in this issue

Presidential Address

New Ideas for Honors Courses

New Ideas for Honors Administration

With Articles By:

Bonnie D. Irwin
Joan Digby and Kathleen Nolan
Leda Cempellin
Jennifer Gresham, Betty Carlson Bowles, Marty Gibson, Kim Robinson, Mark Farris, and Juliana Felts
Stephan R. Campbell, Robert T. Grammer, Lonnie Vandyell, and William H. Hooper
Julie M. Barst, Julie D. Lane, and Christine Stewart-Nuñez
Ellen J. Goldberger
Mark Boren
Allison B. Wallace

Aaron T. Coey and Carolyn Haynes
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The cover image was taken in the summer of 2011 by Tim Heckman of LIU Post at the NCHC Partners in the Parks program in the Grand Canyon Parashant.
EDITORIAL POLICY

Honors in Practice (HIP) accommodates the need and desire for articles about nuts-and-bolts issues, innovative practices in individual honors programs, and other honors topics of concern to the membership. HIP complements the semi-annual scholarly journal of the NCHC, Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC). Both journals employ a double-blind review system. JNCHC publishes scholarly essays that stress research in and on honors education. HIP publishes practical and descriptive essays: descriptions of successful honors courses, suggestions for out-of-class experiences, administrative issues, and other matters of use and/or interest to honors faculty, administrators, and students. Essays should present ideas and/or practices that will be useful to other honors administrators and faculty, not just descriptions of “what we do at our institution.”

Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu.

DEADLINE

HIP is published annually. The deadline for submissions is January 1.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. We accept material by e-mail attachment (preferred) or disk. We do not accept material by fax or hard copy.

2. If documentation is used, the documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author’s primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation to a list of references (bibliography) is strongly preferred, and the editor will revise all internal citations in accordance with MLA guidelines.

3. There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.

4. Accepted essays are edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for infelicities of style or presentation. Authors have ample opportunity to review and approve edited manuscripts before publication.
Gary Bell has been a stalwart supporter of honors locally, regionally, and nationally for almost twenty-five years. His commitment to honors started even earlier when he was an undergraduate honors student at Brigham Young University, where he got both his BA and MA. He then earned his PhD from UCLA, and, after teaching at Illinois State and Western Illinois University, he joined the faculty of Sam Houston University, where in 1988 he became the founding honors director until 1993. He then moved to Texas Tech University and became Professor of History and Director of the Honors Program, along with other administrative positions, until becoming Dean of the Honors College from 1998 to 2010. While continuing to publish and teach in his field of Tudor-Stuart England, Gary chaired the Council of Texas Honors Administrators from 1994 to 1998. He subsequently served four years as secretary/treasurer and then, in 2001-02, as president of the Great Plains Honors Council. In the NCHC, he was elected to serve on the Executive Committee from 1996 to 1999 and co-chaired the Finance Committee from 1998 through 2010; he is currently serving his second year as treasurer. In addition to being the invaluable moneyman for NCHC, Gary has contributed his intellect and expertise regularly to Beginning in Honors, Developing in Honors, and numerous conference sessions. He has also published essays in the NCHC monograph The Honors College Phenomenon and in Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council, including one of my all-time favorites, “Honors and Intercollegiate Athletics,” in the spring/summer 2010.
issue. Gary has been a dedicated champion of honors, bringing its ideals of intellectual inquiry, critical thinking, inclusiveness, rationality, and rigor into the public forum by giving talks and writing papers for a general audience. Those of us who have had the pleasure of attending Gary’s conference sessions or reading his essays have benefited from his seasoned—and occasionally spicy—insights into honors education, and all of us have benefited from his less visible but indispensable work behind the scenes in keeping our organization on track financially. We gratefully dedicate this issue of *Honors in Practice* to our colleague Gary Bell.
Editor’s Introduction

ADA LONG
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

We begin this volume of Honors in Practice with Bonnie D. Irwin’s presid-ential address at the 2011 National Collegiate Honors Council conference in Phoenix, Arizona. Irwin develops a comparison between Scheherazade in 1001 Nights and the NCHC: like that fictional storyteller, the NCHC needs to assure the survival of honors by carefully shaping its narratives. The countervailing story of higher education is burdened with negative and dangerous reviews in today’s culture. By shaping a powerful and positive story of our own, Irwin argues, NCHC can not only energize honors programs and colleges but revitalize and enliven education generally.

The essays included in this volume of HIP are the kinds of stories that Irwin encourages honors teachers and administrators to write. The first nine essays are accounts of innovative honors courses that engage students and faculty in new ways of seeing and structuring knowledge. The other seven essays tell stories about programmatic innovations that promise not only to strengthen honors education but, in many cases, to fan out into the institutions in which honors is housed, thus doing the revitalizing work that Irwin has encouraged.

The role of the NCHC in initiating precisely this kind of revitalization is the subject of “Honoring the National Parks: A Local Adaptation of a Partners in the Parks Adventure.” Joan Digby and Kathleen Nolan describe an NCHC Partners in the Parks program hosted by LIU Post—“From Fire Island to Ellis Island”—and the spinoff from it of a course called “Honoring the Parks” at St. Francis College. The essay illustrates the way that NCHC-sponsored programs can spread from a single experience into multiple innovations at local and national levels. The authors also reveal the new energy to be gained by partnering with professionals outside of academia, in this case National Park Services rangers.

The next essay gives another account of collaboration between honors faculty and nonacademic professionals and also between freshman honors students and senior-level non-honors majors. In “Turning Challenges into Gold: Cross-Listing Introductory Honors with Advanced Classes in the Visual Arts,” Leda Cempellin describes her honors course called “The Museum Experience” at South Dakota State University. Working with the curator of the South Dakota Art Museum, Cempellin found ways to combine the talents and ambitions of honors students with the acquired skills and knowledge of art...
majors in a semester-long service project designing an exhibition catalogue. This story of cross-listing an introductory honors course with an advanced visual arts course suggests a model for creating similar cross-listings with other disciplines.

Team teaching is another form of collaboration that is common in honors programs and colleges, but nothing is common about an honors course on death team-taught by faculty members in nursing and respiratory therapy at Midwestern State University and described in “Death—Planning for the Inevitable: A Hybrid Honors Course.” The authors—Jennifer Gresham, Betty Carlson Bowles, Marty Gibson, Kim Robinson, Mark Farris, and Juliana Felts—describe a course that combines traditional face-to-face classroom time with an online component via Blackboard. They argue in the essay for the benefits of online education as a means to elicit participation from introspective honors students who may be reluctant to speak up in class and who tend to do better academically when given the time to think out their ideas before expressing them.

“Honors Analytics: Science, An Interdisciplinary Lab-Based Course on Visual Perception” is an account of another team-taught course. Stephen R. Campbell, Robert T. Grammer, Lonnie Yandell, and William H. Hooper describe a junior-level honors course that combines physics, biology, psychology, and computer science. The logistics and content of the course provide a model for successful interdisciplinary honors courses in science even though this one had to be abandoned after ten years because the rapid growth of the honors program at Belmont University made it infeasible.

Another team-taught honors course is the focus of “Women Shaping Their World: An Honors Colloquium” by Julie M. Barst, Julie D. Lane, and Christine Stewart-Nuñez of South Dakota State University. The authors suggest that women’s studies courses are especially beneficial to honors students by combining their academic interests with personal and emotional challenges. Their colloquium combined gender issues with multicultural studies so that students could see connections to lives that were both like and unlike their own. The authors list the intended outcomes of the class and how they achieved these outcomes.

In “On Honors Students Dreaming the Gothic,” Mark Boren of the University of North Carolina Wilmington illustrates that a course need not be team-taught in order to be interdisciplinary. He gives a detailed account of an honors course in which he combined close textual analysis and psychoanalytic theory to the study of the Gothic form from Dracula to Lady Gaga. Boren shows that this methodology lured honors students from their typically practical and goal-oriented mode into examining texts, their lives, and their culture in ways that surprised and delighted them. The course provided critical tools useful in all contexts and challenged students both intellectually and personally.

In a different context, some similar goals inspired the redesign of an introductory honors seminar at Mount Ida College. In “Designing a First-Year
Honors Seminar with *A Whole New Mind,* Ellen J. Goldberger tells her story of reading Daniel Pink’s *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future* and realizing that she needed to change the way she was teaching. Her seminar, which had been a typical college-orientation course, became instead a leap into creative and experiential pedagogy. In her essay, Goldberger describes the innovative details of a course that has become a model for her college, where all first-year seminars now use her approach.

A creative approach to teaching in honors is also the focus of Allison B. Wallace’s “The Place of Drawing in Place Journaling.” At the University of Central Arkansas, Wallace teaches courses on nature writing and environmental activism in which a significant requirement is getting to know one place outdoors and documenting it throughout the semester in both writing and drawing. She suggests that drawing teaches students how to see and value the natural world and prepares them to become responsible stewards, a strategy and goal that may spark the interest of many honors educators.

Creative thinking and personal development may not be the first traits that come to mind when most of us think about preparing students to write an honors thesis, but Aaron Coey and Carolyn Haynes show us how they incorporated these dynamics in “Honors Pre-Thesis Workshop, 2.0.” They have revised the thesis workshop for honors students at Miami University (Ohio) from the original version, which was probably typical of such workshops around the country, to make it less intimidating and more fun as well as more productive. Coey and Haynes analyze and document the success of the changes they have made, which include self-analysis, creative thinking, and peer interaction. The text of this essay and also the appendices should be useful and inspiring to other honors deans and directors.

