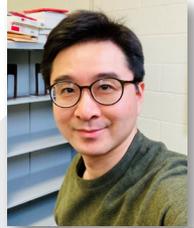


TRANSFER

Graduates of the Union Honors program at UCNJ have transferred to top schools, including Columbia, Cornell, Princeton, Dartmouth, Rutgers, and Georgetown. These students receive significant support when applying to colleges and universities.



We are proud to introduce our distinguished faculty:



@UCNJ_Honors #UCNJ_Honors

www.ucc.edu/honors



Dr. Valerae Hurley

 **Dr. Valerae Hurley** earned a PhD in Modern History and Literature from Drew University in 2001. She holds three additional degrees, a MPhil from Drew, a MA in History, and a BA in Fine Arts from Monmouth University. She was the 2014 recipient of the John & Suanne Roueche League of Innovation Excellence Award and the 2012 Student Government Recognition Award. Her latest publication, *Hawking Vengeance: Reading the French Revolutionary Press*, was published by Edinburgh University Press in April of 2020. She is currently working on another project, which will be entitled *The Woke Crowd in the French Revolution*.

Dr. Hurley's classes include Introduction to Western Civilization I and II, Classical Greece and Rome, and Twentieth Century Europe. Her approach to teaching honors classes includes projects that compel students to research controversial topics while also encouraging critical thinking skills when arguing or presenting their findings. Union Honors students are well prepared for this approach; indeed, many report that they find it both interesting and informative. Dr. Hurley gets great satisfaction from observing the individual intellectual growth that this exercise fosters in her students.



Krishna kumaari Janakiraman

 **Krishna kumaari Janakiraman** earned her Master's degree in Computer Applications and her Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Bharathidasan University in India. She has worked as a Head of the Computer Science Department at Bishop Cotton Women's College in India and as a Software Engineer, Module Leader, and Business Analyst at TATA-IBM, Syntel, and Databased solutions.

At UCNJ, Janakiraman teaches various Computer Science courses, including Systems Analysis and Design, Principles of Cybersecurity, Intro to Computer Applications, and the Honors section of Computer Programming Fundamentals using Python. She encourages her Honors students to develop teamwork through group discussions and presentations in her classes. Additionally, students participate in a capstone project that further develops their presentation and communication skills alongside subject knowledge. She is also dedicated to fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills by mentoring students in the IRAP research program.



Dr. Len Anyanwu

 **Dr. Len Anyanwu** earned a PhD in Economics from the University of Texas at Dallas. He also holds an MA in Economics and a BA in Government from the same university. Dr. Anyanwu joined UCNJ in 1999 and is currently Senior Professor of Economics and Business Management in the SSBH Division. Previously, he worked at the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) as a Research Professor in the School of Industrial Management and consulted for the Economic Directorate of NATO, the Educational Testing Service (ETS), and other corporate and public organizations.

His scholarship includes work in the areas of technological change, competitiveness, and globalization. He has published extensively, including most recently: "The 2024 Contractionary Monetary Policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria Against Inflation Isn't Working Because it is Based on Shaky Theoretical Grounds"; "Strengthening the Preconditions for Economic Take-off in Nigeria Via Grater Inward-looking Policies"; both published in the African Global Leadership Council online (2024); and "An All-inclusive Political Campaign Process Can Produce Sound Economic Policy," published in the African Council on Global Affairs online (2019).

Dr. Anyanwu teaches Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, International Economics, Money & Banking, and Business Organization & Management. In his honors courses, Dr. Anyanwu strives to create an environment where students are active learners, think through real-world issues, and conduct evidence-based scholarship. Dr. Anyanwu has experienced great success in triggering students' interests and motivation to learn by showing them how closely economics is related to the real world. He is pleased and driven by student feedback that feeds his passion for both research and teaching in this applied approach.