As we shift now from curricular to programmatic matters, we stay with the topic of honors theses in the essay “Developing an Electronic Repository for Undergraduate Theses” by Foster Levy, Rebecca Pyles, Celia Szarejko, and Linda Wyatt. The authors present a clear and compelling case that honors programs should collaborate with their institutional librarians to create an electronic repository for honors theses. They describe the implementation of such a repository at East Tennessee State University, explaining the steps they took, the systems they adopted, and the reasons for their decisions. Any honors administrator considering establishment of a digital system for submitting and archiving honors theses will find this essay invaluable.

“An Outcome-Based Honors Program: The Honors Option Points (HOPs) System” describes another programmatic innovation. Bradley E. Wilson of Slippery Rock University gives an account of the honors program’s self-evaluation process that led to a new, outcome-based structure of the honors curriculum. Given what the program sought and valued in its graduates, the honors director, faculty, and students collaborated in designing a system in which students can gain honors credits not only through courses and contracts but also through study abroad, research presentations, publications, and leadership positions. The essay describes the system they developed and advocates.
an outcome-based self-evaluation as a means to adapt honors requirements to
the particular goals of a program and its students.

The next essay—“Doing the Honors: How to Implement a Departmental
Honors Program in a Business School” by Julie Urda—is aimed at faculty in
business schools who are hoping to start a departmental honors program but
who are unfamiliar with honors. Urda outlines a ten-step process, based on
the development of the departmental honors program in management and
marketing at Rhode Island College, for planning and implementing a depart-
mental honors program within a business school.

The final three essays in this volume of HIP describe honors initiatives
that have had a significant influence on the institutions in which the honors
programs are housed. In “The Institutional Impact of Honors though a
Campus-Community Common Read,” Timothy J. Nichols uses his honors col-
lege and university as a case study for developing an honors-led common
reading program that can improve the education of all students, honors and
non-honors. Nichols gives an account of the origin and implementation of the
common reading program at South Dakota State University as a potential
model for the development of such a program within and beyond honors at
other institutions.

Kevin W. Dean and Michael B. Jendzurski tell the story of another hon-
ors-led initiative that has benefitted the whole campus in “Affirming Quality
Teaching: A Valuable Role for Honors.” The honors college at the West
Chester University of Pennsylvania has initiated a low-cost and student-direct-
ed celebration of excellent teachers throughout the university. The authors
provide a detailed account of the program they have developed and a
description of its multiple benefits to a wide variety of constituents both in and
outside of the honors college.

An especially ambitious multidisciplinary collaboration is the topic of our
final essay, “The Genesis of an Honors Faculty: Collective Reflections on a
Process of Change,” by Robert W. Glover, Charlie Slavin, Sarah Harlan-
Haughey, Jordan P. LaBouff, Justin D. Martin, Mimi Killinger, and Mark
Haggerty. The essay includes seven narratives about the recent establishment
at the University of Maine of “preceptorships,” joint appointments in honors
and academic departments that are teacher/scholar positions for faculty mem-
bers who conduct research projects with undergraduates. Housed half in the
honors college and half in an academic department, each of these new posi-
tions is non-tenure-track but offers benefits that attract excellent candidates.
The six faculty members who now fill these positions have become an inter-
disciplinary cohort of honors faculty. Honors administrators who have the
resources and potential, in collaboration with academic departments, to
develop a cadre of honors faculty will find a wealth of useful details here
about designing the job descriptions, negotiating with departments, advertis-
ing the positions, and hiring qualified candidates.

Two motifs that run through all the essays in this volume of HIP are inno-
vation and collaboration, with both contributing to the revitalizing work that
Bonnie Irwin advocated in her presidential address. Both within and beyond individual programs and colleges, honors directors, deans, and faculty are finding new ways to engage and excite students and to strengthen higher education. This volume of essays gives us all cause for hope despite the budget cuts and negative press that are currently threatening higher education.
Presidential Address
We Are the Stories We Tell

BONNIE D. IRWIN
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

(What follows is a slightly revised version of the presidential address that Bonnie Irwin delivered on Saturday, October 22, 2011, at the annual NCHC conference in Phoenix, Arizona.)

wa‘adraka shahrazaad ~S-Sabaa%H fasakatat ~an ~I-kalaam ~I-mubaaH.
“But morning overtook Scheherazade, and she lapsed into silence.”

As I approach my last hour of the presidency of NCHC, my voice will fade; it will become less prominent in the discourse of honors and our organization, and a new day will bring new stories into our midst. Yet my stories of our organization and our meeting in Phoenix will endure as I return to my campus, tired but enlightened, inspired to apply what I have learned and experienced over these four days. You each will do the same, returning home and telling your stories; by doing so, you will tell the story of NCHC.

I study storytelling and the living, breathing, changing stories that constitute who we are as individuals and communities. NCHC can be defined by our numbers: we have more members than ever before, and our endowment has surpassed the one-million mark. NCHC can be defined by our accomplishments: we have successful conferences and institutes, provocative and enlightening publications, and a thriving support network for our members. I believe that NCHC is also, maybe even primarily, the stories we tell as individual members, and that NCHC is the totality of these stories.

Year after year, our members report that the most valuable component of the conference is the opportunity to network with others, to share our stories and hear those of others, and I wager that, like me, you will return home with a host of stories. My husband will hear stories of good meals, good friends, long nights and early mornings; my friend and associate dean will hear stories of contentious yet productive meetings, of what I might have done differently or what more I might have done over this past year as NCHC president; my provost, as always, will hear stories of student experiences, successful programs on other campuses, and a fine glass of wine.

We are the stories we tell. Over the last year, I have been thinking of those no longer with us, like John Portz and John Grady and a host of others whose stories became the foundations of our dreams and our vision of what we could become. I have been listening to the stories of those among you who have been active in this organization since the days when I still thought I was going to be an international lawyer, stories that have shaped events like this conference and
have informed the committees that allow us to build for future generations of students and faculty. I have been thinking about the stories of our staff in Lincoln and how quickly those stories have become part of our organizational fabric. And I have been smiling as I contemplate the stories of thousands of students who have joined us at our meetings over the years and the thousands more who have participated in our honors activities and classes; the struggles and accomplishments of these students are at the heart of our story.

Our stories define us; they also sustain us. The 1001 Nights tells the story of Scheherazade, who must tell a compelling story every night so that her tyrannical husband will not execute her in the morning. The legend has it that she tells these stories for a thousand and one nights, an infinite number in Arabic lore, but what the book is really about is the power of story.

My charge to NCHC members is to reflect on the story you want to tell. If we are to fulfill our mission of advocating honors, we have to not only tell our current story but also dare to dream into the future and imagine what that story will be.

What will our story be? Will we be able to channel the hundreds of stories we tell within our organization into a coherent narrative that can help shape the future of higher education, ensuring that future generations of students receive the same quality of education and experience as those with us in Phoenix? How we tell our stories and to whom will, in large part, determine the future of NCHC. We do not want our stories to dissipate within the cacophony of the dominant higher education narrative today, which argues that students are adrift, professors care only about research, and administrators care only about numbers. Our story is much more meaningful, characterized by bright and compassionate students, talented faculty dedicated to student success, and staff who work tirelessly to support the accomplishments of our students and faculty.

The pressures on honors education are increasing dramatically. Legislators and citizens seem more interested in job training and scientific research than in the fabric of our culture and our democracy. We must continue to tell the compelling stories of our successes and work to expand our audiences. One of the reasons I so admire Scheherazade is that she possesses two qualities I continually try to nurture in myself: creativity and bravery. As an organization, we need to apply the creativity we bring to teaching and learning to communicating our stories in new and better ways. We need to be brave enough to tell our stories even to those we fear may not listen; a compelling story can capture the attention of even the most stubborn audiences.

I always keep two books within reach both at home and at school: one, as you might have guessed by now, is the 1001 Nights. The other is Don Quixote, the story of a man who read so many fanciful stories that he went mad and created his own reality, based on his aspirations and not the stark world that surrounded him. I do not want to suggest that we ignore the stark realities. Indeed, I think we need to be well-informed about the threats to high-quality higher
education. But I think we can, through our stories, begin to change these realities. We are the stories we tell. We control what that story will be, and, if we are creative and brave, our story will be a compelling one.

“But morning overtook Scheherazade, and she lapsed into silence. Then Dinarzad said, ‘What a strange and entertaining story!’ Scheherazade replied, ‘What is this compared with what I shall tell you tomorrow night if the king spares me and lets me live!’”

The author may be contacted at bdirwin@eiu.edu.
New Ideas for Honors Courses
Honoring the National Parks: A Local Adaptation of a Partners in the Parks Adventure

JOAN DIGBY
LIU POST
KATHLEEN NOLAN
ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

The National Collegiate Honors Council has long recognized that collaboration among institutions is important to honors education. Since its inception over five decades ago, NCHC has promoted the mutual exchange of ideas about honors in order to disseminate the best of these ideas as potential prototypes (Andrews). In addition to its annual NCHC conferences, which offer a large forum for sharing ideas, NCHC has fostered and supported a variety of collaborative programs such as Honors Semesters and Faculty Institutes, the most recent of which is the Partners in the Parks Program (PITP), which—like its predecessor programs—is designed not only to provide educational opportunities for students and faculty in honors but to inspire educational innovations within honors programs and colleges across the country. PITP has already begun to spin off such innovations. The adaptation of the PITP program “Fire Island to Ellis Island” in a college course called “Honoring the Parks” demonstrates the way that colleges and universities can use NCHC resources to inspire new educational opportunities on their campuses.