*Associate Professor
Larry Kwon*

 **Associate Professor Larry Kwon** earned a BS in Aviation Technology Maintenance from Vaughn College in New York and a master's degree in Mathematics Education at Columbia University, where he continues to pursue an EdD in Mathematics Education. During college, he discovered that mathematics is connected to every discipline and was inspired to become a mathematics teacher. He presented "New technology of students' assessment and its positive outcomes" at the 2017 Faculty Showcase hosted by NJEdge focusing on how well-prepared learning objects and the learning management system can be used both inside and outside the classroom to promote student engagement and learning.

Professor Kwon teaches a wide range of mathematics courses from Remedial Mathematics to Differential Equations at UCNJ. He uses active learning instructional strategies to promote student engagement by incorporating videos and mathematical modeling research projects. His educational background and diverse teaching experiences help Union Honors students better connect mathematics to different industries.



Dr. Michele Rotunda

 **Dr. Michele Rotunda** earned her MA in History from the Rutgers-Newark/NJIT Federated Program and her PhD in History from Rutgers University. She is the Faculty Coordinator for the Union Honors program and serves as an advisor to the History Club. She was selected as a 2015-16 Fellow at the Metropolitan Colleges Institute for Teaching Improvement (MetroCITI) at Teachers College, Columbia University. She won the New Jersey Studies Academic Alliance Teaching Award in 2014 and the Neblett Award for Educational Excellence in Teaching & Learning in 2016. Her

book, *A Drunkard's Defense: Alcohol, Murder, and Medical Jurisprudence in Nineteenth Century America*, was published in 2021.

Dr. Rotunda teaches History and Government classes including U.S. History, Women in American History, and American Government and Politics. She encourages students to engage in disciplinary thinking through various active learning projects that have included presenting and publishing original research. She enjoys being a part of Union Honors and looks forward to challenging and being challenged by her students every day.



*Associate Professor
Sherry Heidary*

 **Associate Professor Sherry Heidary** began working at UCNJ in July 2007. She has held several leadership positions at the college including serving as the Chair of the Chemistry Department, Chair of the Standard I Middle States Self Study committee, Faculty Advisor to the Student Government Association, Faculty Advisor to Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society, and Faculty Advisor to the American Honors Council. She is currently a commissioner to the Union County Commission on the Status of Women, Union County YWCA Board member, and a Trustee on the Union County College Foundation Board.

Professor Heidary is the first recipient of the prestigious Fiat Lux Award in 2017, and a two-time recipient of the Dr. Richard and Barbara Neblett Prize Award for Educational Excellence in Teaching and Learning. In 2015, she was awarded the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence Award in Teaching, Learning, and Leadership at Community and Technical Colleges. She was also awarded the Association of Community College Trustees "ACCT" Northeast Regional Faculty Award in 2023 and the New Jersey Council of Community Colleges "NJCCC" Distinguished Faculty Award in 2024.

Professor Heidary holds a BS in Polymer Engineering, and a MS in Polymer Science from Penn State University. Her interest in STEM courses was nurtured by her chemistry high school teacher and her love of teaching by her mother. She finds teaching STEM students interesting, challenging, exciting, and extremely rewarding. Her mission in life is helping her students achieve their goals and dreams. She is an avid ballroom dancer and loves to travel.





*Associate Professor
Marc Postiglione*

 **Associate Professor Marc Postiglione** serves in the Social Sciences, Business and History Division where he works with our Sport Management students. He has a BA from Long Island University and a MA from St. Joseph Seminary and College. Professor Postiglione has served on many college-wide governance committees, including Strategic Planning and Curriculum, and as Chair of the Governance and Leadership Council. He currently serves as a Tri-Chair for the College's 2025 Middle States Accreditation visit. Professor P. is also the Head Golf Coach at the College and has been working with the Golf Team since 2002.

Professor Postiglione volunteers to coach golf at his children's school, Koinonia Academy in Plainfield.