Partners in the Parks became an NCHC experiential learning program in 2008. Designed to inspire commitment to America’s national parks, PITP is “predicated on a three-fold purpose: to educate students about the national parks, to engage them in recreational activities that are the essence of park experiences, and ultimately to urge stewardship of these treasured spaces through a lifetime of involvement” (Digby). In only four years the program already has more than three hundred alumni and an expanding number of national park venues (see Appendix). These week-long immersion seminars, in which students and faculty along with National Park Service (NPS) park rangers study a park from multiple perspectives, were not initially designed as credit-bearing courses, yet within a few years of the pilot program at Bryce Canyon, colleges started offering such experiences for credit. Heather-Thiessen Reily,
Director of Honors at Western State College of Colorado, developed a PITP week at Black Canyon of the Gunnison as a rigorous three-credit course open to students from all NCHC programs and colleges; she describes the evolution and content of this course in *Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks* (Digby, ch.3). In addition to courses specifically structured for credit, some member institutions that send students to PITP programs offer their participants credit based on journals, papers, or creative projects presented as evidence of learning outcomes worthy of academic credit.

In the adaptation we discuss below, a PITP program became the model for a course at a local college. The PITP host institution for “Fire Island to Ellis Island” is LIU, a mid-size private university with an urban (Brooklyn) and suburban (Post) campus in close proximity to a variety of NPS sites. Dormitory housing on both campuses allows the program to move students from Long Island to New York City over the course of a week. St. Francis College, by contrast, is a small, private institution housed in a single building in Brooklyn with no dormitory facilities. Despite the differences in host institutions, the variety and density of NPS sites in close proximity inspired the shaping of a course for commuter students at St. Francis. Particularly in view of the current emphasis on environmental issues and field-based learning, participating in PITP programs might help faculty develop new courses well-adapted to their home campuses.

**“FIRE ISLAND TO ELLIS ISLAND”**  
*JOAN DIGBY*

Like NCHC’s City as Text™, Partners in the Parks appears to be developing a life of its own generating creative permutations that evolve naturally from local sites and participating institutions. During the summer of 2010, when LIU offered “Fire Island to Ellis Island” for a second time, Kathleen Nolan of St. Francis College in Brooklyn joined the program as a marine biologist with expertise in dune ecology. She camped with us on Fire Island and led field workshops introducing the students to dune habitats and local marine life.

Bringing together students and faculty from a variety of two- and four-year, public and private, large and small colleges and universities combines multiple perspectives in a way that energizes conversation and spawns new ideas. “Fire Island to Ellis Island,” for example, attracted students from two- and four-year schools in Florida, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, and California. For some, it was their first visit to New York. One student at a school in Boston turned out to be a native of Long Island who had travelled to Fire Island on his family’s boat many times before. He was amazed to discover how little he knew about that place as well as many of the other NPS sites in New York City venues. His revelation about how PITP can teach students to see even familiar landscapes with new vision ultimately gave Nolan an idea about offering a course for her Brooklyn students based on this quite local adventure that included many sites within commuting distance of St. Francis College.
In the “Fire Island to Ellis Island” PITP program, the NPS sites range from National Seashore to urban monuments and museums, and, although they may seem disparate, the two lenses through which we study this environment—water as a factor of local habitats and immigration as the historical essence of New York—are intimately related. New York is a city of islands stretching from Brooklyn and Queens to Montauk Point at the tip of Long Island; it is a landscape surrounded by water and deeply connected to the fishing and shipping industries and the port of New York. The history of New York, including its great lyrical poet Walt Whitman, begins on Long Island and moves west to “Manahatta.” There, in the great harbor at the confluence of two rivers, the Statue of Liberty presides as the iconic symbol of immigrant entry to America.

The week begins on Long Island in Oyster Bay (founded in 1653) Harbor, where students have the experience of sailing on a reconstructed nineteenth-century, gaff-rigged oyster sloop. Before Partners in the Parks came into being, I took my LIU Post honors program freshmen sailing on Christeen for a “harbor as text” mapping exercise. They studied the geological formation of Long Island, the marine animals dredged from the bottom, and the demographics reflected in boats on the water from Coast Guard patrols and oystermen to sailing schools and private yachts. Most of my students are native Long Islanders, and many engage in sailing and fishing; some even eat oysters, but, like most of us, few had ever applied analytical reflections to their home territory—all the more reason to integrate local, experiential learning into honors programs as a basic tool of developing awareness.

Also located in Oyster Bay is Sagamore Hill, the summer White House of President Theodore Roosevelt, who was instrumental in creating the National Park Service. Superintendent Tom Ross has been eager to host PITP, and on our last visit we were treated to a meeting with the architect in charge of the current restoration, a major NPS project that will take several years. On this occasion, the students assisted in landscape renovation by removing invasive Norway maple saplings so that the grounds could be restored to native species in place during Roosevelt’s tenure. Volunteer service is a key component of PITP, and Nolan’s 2011 course scoped out several places for future involvement. Her participation in the PITP “Fire Island to Ellis Island” trip also had a shaping influence on group dynamics that, in turn, inspired some of the curriculum and weather-related flexibility of the course that she developed.

In May 2010, Nolan’s sessions on barrier dune ecology and marine biology concluded on a rainy night with “Ecology Bingo,” an impromptu game she created based on the technical vocabulary she had earlier taught. This entertainment bonded her with the group so that, when she appeared again later in the week, students were most welcoming. She rejoined them for a self-guided neighborhood walk on The Lower East Side as a prelude to The Tenement Museum, a site run by the National Park Service that she later incorporated into her course. Nolan had already been thinking about modeling a class on “Fire Island to Ellis Island,” so her participation provided the opportunity to try out
some of the components and consider how they might work for a cohort of commuter students from Brooklyn likely to see suburban and rural Long Island as exotic territory.

The PITP committee recommends that, before hosting a PITP program, faculty should first take part in one as a learning experience. A week of observation is useful in developing a project and understanding how important it is to:

- cultivate relationships with the park supervisor and rangers;
- spend enough time in the park to plan activities;
- get to know the territory and learn how to navigate the site
- develop an itinerary with morning, afternoon, and, if possible, evening programs;
- put together a set of readings that includes additional material in the event that weather conditions require alternative learning options; and
- understand the ultimate outcomes that are likely to result from the program.

As a participant in “Fire Island to Ellis Island,” Nolan observed the structure of a program that moved from site to site on a daily basis, which is not typical of most PITP programs, and we shifted from NPS recreational park sites on Long Island to New York City sites that illustrated the National Park Service involvement in monuments and museums. This model became useful in constructing a course based on moving commuter students to different venues for day-long sessions. Because this PITP program included city parks as well as NPS sites, this diversity also came to play a role in the course that evolved. The comparison between national and city parks and, in some other programs, state parks is a permutation of consciousness that has been developing as a sub-text of Partners in the Parks.

In “Fire Island to Ellis Island” we first camp on the National Seafront and then days later visit Olmstead’s Central Park and the new High Line, a city park constructed from old railroad tracks in the lower Manhattan meat-packing district, now planted with indigenous flowers and grasses. We process our responses to these sites by holding “circle” discussions in the parks, allowing us to contextualize such different places through the immediacy of observation. Students participating in “Fire Island to Ellis Island” also engage in a photography workshop at the beginning of the week, so their sensitivity to place and ability to record landscapes through a photographer’s eye sharpen as we progress. At the end of the week, when the students make their presentations to the group, an edited selection of their photographs helps them tell the story of their journey.

Unlike many of the PITP adventures, the New York experience is not strictly about nature. Once in the city, investigations largely shift from nature-watching to people-watching. Although we arrive on Liberty Island early in the morning, by the time we take the ferry to Ellis Island the crowds have swelled. Along
the wall of names people search for ancestors who passed through the forbidding entry hall. How these immigrants lived in New York is dramatized in the reconstructed apartments of Jewish, Italian, and Irish families in the Lower East Side Tenement Museum run by NPS. Experiencing the inside of typical tenement apartments makes students aware of similar buildings that are visible in every neighborhood of the city and that still house people who have come to New York from all over the world. In one long day of city walks, the group travels from Chinatown to Harlem. Part of the adventure includes the experience of cuisines representing various immigrant cultures that are in a constant state of flux, which is nowhere more visible than on our final walk across the Brooklyn Bridge amid throngs of young people from all over the world who now call Brooklyn home.

Some of these young people are students at St. Francis College, a small institution housed in a single building near Brooklyn Borough Hall. How this PITP program was transformed into a three-credit course at St. Francis College in Brooklyn is a model for collaboration among institutions and for adapting NCHC programs to institutional contexts.

**HONORING THE PARKS**

(Kathleen Nolan)

I developed the curriculum for Honoring the Parks, a three-credit course at St. Francis College, as an adaptation of “Fire Island to Ellis Island” because I saw potential for engaging my students in a new understanding of their home environment. Although St. Francis students are, for the most part, native New Yorkers familiar with the city, they are generally unfamiliar with the National Parks even in their immediate locale. Having witnessed the degree to which students engaged in PITP cultivate their ability to “read” and interpret an environment, I made the decision to create a two-week course that included Fire Island as well as several of the New York City National Parks sites that are accessible for commuter students, who, with the exception of one overnight camping experience, were able to return to their homes each evening. For all these students, the itinerary was a stretch of their energy as well as imagination. Few had previous camping experience, and many had never visited any of the chosen parks and monuments within the city.