Professor Postiglione teaches a wide variety of Sport Management classes including Introduction to Sport Management, Evolution of American Sports, Sport & Law, Sports in Society, and Current Issues in Sports. He also teaches philosophy classes including Ethics and an honors section of Introduction to Philosophy. Professor Postiglione enjoys working individually with his students to help them reach their academic and personal goals.



Dr. Rama Lohani-Chase

 **Dr. Rama Lohani-Chase** is a faculty member in the Social Sciences, Business, and History Division. An interdisciplinary teacher-scholar, she received her PhD in Women's and Gender Studies with concentrations in Sociology and Anthropology from Rutgers University-New Brunswick, and has researched and published on the topics of social movements, gender and sexuality, and socio-cultural issues. Among her various contributions at UCNJ, she has served as an advisor to the college's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. She is also a recipient of the 2018 John and Suanne Roueche Excellence Award from the League for Innovation in the Community.

Dr. Lohani-Chase teaches sociology courses such as the Principles of Sociology, Social Problems, Gender and Work, Minorities in American Life, and Marriage and the Family. In her Union Honors courses, she encourages inquiry-based discussion and collaborative learning in the belief that an environment in which students learn from and appreciate each other is conducive to growth.



Dr. Phillip Papas

documentary film *Loyalty & Rebellion* (2019), which was inspired by his book *That Ever Loyal Island*.

Dr. Papas enjoys teaching in the Union Honors Program and challenging his students to appreciate the history of their communities and to think critically about the past. He encourages students to visit museums, historical sites, and online exhibits and to ask questions about the way these platforms present history. Dr. Papas fosters a learning environment that opens students to new research and experiences, makes them comfortable critiquing how history is taught and presented to the public, and helps them develop the skills necessary to become successful in their professional careers and as members of society.



Dr. Phillip Papas is a Senior Professor of History in the Social Sciences, Business, and History Division at UCNJ. He earned his BA (History/Political Science) and MA (History) from Hunter College-CUNY, MPhil (History) and PhD (History) from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. In addition to journal and newspaper articles, book reviews, and blog posts, Dr. Papas has authored *That Ever Loyal Island: Staten Island and the American Revolution* (2007), *Renegade Revolutionary: The Life of General Charles Lee* (2014), which earned several awards, and co-authored *Port Richmond* (2009). He has also been featured in the



Dr. Mary Meeks

Dr. Meeks enjoys teaching honors classes because the students are willing to go the extra mile to delve deeper into the analysis of literature, thus keeping her on her toes. She finds that the students in the Union Honors Program tend to be particularly hard-working and creative, which is inspiring. Her students comment on her caring approach to supporting their learning.



Dr. Mary Meeks has a PhD in Modern History and Literature from Drew University and a BA in Psychology from Brooklyn College. She is a Brontë scholar with an interest in the intersections of life and literature. She joined the faculty at UCNJ in January 2007 and enjoys learning in various disciplines. Dr. Meeks is also energized by College Life activities outside the classroom. She has served as an advisor to multiple clubs and believes that campus involvement is important to student success. She is a 2019 recipient of the Neblett Prize for Educational Excellence in Teaching and Learning.





Dr. Mandana Ahsani

Dr. Mandana Ahsani is a Senior Professor of Psychology. Dr. Ahsani has a BS in Psychology from National University of Iran, a MEd in Computer Assisted Instruction from the University of Illinois, and a MA and PhD in Cognitive/Experimental Psychology from Rutgers University. She has served as the Chair of the Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee, the Co-chair of the Professional Development Committee, and advisor to Psi Beta and the Psychology Club. Dr. Ahsani was the Co-chair of the Middle States Accreditation Study and a former advisor for Iota Xi chapter of Phi Theta Kappa international honor society. She is the winner of the 2011 Paragon Award for New Advisors from

the Phi Theta Kappa International Headquarters and the recipient of the Neblett Award for Educational Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Dr. Ahsani's classes include General Psychology, Child Psychology, Lifespan Development, Social Psychology, and Social Research Methods. Her honors classes are seminar based and encourage critical thinking, problem solving, and communicating through research, presentations, and group projects. Honors students find this approach challenging, yet stimulating, and are ultimately well-prepared for their future academic and career endeavors.