The students paid tuition and earned three credits as part of a two-week mini-mester in May 2011. The course was open to both honors program students and biology majors with GPAs above 3.2. Since I am a marine biologist, the course emphasized habitats, resident species, and the diversity of local biological environments. We visited many of the same venues as “Fire Island to Ellis Island,” but I also added others suitable to education in biology: Jamaica Bay (Gateway National Park), which is a major migratory path for birds; Great Kills National Park on Staten Island, which presents the opportunity to view unusual vegetation; and Brooklyn Bridge Park, a new city park that is contiguous with the National Parks system of the New York Harbor and
provides access to the East River, where students were able to study diverse fish aggregations.

Although some students took the course for biology credit, others were permitted to take it for general honors program credit or for non-majors' science credit. Honors courses at St. Francis are not assessed by traditional testing; students complete a reading list, submit a book report, write a reflective paper and give a PowerPoint presentation on an assigned theme. For this course, the required texts included diverse background material on the local sites, including Howard Markel’s book *Quarantine!: East European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892* and the DVD of Ken Burns’s *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*. A book report on *Quarantine!* was linked to the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. The Ken Burns series introduced students to national parks in other geographical region so that they could research the history and geography of a place they might visit in a future PITP or other context. The reflective paper for the course was based on readings about Governor’s Island and the stakeholders involved in bidding for use of the property. Because students in the course had a number of complex projects to produce for assessment, the groups first met on campus for four days of scheduled lectures to prepare them for the experiential component of the following two weeks.

The syllabus had two discrete components. The first week was devoted to a variety of natural settings and the second week to mostly urban NPS museums and monuments. In addition to the set of readings, students received problems, observations, and experiments that included a debate over the future land use of Governor’s Island, a bird-watching assignment in Jamaica Bay, an analysis of water quality on Staten Island, and a diversity index of fish caught in the East River.

Like PITP, the course emphasized the ecological, recreational, aesthetic, and historical significances of the parks, and, like the PITP adventure “Fire Island to Ellis Island,” the course underwent some impromptu transformation as a result of heavy rain.

In keeping with the PITP tradition, I had planned to camp with the students at Watch Hill on Fire Island, and St. Francis College had purchased five Coleman four-person tents. Two weeks prior to the course students with little or no camping experience practiced setting up the tents in a classroom. The students arrived on Fire Island in light drizzle and were able to set up tents and cook a meal. Ranger Valentine engaged the students in an ecological exploration, and, when it poured the next morning, she came through for these students, as she had done the previous year for the 2010 PITP group, with a perfectly dry house. Maintaining amiable relationships with park rangers has proven to be essential.

Alternative planning is essential. When another storm prevented the students from observing horseshoe crabs mating in Jamaica Bay, we were able to watch an introductory segment of Ken Burns’s *The National Parks: America’s
Best Idea. Later in the week we were again thwarted when, intending to do an experiment on water quality on Staten Island, we were deterred by not just rain but lightning. The students thus had some reflective time to consider the multiple uses of national parks, including the recreation and nature study that Mother Nature had prevented them from doing.

We were grateful for the half-hour of sun that enabled our canoe trip in Jamaica Bay, part of the Gateway National Recreational Area managed by NPS. Many students had never been in a canoe, and so the experience was exhilarating for them. Viewing Riis Park from the water allowed students to observe many species of shore birds that were unfamiliar to the group. Students also went bird watching with the Audubon Society at an area of the park called Dead Horse Bay, where they were disturbed to discover the origin of the name and its connection to glue factories once located here. Though the area has been reclaimed, the beach is still littered with old glass bottles and would be a natural site for a volunteer PITP clean-up project.

Another section of the park is Floyd Bennett Field, New York’s first municipal airport, where people now fly model airplanes in connection with a museum of historic aircraft. One of the themes that emerged from the Queens segment of the course was the reclamation of wasteland for conversion into park sites, a resonant urban theme that might be expanded in the future both in my course and in the next PITP iteration of “Fire Island to Ellis Island.”

From Queens, the course then moved to Staten Island, a borough yet to be included in PITP. At least five of the seventeen students had never ridden on the free Staten Island Ferry even though they are native New Yorkers. Our destination was the Great Kills National Park, another wasteland reclamation site, which has a beachfront, freshwater swamp, and interesting vegetation. From the ferry, a train ride and a two-mile walk got us to the beach, where a thunderstorm forced us to abandon the water quality experiments.

Again an alternative learning experience filled in. The students were given an article to read about Governor’s Island on the train/ferry rides home. They showed scant interest in reading until the assignment was framed as a contest. Each of five teams had to make a convincing case that their group would be the one to develop Governor’s Island, with the groups each representing actual bidders for the site: casino developers; New York University, a private institution of higher learning; the City University of New York, a public institution of higher learning; environmentalists; and an artists’ collective. Students read, took copious notes and presented their arguments on the ferry back to Manhattan. Even though most were not in favor of this option, the casino developers gave the best presentation!

During the second week, the urban component that included the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, we had a welcome break in the weather. A warm afternoon found us walking through the streets of Manhattan to the African Burial Ground, discovered by accident during the excavation for a federal office building. Over 50,000 African American
graves, paved over during the growth of the city, were discovered and memorialized, and the NPS walking tour now provides a very positive example of the park service’s commitment to historical research.

On the last day of the course the group went seining at the Brooklyn Bridge Park in the same borough as St. Francis College. We calculated a diversity index for the East River based on our catch, which included moon jellyfish, grass shrimp, silverside fish, bay anchovies, tomcod, striped bass, invasive Japanese crab, and a Northern pipefish, which looks like a straightened seahorse. The students were amazed to see this rich marine life in what was once polluted water, and thus we had a final lesson in the role parks play in reclamation.

Using the PITP practice of student evaluation, we asked participants in the course to rate their experiences on a 1–5 Likert scale, with 5 being “informed me the most.” Their three top choices were (1) Tenement Museum, (2) Floyd Bennett Field canoeing, and (3) Brooklyn Bridge Park. The students may have felt most comfortable in the Tenement Museum because it was in a busy urban environment. Since many of our students are first-generation college attendees, their top choice may well reflect their empathy toward immigrants. In the future, we will design a survey to assess students’ comfort level with various environments.

**SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN**
**“FIRE ISLAND TO ELLIS ISLAND” AND**
**HONORING THE PARKS**

The major influence of the PITP program on the credit-bearing course at St. Francis College is obvious in the list of features they have in common:

1. Students engage in an intensive learning experience in regional parks and museum/monument sites that stretch from rural Long Island to the urban boroughs.

2. Students develop an understanding of the historical, ecological, and recreational dimensions of parks as well as the opportunity for research and volunteer work within these environments.

3. Students bond as a result of the time frame and intensity of the experience.

4. Students develop their abilities to do collaborative work and share their reflections.

5. “Circles” function as a superb reflective method of processing information and bringing the group together on a daily basis to review experiences and learning.

6. Students gain sensitivity to the national parks as well as awareness of the operational differences among national, state, and local parks.
As a result of their experiences students might bring family and friends to visit these parks.

Final student presentations bring closure to the experience.

Some difference between the PITP program and the course include the following:

1. While students engaged in the PITP program are expected to read a selection of essays and to produce writing and visual responses to the sites, their work is not evaluated in any formal way. Students in the credit-bearing course are under pressure to produce materials that will be assessed.

2. While students attending a PITP seminar have email contact with the leaders prior to the week, students in the course meet for four days in advance of the experiential component.

3. While students attending a PITP program attend a variety of two- and four-year colleges around the country, students in the St. Francis course come from the same institution and are local to the area; thus, they cannot bring the different sets of perceptions and awareness that arise in a multi-regional, multi-institutional group.

4. Students commuting each day to a new site and returning home at night do not have the opportunity to spend much recreational time together and intensify the bonding that takes place in a PITP seminar. The commuters did, however, achieve some degree of bonding during their one-night camping experience.

5. Nevertheless, because students come from the area local to the parks, they have a greater opportunity to revisit the parks and deepen their interest.

6. Local students have a greater opportunity to explore research, job or volunteer possibilities in these venues.

CONCLUSION

The collaboration between LIU Post and St. Francis College that took place through an NCHC Partners in the Parks program is one example of the way NCHC offers opportunities for innovation in pedagogy and curriculum. The PITP programs are inter-institutional versions of the team teaching that many of us do or wish we could do on our home campuses, offering opportunities to gain fresh ideas about how to structure learning, approach academic subjects, and excite students. The synergy and cross-fertilization that arise from such collaboration can reenergize teachers and inspire students. When members of the teaching team include park rangers and the class meets in some of the most spectacular settings in the United States, the results are exceptional experiences available to students in the whole range of honors programs and colleges represented in the NCHC. Most of all, we recommend the synergy that arises from institutional collaboration and creative learning models. Linked to national
HONORING THE NATIONAL PARKS

parks around the nation, PITP adventures draw local colleges into rich course programming that develops student sensitivity, understanding, and commitment to natural landscapes, wildlife, environmental resources, and thoughtful stewardship.

REFERENCES


The authors may be contacted at Joan.Digby@liu.edu.
# APPENDIX

## PARTNERS IN THE PARKS PROJECTS TO DATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
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<th>Director(s)</th>
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Mini-PITP Excursions at NCHC Annual Conferences:

- San Antonio Missions (2008)
- Washington, D.C., Mall (2009)
- Montezuma’s Castle, Arizona (2011)
Turning Challenges into Gold: Cross-Listing Introductory Honors with Advanced Classes in the Visual Arts

LEDA CEMPPELLIN
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

Jim Lacey has offered an insight on the benefits of challenging courses for honors students: he prefers to think of an honors course not as a highly specialized, intensive-writing, and discipline-specific academic course but as the ideal general education course: “The courses themselves, I believe, should be challenging, different, and fun for instructors and students alike. When possible, they should be team taught and interdisciplinary; they should involve off-campus activities; and, instead of papers and exams, they should feature projects, preferably in teams” (79). During the early planning stages of the new course called Museum Experience at South Dakota State University, the faculty member serving as project director had all these components in mind. While this course was specific to the honors college and institutional context of SDSU, its conception, development, and implementation offer an example of how an honors course can evolve from the merger of national ideals with local needs.

BACKGROUND: TAKING ON A NEW CHALLENGE

The honors college at South Dakota State University (a public land-grant institution of almost 13,000 students) is well integrated with numerous departments and programs. Currently including over 350 students and still expanding, the honors college offers general education courses, interdisciplinary colloquia, and contracted upper-division classes that integrate the regular course content with opportunities for research, service, leadership, and travel. In order to graduate with honors college distinction, students entering the college must complete fifteen credits of honors general education (lower-division) courses, which are offered in collaboration with the respective departments, in addition to three to six upper-division credits within the students’ chosen major, three to six credits of honors colloquia, and three credits of research-driven honors independent study under supervision of a faculty mentor.
In addition to regular offerings of art appreciation classes in large-size classroom settings and online, the Department of Visual Arts at South Dakota State University periodically offers a small-size class specifically for honors students. Art Appreciation is an introductory theoretical course at the lower-division level, aimed at teaching students how to look at art. Like the regular art appreciation courses, the honors section fulfills a general education requirement for graduation and does not have any prerequisites; therefore, it can be taken by any honors students, regardless of their chosen major. Aligned with the vision of the honors dean, Timothy Nichols, that “Honors is an enriched, challenging, personalized pathway that allows talented, motivated students in any major to make the most of their academic experience at SDSU” <http://www.sdsstate.edu/honors/deans-welcome.cfm>, the honors art appreciation course strives to push both students and faculty outside their comfort zones. In the words of Alexander Werth, faculty members involved in teaching honors courses in general have the unique opportunity “to explore new pedagogical strategies and settings” (44).

The honors art appreciation section, scheduled for spring 2011, was facing a challenge in the estimated enrollment number. A mutual desire to accommodate those honors students that were choosing a course in the visual arts activated a constructive dialogue between the dean of the honors college, the head of the visual arts department, and the honors art history faculty, culminating in the decision to take on an outstanding challenge by cross-listing the 100-level honors art appreciation course with a new 400-level special topic course in the visual arts. The cross-listed section was initially conceived as a one-time occurrence to solve a temporary issue. The title Museum Experience chosen for the new course would allow the instructor ample margins for creative logistic solutions within course planning, at the same time providing a unique experience to the cross-listed honors students.

The instructor of the new course, a notorious risk-taker in undergraduate research with a recent record of co-curatorial experiences in collaboration with the South Dakota Art Museum, enthusiastically embraced this challenge as an opportunity for development in the area of museum studies, new to our visual arts program.

EARLY HONORS AND MATURE ART/GRAPHIC DESIGN STUDENTS: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF CROSS-LISTING

The newly created cross-listed class included two diverse groups of students. The first group was composed of five honors students seeking to satisfy a general education requirement for their lower-division honors courses required for graduation with honors college distinction. Most of them were unfamiliar with the museum world and art in general. However, honors students are “generally the brightest and most able, the hardest-working and most highly
motivated” (Werth 43–44); a combination of these factors constitutes a good promise of successful completion and positive outcomes for new risk-taking enterprises.

The other group of nine students, who enrolled in the special topics class Museum Experience, mostly comprised upper-division students from our visual arts department (fine arts, graphic design, and art education), who chose this course as an elective. Before the semester began, the course instructor made several visits to art and graphic design classes within the department to promote the new spring course, emphasizing that students enrolling in this course would have a unique opportunity to get acquainted with the art museum’s professional dynamics ‘behind the scenes’ and to learn about career opportunities that are not explored within our regular program. The class effectively attracted skilled, ambitious, and creative achievers who were motivated by both the novelty of the course and the opportunity to expand their knowledge on museum-related careers.

Once the new topics course was identified as involving a close collaboration with the art museum, some major challenges surfaced related to the composition of the cross-listed section and the diverse academic needs. The first challenge was to accommodate the needs of both academically precocious lower-division honors students and upper-division students in the visual arts, whose problem-solving skills have been nurtured by years of practice within a studio environment.

Honors students first needed to learn those basic visual elements and principles of design that constitute a major goal of an art appreciation course; such information would be redundant for upper-division art and graphic design students, who had taken an art appreciation course years before, had heard about these elements over and over again in their other visual arts core courses, and had learned how to apply them in real-life situations such as their own painting or graphic design work. A few intensive lectures on art appreciation theory were scheduled during the first weeks of the semester so that honors students could rapidly catch up with some basic elements necessary to talk and write about art. The challenge was to make advanced visual arts students understand that some initial redundancy was necessary for the two classes to work successfully on a new project together and to trust that honors students would compensate by contributing their scholarly skills later on. This challenge was exacerbated by the fact that our visual arts students are not very familiar with the honors college. A 2009 study by Beata M. Jones and Peggy W. Watson indicates the gap between honors and academically specialized students: “These [latter] students often choose pragmatic approaches to their university education, enrolling in courses that directly relate to their professions rather than the liberal-arts courses that are the staple of university honors programs’ offerings” (53).

The second challenge was to prevent honors students from being intimidated and dropping the class; a climate of reciprocal trust was essential so that
students felt they would successfully get through a course structure that was complex and multilayered, knowing that the many pieces of the puzzle would give a clear picture only later in the semester.

In approaching these two unavoidable challenges, the instructor focused on combining diverse strengths, envisioning a set of common goals that required different skills from each of the student groups or both. The course would rotate around basic elements from three disciplines: art appreciation; art history and criticism; and museum studies. Through art appreciation lectures and class discussions, honors students would learn how to give a meaningful interpretation of an artwork by analyzing the choice, arrangement, and intrinsic dynamics of the visual elements line, space, light, and color as well as their correlation to the design principles of unity and variety, emphasis and subordination, scale and proportion.

Another component of the course included selected basic readings in museum studies, aimed at arousing discussions on the diversification of roles and responsibilities within the museum profession, the process of exhibition development, typologies of space layout, conservation challenges for contemporary ephemeral artworks, different categories of museum visitors, and the differentiated marketing strategies used to target one category or the other. Classroom lectures and discussions on theoretical aspects of art appreciation and museum studies alternated with local tours to the South Dakota Art Museum and meetings with the museum staff members so that students could learn about the museum as a whole and curatorial practices.

**FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE THROUGH A SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT: MENTORING HONORS STUDENTS WHO BECOME MENTORS THEMSELVES**

In order to make sense of the diverse components of this course through application to a real-life situation, the instructor, in dialogue with the art museum’s curator, envisioned a service-learning project aimed at producing a catalogue to accompany an exhibition planned for the month of April at the South Dakota Art Museum. With the title *Lynn Thorpe—Earth and Sky*, this special feature-exhibition of an artist resident in Rapid City was part of the South Dakota Artist Series.

All students in the cross-listed course were involved in writing and designing the catalogue. Visual arts students from the special topics class Museum Experience worked on the project as their primary class requirement. The project was also mandatory for honors students as an opportunity to learn art appreciation differently than in a regular course. Additionally, students were required to give a guided tour of the exhibit at the end of the semester.

At the beginning of the semester, the instructor applied for and was awarded a service-learning mini-grant by the Teaching Learning Center, aimed at
covering the publication of a small edition of the catalogue. Students received copies of the catalogue for inclusion in their professional portfolios.

All honors and visual arts students were required to write a small paper as their individual contribution to the catalogue essay, each focusing on the analysis of two or three selected images of Lynn Thorpe’s work in the exhibition and comparing them with the work of one major modern artist. The instructor provided a list of plausible influences, along with a draft bibliography, as part of the initial orientation for the project. She later edited the catalogue essay by collecting the individual papers, grouping them according to the reference artists chosen, and selecting some parts to combine into four longer essays framed by an introduction and a conclusion. Students observed the progressive growth of the project from their brief individual papers to a larger and complex essay, an invaluable lesson for honors students as they saw how writing projects can grow from small pieces into an ambitious structure resembling a book.

Within the cross-listed class, four advanced graphic design students, endowed with a strong level of self-confidence and determination, chose to take on the challenge of designing the catalogue. The class was divided into four layout teams, each assigned to one graphic design student who served as layout project manager. Each team proposed a competitive layout for the catalogue. The catalogue layouts underwent jurying by two museum staff members and one graphic design teacher designated by the project director. The winning catalogue was published with the mini-grant funds.