Dr. Mushtaq Khan

Dr. Mushtaq Khan earned his three post baccalaureate degrees in chemistry (PhD, MPhil, and MSc) from Aligarh Muslim University, India in 1986, 1983 and 1981. He worked as a chemistry instructor at Wesley College, Hyderabad, India for two years and then came to the United States in 1989 to work as a post-doctoral research associate at South Dakota State University. He worked at Ferris State University and Oklahoma State University before coming to UCNJ in 1993. His research involves isolation, identification, and synthesis of natural products, and he has published several research papers in peer reviewed journals.

Dr. Khan teaches Organic Chemistry I and II in the Union Honors program. Organic chemistry is a tough subject for the majority of students, but Dr. Khan encourages students to first understand the fundamental concepts, apply logic and critical thinking, and then explain how and why organic reactions occur. His approach to teaching organic chemistry includes group presentations, a research paper, and poster presentations. Dr. Khan's goal is to prepare his students to shake off their initial jitters and get ready to confidently and logically solve organic chemistry problems. His Honors students consistently perform well above the national average on the national exam developed by the American Chemical Society.



Assistant Professor
Roberto Carlos Garcia

 **Assistant Professor Roberto Carlos Garcia** earned an MFA in Poetry and Poetry in Translation from Drew University. He holds two additional degrees, a BA in English from Kean University, and an AS in Liberal Arts from Union County College. Professor Garcia has published widely, both online and in print. He has participated in countless poetry readings and was awarded the 2023 New Jersey State Council of the Arts Poetry Fellowship. His published books are *Melancolía*, *black/Maybe: An Afro Lyric*, *[Elegies]*, *What Can I Tell You: Selected Poems*, and the essay collection, *Traveling Freely*.

Professor García's classes include Introduction to Literature, Contemporary Literature, and Latinx Literature Studies. He is committed to teaching students the ways literature is relevant to their daily lives and that there are books out there written just for them.



Dr. Marie C. Montes-Matías

 **Dr. Marie C. Montes-Matías** holds a BS in Industrial Microbiology from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus and a PhD in Microbiology and Molecular Genetics from Rutgers University, New Brunswick. Her area of expertise is environmental microbiology, and her thesis was focused on the analysis of novel enzymes involved in the metabolism of hydrocarbons. Her research interests are in the area of environmental and industrial microbiology with molecular biology and biotechnology applications. She is very passionate about teaching and received the 2018 John and Suanne Roueche Excellence

Award from the League for Innovation in the Community College. She also enjoys working with student organizations and currently serves as co-advisor to the college's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa.

Dr. Montes-Matías teaches General Biology I and II, Microbiology and Introduction to Biology. As a mentor of research projects for STEM majors, she is actively involved in promoting undergraduate research at UCNJ. She enjoys teaching honors courses because they offer her the opportunity to provide students with course research-based experiences while fostering scientific reasoning and critical thinking in the classroom.





Dr. Wallace Smith

 Celebrating over 35 years in higher education, **Dr. Wallace Smith** has had multiple roles that led to his position as Senior Professor of Psychology and Sociology at UCNJ.

Dr. Smith is an identical twin who was raised in the Bronx. His original goal was to be a psychologist. He earned an Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts, a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, a Master's degree in Counseling and Education from Buffalo State, an additional Master's Degree in Education and Curriculum Design from Columbia University, and a Doctorate in Education from Columbia University.

Dr. Smith began teaching college classes in 1981, while holding other positions over the years, including Psychological Counselor at Farmingdale University, Assistant Dean for Residence Life at Lock Haven University, Adjunct Professor/Assistant to the Dean of Student Life and Admissions at Columbia University, Assistant VP for Academic Affairs at Suffolk Community College, Provost of the Plainfield Campus of Union County College, and then Senior Professor of Psychology and Sociology at UCNJ.

Dr. Smith's major focuses in psychology include the Psychology of Motivation, Cognitive/Behavioral Therapy, Client Centered Therapy, Phobia Therapy, Hypnotherapy, and Humanistic Psychotherapies. Dr. Smith is honored to be a faculty member in the Honors Program and is dedicated to student success. He will do anything he possibly can to help every student succeed at UCNJ!

 **Dr. Karen Zielony** earned a PhD in Applied Linguistics, with a specialization in Composition Theory and Rhetoric, from New York University in 1996. She also holds a MA from NYU in English Education and a BA, Magna Cum Laude, in English Literature from Queens College, CUNY. Her doctoral dissertation focused on cultural difference in rhetoric as seen through composing processes in writing. Dr. Zielony taught writing courses at NYU including an undergraduate teacher-training class and a graduate course in socio-linguistics. She taught undergraduate English writing classes at Ben Gurion University in Israel, where she also taught training courses to teachers of English working in the Arab sector and a writing course for graduate students writing their doctoral dissertation in varied disciplines at the university. Dr. Zielony also worked in the business sector, writing technical instructional manuals for an international software engineering company in computer-aided graphic design, with offices in Tel Aviv, Israel and Palo Alto, CA.

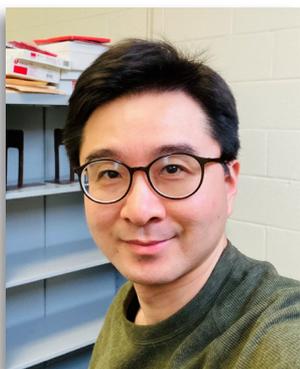
Dr. Zielony began teaching at UCNJ in 2004. Her courses currently include English 101 and English 102, and a 200-level course in Literature and the Arts in the Twentieth Century. Dr. Zielony's classes are highly student-centered, as she views and values the writing and learning process as rather idiosyncratic and individual for each student.



Dr. Vikul Rajpara

Dr. Vikul Rajpara is an associate professor of Chemistry at UCNJ. He completed his Bachelor's in Chemistry at South Gujarat University, and his Master's in Organic Chemistry and Doctorate in Materials Chemistry at the University of South Dakota. Dr. Rajpara is a recipient of the Neblett Prize for Educational Excellence in Teaching. He is also the recipient of a Gold Lapel pin from the President for his dedication to students and the college. Dr. Rajpara is very involved in Union Honors events and collegewide activities.

Dr. Rajpara teaches various chemistry courses including honors sections of General Chemistry and Organic Chemistry. He incorporates various group projects in his honors course with a focus on developing critical thinking and problem solving skills in students. As part of the honors project, students are required to prepare a video explaining a concept or experiment. Additionally, Dr. Rajpara incorporates topics related to sustainable lifestyle and green energy in his classes.



Yohan Kim

Dr. Yohan Kim attained a PhD in Molecular and Cellular Biology from the University of Iowa and an MA in Biology from Eastern Washington University. He also holds a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) license after completing Veterinary Medicine School in Korea. His doctoral research concentrated on the investigation of intracellular signaling pathways pertinent to brain development and Alzheimer's disease (AD), leading to published findings. Following this, he served as a post-doctoral fellow at the Nathan Kline Institute, New York, where his work delved into the extracellular vesicle-mediated pathogenesis of AD.

Dr. Kim is engaged in teaching General Biology I and II, as well as Introduction to Biology. He plays a mentorship role in research projects for STEM majors, actively advocating for undergraduate research endeavors at UCNJ. Dr. Kim particularly appreciates teaching honors courses due to their capacity to provide students with research-based experiences within the curriculum, thereby nurturing scientific reasoning and critical thinking skills in the academic environment.





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