Opposite to the individual approach required by the catalogue essays, the competitive layouts were team efforts. The role of honors students in these tasks was to observe and provide input in team discussions while the responsibility for successfully completing the task fell on the four advanced graphic design students. Honors students had the golden opportunity to observe the process of developing a discipline-specific project, with the visual arts students serving as mentors. During one class session, the advanced graphic design students started the project in Photoshop of InDesign in front of their teams while honors students took part in discussions of, for instance, what image to choose for the cover of the catalogue. When the four layouts were completed, the instructor required each project manager to give a class presentation of his/her layout project, explaining the vision and rationale behind all the major choices, e.g., the image for the cover, the typography, and the distribution of images within the text. Another layer of mentorship was added in the following days when one of the layouts’ co-jurors, a senior graphic design professor, visited the class twice and performed two single-blind peer-review sessions, sharing his professional expertise through extensive suggestions for further improvement.

Through this multi-step feedback process, honors students observed several layers of professionalism within one discipline, learning the invaluable and humbling lesson that professional growth is virtually unlimited. As Jay Freyman wrote, “Honors students have an interest in learning, which they see both as an ongoing process and as an end in itself, not merely as a means to something
else” (25). The intrinsic complexity of this cross-listed course aimed at nourishing this professional attitude in multiple forms.

The exhibition preparation and catalogue project were occurring at the same time, so lectures and activities were alternating throughout some crucial periods of the semester. Everyone in the class was a learner, even the instructor. By working closely with professionals in other fields, faculty members teaching honors courses have “the opportunity to learn and practice new pedagogical methods” (Werth 45), further enriching their professional skills. The instructor learned as much as the students did when the museum curator visited the class to show the “virtual exhibition layout”—i.e., the placement of all the illustrations from Lynn Thorpe’s work on walls designed on the computer—to preview the exhibition and finalize the layout settings. The curator showed three possible layouts to the class: one with each wall featuring all the paintings in either horizontal or vertical format; one with the paintings arranged on the walls according to alternating horizontal and vertical shapes; and finally one in which each wall featured two horizontal paintings on the external borders and two vertical ones together in the middle or vice versa. The curator then asked students to provide feedback on the three layouts, saying which one they preferred and by providing a rationale. This exercise allowed honors students, who were learning about the arrangement of shapes and colors within one painting, to imagine the entire wall as a *gestalt*, analyzing how four artworks placed on a wall affected each other in the same terms of shapes and color. The curator’s idea of presenting three possible real-life scenarios from which to choose was an important pedagogical strategy for the instructor to observe, and it evoked a great class discussion.

Art appreciation courses are particularly suitable for combining theory and practice through various and diverse activities. In 2007, Joe Thomas of Clarion University of Pennsylvania reported his experience with an honors introductory class to the visual arts titled *Art and Imagination*. In this course, he alternated the traditional study of visual elements and principles of design with such diverse outcomes as a written analysis of an artwork found on campus; a written exhibition review modeled on major art magazines found in the library; visits to the university’s art gallery and to department studios; and hands-on experiences such as creative drawing assignments followed by exhibition of the best work produced during the semester (Register, Bullington, and Thomas 37–44). Having honors students in Art and Imagination, initially unfamiliar with art practices, produce artworks in class and then see them featured in an exhibition produced an effect like that for honors students in Museum Experience, who could see their essays shaped into an artistic layout and then published.

An interesting consequence of this class was that, at the end of the semester, honors students had naturally developed mentoring abilities. During the last week of class, all the students gave a tour of the exhibition to a scheduled group composed of high school students from North Dakota. After the tour, honors students asked the high school students questions about their future career
goals and then explained the special opportunities offered by SDSU’s honors college, including this museum course.

CONCLUSION

In informal and anonymous evaluations of the course, some honors students expressed their initial concern about the novelty of the class and about the essay-writing project, fearing that they did not have enough competence to write in a discipline that was completely new to them. Some students also expressed concerns about the exhibition tour because it involved a certain amount of improvisation.

Another challenge that some of the honors students perceived related to anxieties about changes in the syllabus, but they were able to adapt fairly well to the inevitable fluctuations in a course like this because, as one student wrote, “we were given enough notice to adjust and prepare.” Honors students, who are used to high organizational levels, were approaching a complex project that involved a number of different components and constituencies. Even though the activities were planned in advance and well scheduled, the instructor had to maintain flexibility. With a complex set of circumstances organically evolving throughout the semester, rapid changes and adaptations were necessary in order to make the most of each day. By observing the implementation of the course schedule through a good balance between organization and flexibility, honors students received training on one of the essential qualities that Jay Freyman lists as paramount to being a successful honors student: “Patience—An honors student should have the patience to defer, if need be, the satisfaction of wants and the patience, at all times, to listen to and to consider seriously all sides of an issue” (26). This skill allowed honors students to make sense of evolving situations, unexpected changes and incoming challenges. Despite the challenges, the honors students unanimously praised the course, understanding the combination of theory and practice provided by class lectures and assigned readings that alternated with outside-class activities at the art museum and direct involvement in a museum activity through the exhibition catalogue.

Honors students also praised as “good learning opportunities” the mentorship experiences provided by the combination of the two classes and by the exhibition layout team project. One honors student appreciated the opportunity to provide input on the best exhibition layout, and all the honors students were particularly proud of the scholarly work they accomplished on the catalogue: one wrote, “Having my name in a printed piece—wow.” In the end, honors students thoroughly enjoyed the experience, as evidenced by these comments: “I’m not sure I would have learned the same thing in a regular art appreciation class” and “We accomplished a lot this semester. It felt a little rushed at times, but we made it and learned a lot.”

The course also received enthusiastic responses from the dean of the honors college, the head of the visual arts department, the art museum staff members, the teaching learning center, and the artist Lynn Thorpe. Two visual arts
students in the special topics class became summer interns at the museum, where they were praised for their excellence. All the parties involved expressed a desire to have the magic of this one-time experience repeated.

Repeating such a course is not easy, however. Structuring an entire course around a semester-long project that involves an outside institution (the art museum), needs the fortunate concurrence of numerous factors, which in our specific case included: a match between the academic and museum calendars so that an exhibition is scheduled for inauguration toward the end of the semester and can be observed from its conception; a solo exhibition, usually simpler in structure than a group exhibition; an artist willing to cooperate and release all the necessary permissions; and a cohesive body of contemporary artworks with numerous and diverse ties to art history that can be easily identified and investigated. The instructor is aware that, in such uncharted territory, structuring an innovative course combining honors and visual art students needs to include new typologies of projects and new cross-listing combinations to get the necessary blend of skills.

The specific experience of this new ‘dream course’ has revealed that extending the cross-listing structure, which is a common practice in studio art, to honors classes that meet general education requirements can provide an invaluable experience for honors students. Indeed, cross-listing lower-division honors classes with upper-division discipline-specific classes has the potential more generally to provide honors students with an early understanding of specific careers, forms of mentorship at different levels, and high-level skills. For the instructor, such a course is an opportunity to learn new pedagogies and apply them to creating a unique academic experience for students of diverse skills and backgrounds.

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Death—Planning for the Inevitable: A Hybrid Honors Course

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One of the National Collegiate Honors Council’s Basic Characteristics of an Honors Program is that “the program serves as a laboratory within which faculty feel welcome to experiment with new subjects, approaches, and pedagogies. When proven successful, such efforts in curriculum and pedagogical development can serve as prototypes for initiatives that can become institutionalized across the campus.” Four faculty members from the departments of nursing and respiratory therapy at Midwestern State University, a public liberal arts university in Wichita Falls, designed and taught a hybrid honors course called Death—Planning for the Inevitable. This course, which combined traditional in-class and online instruction, might pave the way for determining how honors education can evolve to accommodate the needs of not just honors students but the wider campus context and beyond.

Death—Planning for the Inevitable (from here on called simply Death) was a three-credit-hour, semester-long course that met for two hours each week in a traditional classroom setting, with the other hour spent on an online component using Blackboard, the university’s program for distance education. The MSU College of Health Sciences and Human Services has an extensive program of online coursework and confers degrees on a number of students who rarely, if ever, set foot on campus. Each of the instructors has experience in teaching online courses, and one of the four instructors had previous experience teaching honors classes. This combination of experiences made it reasonable to investigate the direction of online honors instruction. The following study presents background on the merits of online education in honors, including hybrid courses, followed by an exploration of the perceptions of honors students and faculty who participated in the honors hybrid course. We believe this method of teaching successfully enhanced the honors experience and that the hybrid method may be useful in other honors programs as well.
THE GROWTH OF ONLINE EDUCATION

Traditionally, one assumes that learning is to take place in a classroom or other face-to-face environment where the instructor and students are physically together. However, not all students learn the same way; therefore, the traditional approach is not ideal for all students (Young). The use of the Internet and network technologies to provide a means of communication to learners, regardless of their location, challenges the view that learning requires a face-to-face environment (Stacey, Smith, & Barty). Advances in technology expand the range of educational possibilities and contribute to an increased interest in online education; this results in a growing number of courses being supplemented or completely delivered through distance education (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer). Allen, Seaman, and Garrett reported in a major 2004 study of more than 2,500 colleges and universities in the United States, that 55% of public higher education institutions offered at least one online or hybrid course. That percentage is likely to have increased dramatically over the past seven years and will continue to rise as technology advances. Honors programs and colleges should explore these methods of teaching in order to remain relevant in a connected world.

One factor that contributes to the widespread growth of online education is the potential to facilitate learning. Online learning may enable constructivist learning strategies such as self-directed, collaborative, and active learning. Gonzales and Sujo de Montes concluded that key themes of online learning include collaboration, student-centered learning, exploration, shared knowledge, community, and authenticity. These types of learning strategies may occur by allowing students increased time and flexibility for student-to-student interaction, as well as student-to-teacher interaction, by expanding the range of resources available. Students also have increased responsibility for their own learning, and an online component allows for the production of an individualized environment to suit students’ different needs and learning styles (Ayala; Garrison; Jonassen et al.; Knowles).

THE HYBRID APPROACH TO LEARNING

A hybrid course, also identified as web-enhanced/assisted or blended, refers to “courses that combine face-to-face classroom instruction with online learning and reduced classroom contact hours” (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal). Hybrid courses are not traditional courses in which technology components are merely added (Garrison & Kanuka; Garrison & Vaugnan; Picciano); they pose the pedagogical question of which learning modality proves to be useful in realizing student outcomes of a course (Brunner). Whether through lectures, online discussions, research papers, simulations, mentoring, collaborative learning projects, field experiences, exams, or other methods, hybrid learning encourages the exploration of multiple learning modalities. Honors programs often promote the exploration of new and innovative methods of learning, so
venturing into the realm of possibilities provided by hybrid learning could potentially open many doors.

The goal of hybrid learning is to improve the educational experience for students by combining the best features of in-class teaching with the best features of online learning to promote active independent learning and reduce class seat time (Young). Hybrid learning reaches beyond the potential of each individual approach (face-to-face/online) to create a new environment and transform both the structure and method of teaching and learning (Ayala). According to a 2009 meta-analysis by the U. S. Department of Education, students who take part in online instruction perform better, on average, than those in a traditional course. Furthermore, those participating in hybrid courses appear to perform better regardless of the course level or discipline (Allen, Seaman, & Garrett; US DOE). A hybrid environment thus can potentially allow honors students to thrive in new ways.

**INCREASED STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND INTERACTION**

When implemented in pedagogically effective ways, hybrid courses can produce overall improvement in student learning. R. J. Beck recounted his experience of teaching a hybrid course in international law and found that instructor ratings and overall student exam scores exceeded scores in his traditional face-to-face course. Beck had twenty years of previous experience teaching face-to-face law courses and compared his experiences to his first year of teaching a hybrid course. Perhaps one of his most significant findings was that participation and discussion of the course broadened as the typically “quiet” students actively participated in discussions on the online discussion board. A large study by McFarlin concluded that a hybrid lecture/online format increased student grades in an undergraduate exercise physiology course at a large urban university. McFarlin used a total of 658 final grades (traditional = 346, hybrid = 312) to evaluate the effectiveness of the course format. Final grades were 9.9% higher in the hybrid course format, which translated to a letter grade increase on a standard grading scale. In a study by Riffell and Sibley, students in a hybrid undergraduate biology course reported that the quality of communication with the instructor was high and that they read the text more often and studied in groups more frequently. Performance on a post-course assessment test indicated that the hybrid course format was better than or equivalent to the traditional course. Specifically, online assignments were equivalent to or better than passive lectures, and active-learning exercises were more effective when coupled with online activities.
INCREASED STUDENT SATISFACTION AND FLEXIBILITY

An almost universal reason that students report high levels of satisfaction in online courses is time flexibility and convenience (Rovai). Similarly, students value the time and space flexibility offered through hybrid learning. Face-to-face discussions are spontaneous; they can create enthusiasm, build relationships, and foster a sense of community in the classroom (Garrison & Vaughan) while Internet-based discussion forums can offer scheduling flexibility, promote interaction, and foster a sense of community outside of the classroom. These combined benefits may increase student satisfaction. In a 2010 study by Ertmer, students expressed a higher level of confidence when contributing ideas to online discussions, with nearly two thirds of students agreeing that online discussion made it easier to express their opinions and participate in class. A 2011 study by Forte and Root compared the differences and similarities in student satisfaction and learning outcomes between a hybrid and face-to-face web-enhanced macro-course called Human Behavior in the Social Environment. In contrasting surveys that evaluated pretest/post-test content knowledge as well as interactive assignments, final grades, and satisfaction, the researchers found that hybrid and web-enhanced course delivery methods did not differently affect student learning. However, students in the hybrid group indicated perceptions of satisfaction with the learning experience significantly higher than those in the web-enhanced course. Students also reported that they enjoyed the flexibility of the hybrid course.

CONNECTION TO HONORS

Occasional comments during sessions at recent meetings of the NCHC seem to indicate some disregard for the effectiveness of online honors education. However, numerous honors programs at both universities and community colleges experiment with online possibilities. Melissa L. Johnson at the University of Florida hosted a session at the 2011 NCHC meeting in Phoenix titled “Including Online Learning in the Conversation about Teaching and Learning in Honors.” Johnson has used an online component in several courses, and she recently collaborated on an article about student blogging in an honors course (Johnson, Plattner, & Hundley). At the NCHC session, she shared her experience with honors and online education, describing how the “blended learning” environment of a hybrid course allows more class time for hands-on projects. Johnson emphasized that blended learning enhances the honors environment because students do research, exams, and written work on their own time through the online component. The hybrid system allows more classroom time for field trips, hands-on experiments/projects, and discussion. Johnson also quoted the NCHC website, which states that “Honors education is a general term that covers a wide variety of courses, teaching styles, and even educational objectives.” She continued by quoting the statement “Honors
programs and Honors courses may attempt to fulfill diverse goals, *utilize different teaching approaches*, and employ a variety of ways of mastering subject matter*” (Johnson). Hybrid learning accords with these statements, and Johnson’s success with a hybrid course, along with the success we experienced, seems to show that adding online components to honors courses may be an exciting new territory to explore.

Topics related to online honors courses and honors distance learning come up occasionally via the Hermes Honors Listserv, and each new conversation strand offers varying opinions (Hermes Archive). While some universities report success with online honors courses, the argument that online learning cannot provide the same atmosphere and/or results as face-to-face instruction is ever present. We hope that this essay will provide some additional background for the discussion. The following course experience offers a case worth examining.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

**BASIC CONTENT AND DELIVERY**

*Death* was a three-hour hybrid honors course with a two-hour classroom session and a one-hour Blackboard activity each week. The course was an exploration of the fears associated with death and dying; cultural, religious, legal and ethical issues surrounding death; grief and condolence; and practical preparations for the end of life. Learning strategies included readings, class participation, team projects and presentations, written assignments, field trips, observational experiences, online activities, discussions, and evaluations. Students read Mitch Albom’s *Tuesdays with Morrie*, and the instructors placed numerous books on reserve in the library, also posting references and web links on Blackboard each week (see Appendices). Students completed Blackboard discussion topics and activities each week outside of class. These assignments accounted for the additional one hour “hybrid” component of the course. The hybrid model allowed the course to flourish as an honors experience. Because students completed many of the reading and writing assignments as part of the online portion, class time could be used for field trips, class discussions, student presentations, and other unique learning opportunities that are hard to pursue in traditional classroom environments.

**DESCRIPTION OF STUDENTS**

Honors students voluntarily enrolled in Death—Planning for the Inevitable. Most of the students took the course not because of any particular interest in the subject but because they needed an upper-level honors course. Of the 16 students enrolled in the course, 12 were female and 4 were male; their ages ranged from 19 to 26 with a mean of 21.3; 10 were United States citizens, 5 were non-resident aliens, and 1 was unspecified; 3 were freshmen, 4 sophomores, 1 junior, 7 seniors, and 1 seeking a second bachelor’s degree; 6 were nursing majors, 3 were psychology majors, 1 each majored in radiology,
business, chemistry, music, criminal justice and accounting, and 1 was undeclared. As is the case with most honors courses, the honors students themselves partly helped mold this course into a suitable honors experience: the diverse backgrounds of the students enrolled allowed discussions and student presentations to be approached from many different perspectives.

**DESCRIPTION OF FACULTY**

Our honors program seeks to demonstrate the effectiveness of team-taught, interdisciplinary learning to our university community, and this course provided such an opportunity. The instructional team consisted of four faculty members from the College of Health Sciences and Human Services. They included a nurse with experience in implementation of the national programs Education of Physicians in End-of-Life Care and End-of-Life Nursing Education, a clinical nurse generalist and certified health education specialist, a respiratory therapist with experience in pediatric intensive care, and a nurse with added credentials as a psychologist. All four faculty members had experience teaching online courses, and one had experience teaching honors courses. The idea of teaching a course on death and dying was a common interest among the four faculty members, each of whom had diverse experiences and expertise on the topic of death and dying. They decided that bringing this diversity into the classroom would enrich the course, and they also recognized that the subject matter could be disturbing for some students. Having four faculty members allowed for time to monitor students closely and to follow through if they needed to speak privately about the topics discussed in the course.

**WHY HYBRID?**

The university’s honors program administers the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to incoming students. This instrument measures personality preference on four dichotomous scales of introversion vs. extroversion, sensing vs. intuition, thinking vs. feeling, and judging vs. perceiving. Slightly more than half of the students (53%) indicated a tendency toward introversion rather than extroversion, thus preferring to have thought things through before expressing an opinion or idea; such students are less likely to speak up in classroom discussion. One way that our honors students differ from the general American population is in the sensing/intuition dichotomy; almost two-thirds (63%) of our incoming students leaned toward intuition whereas, according to the *MBTI Manual*, one would expect 63% of a population to be sensing rather than intuitive. The intuitive student tends to take in information by considering relationships rather than hard data, and, again, such a student is more likely to generate a response after having had “time to think about it.” These data provide one rationale for offering a hybrid course in honors: it allows these students the opportunity to express themselves at their leisure rather than remaining silent, as they might do during an in-class discussion.
EVALUATION OF THE HYBRID EXPERIENCE

STUDENT PERCEPTION

The sixteen students enrolled in this hybrid honors course completed an open-ended survey in class with an array of questions pertaining to student satisfaction with the course. We obtained additional data from the class’s online discussion forums, where students anonymously provided feedback to the instructors regarding the online/hybrid portion of the course. When asked how they felt about the hybrid format, most students were pleased with the structure. Several students commented that the hour online helped them with “time management,” and others felt that the online discussion helped them to “say things they couldn’t or wouldn’t say in class.” One student commented on how “interesting” it was to “read classmates’ opinions on what they were learning.” Another common response indicated a positive feeling of being able to “express thoughts without being shy” or “to express oneself through the discussions [online] after receiving knowledge from class and having time to think about it.” One student criticized the hybrid format, stating that the online portion “just added confusion,” further remarking that he/she “would rather have done everything on paper and turned it in by hand.” These comments indicate that the hybrid format might be a way to level the class participation playing field for students with differing personality types. Overall, the end-of-course evaluations were positive, with students stating they would recommend the course to others.

FACULTY PERCEPTION

The four faculty members also evaluated the course. When asked how they felt about the hybrid format, they were pleased with the structure. One faculty member commented, “Students were better prepared for class since they had done online work and completed online assignments prior to class.” Another teacher felt that “online assignments allowed students to delve deeply into topics of interest, and discussions provided some anonymity allowing students to be more expressive than in a face-to-face class.” Another concluded that students seemed to benefit from “shorter class periods, as it prevented boredom.” In order to improve the structure of the course, faculty made a change midstream to emphasize quality rather than quantity on the Blackboard discussion board posts. At first the instructors required the students to post five hundred words each week to partially account for the one-hour hybrid portion of the course. The faculty found that this constraint prohibited students from posting quality discussions. In general, the faculty members considered the course a great success and are anxious to offer it again as a hybrid honors course.
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, this hybrid course seemed to be successful at creating an environment that allowed both students and faculty to explore and experiment. The combination of classroom instruction with online discussions and assignments allowed more flexibility within the course. Bridging the gap between classroom instruction and online education has often been a controversial topic in honors programs, and the idea of combining the two methods into a hybrid course was certainly an experiment at MSU, but a teaching approach that holds the promise of faculty satisfaction, increased student satisfaction, increased “think time,” and increased flexibility deserves serious consideration. Perhaps this exploratory study can provide a stimulus for faculty who teach honors courses as they deliberate about teaching methods, pedagogical strategies, and different student orientations to web-based innovations.

REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDED READING FOR THE COURSE

APPENDIX B

RECOMMENDED WEB LINKS FOR THE COURSE

Self-Assessment of Your Beliefs about Death and Dying
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/onourownterms/articles/quiz.html>

Life Expectancy Calculator
<http://www.livingto100.com>

Caring Conversations
<http://www.practicalbioethics.org/FileUploads/FINAL_Caring%20Conversations%20Workbook%202010.pdf>

Texas Advance Directive
<http://www.caringinfo.org/userfiles/File/Texas.pdf>

Ethical Wills—Preserving Your Legacy of Values
<http://www.ethicalwill.com/index.html>

Writing a Condolence Letter
<http://dying.about.com/od/thegrievingprocess/a/condolence.htm?once=true&>

Words to Comfort Someone Grieving
<http://dying.lovetoknow.com/Words_to_Comfort_Someone_Grieving>

Organ Donation
<http://organdonor.gov>

Twelve Principles of a Good Death
<http://dying.about.com/od/deathdying_and_culture/qt/gooddeath.htm>

Five Tasks of Dying
<http://dying.about.com/od/the_dying_process/a/5_taskd_dying.htm>

Five Reasons to Plan Your Own Funeral
<http://dying.about.com/od/funeralsandmemorials/a/5reasons2plan.htm?p=1>

Obituary Guide
<http://obituaryguide.com/writingtips.php>

How to Write a Eulogy or Remembrance Speech
<http://dying.about.com/od/funeralsandmemorials/ht/write_a_eulogy.htm?p=1>

Ways to Memorialize the Death of a Loved One
Honors Analytics: Science, An Interdisciplinary Lab-Based Course on Visual Perception

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INTRODUCTION

Interdisciplinarity has consistently been a hallmark of honors courses, particularly in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Such an approach has been less universal in honors courses in the natural sciences, particularly in laboratory-based courses (Ramaley). We believe that a mark of success of any such course is the degree to which it moves from multidisciplinary to interdisciplinary. Moreover, if the course fulfills a general education requirement in science, it needs to include exposure to the scope of scientific investigation, the techniques of science, and the nature of the scientific process. At Belmont University, we created and for ten years offered Honors Analytics: Science as part of an interdisciplinary, alternative general education curriculum for students in the honors program. This four-credit-hour science course, which had no math or science prerequisites, included a two-hour lab component and serves as the only science course in the curriculum. Students in all majors took the course, even science majors, typically in their junior year. While practical impediments arose after ten years that precluded our continuing to teach the course, it had been a highly successful solution to the challenge of offering interdisciplinary science courses in honors. We provide an account of the course here as a potential model for other honors programs.

Honors courses at Belmont for a long time used a “professor pool” model, in which a faculty member coordinated a course and was allotted a budget to bring in faculty with expertise in other areas. In the Analytics courses, the coordinator was initially a mathematician who also had a background in physics. At a later date the coordination was assigned to a biologist who had an undergraduate major in chemistry. Later yet, a psychologist became the coordinator. As a result, we can provide disciplinary perspectives on the content and pedagogy of the course, including laboratory exercises, along with our collective views on the practical details of the model, the strengths of the approaches we
employed, shortcomings we perceived, and suggestions for how the course could be improved by other institutions.

**PEDAGOGICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS**

The faculty member who was the course coordinator received full teaching credit for the course, and the other faculty members received stipends for each lecture or lab period they led. The coordinator was present for all lectures and coordinated all payroll requests, examinations, grade submissions, and attendance records. Each instructor contributed questions to the midterm and final exams about the material they had discussed to that point in the course. The same four science faculty taught the course for the ten years it was offered.

We used several techniques to maximize the interdisciplinarity of the course: (1) the coordinator position was rotated among faculty, ensuring that each faculty member experienced as much of the course as possible; (2) all faculty were present during several class discussions, for example on the importance of models in science; (3) all faculty read and approved exam questions before they were given, and in some years all faculty graded all questions. In addition, since Belmont strongly emphasizes undergraduate research in science, we typically required that all students complete a research project, and the best ones were presented in the Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium.

**SETTING THE STAGE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARITY**

Some of the most challenging problems and most profound advances in science today are interdisciplinary in nature. In promoting an interdisciplinary frame of mind, our course objective was to move beyond either an overview or a simple series of brief introductions to several disciplines in order to show underlying connections as well as distinctions among the sciences. During the first class period, we immediately began to challenge the students to think about the natures of the different scientific disciplines: What are the differences in the tools these scientists use and why? What kinds of questions do they ask? What are some of the great problems and concepts they have considered? What is gained by approaching scientific questions in a discipline-specific way? What can be gained by collaboration among the disciplines? Our semester together would be devoted to exploring these and related issues by focusing our attention on the study of visual perception.

One of the great, scientifically influential problems is the mind-body problem. Descartes and subsequent philosophers profoundly influenced the scientific approach to understanding the concept of perception. The philosophical framework for our study of visual perception was laid during four class periods of readings about the mind-body problem and lively discussions of the problem led by a guest teacher with a background in the philosophy of science. With
this historical background, we turned our attention to the current scientific understanding of visual perception.

**PHYSICS**

The physics portion of the course explored the physical properties of light, including how light is produced, how light interacts with light, how it interacts with matter, how it can carry energy and information, and how these properties affect visual perception. The first laboratory experiment used the ripple tank as a medium for the study of the easily observable properties of waves: reflection, refraction, diffraction, resonance, and absorption. Students observed how these properties were affected by changes in frequency or wavelength. Using various shapes of wave fronts, reflectors, and lenses, we demonstrated how waves can be focused or dispersed. Students drew wave superposition diagrams to help them appreciate the phenomena they had observed.

Lectures and demonstrations showed how these wave properties are evident in sound and light and how waves exhibit these properties in other types of media. We demonstrated resonance, the production of standing wave patterns by reflection, with sound wave generators and speakers, and also the students produced it with springs and ropes. We discussed electromagnetic radiation, which includes visible light, its generation, and propagation. We presented special interrelationships among light, energy, and the structural properties of atoms. We examined the electromagnetic spectrum to help students see the relationship between visible light and other electromagnetic phenomena such as x-rays and radio waves, each related to the structural/energy properties of the atom from which they are produced.

We explored a simple particle-spring model of matter to help students hypothesize how waves of various wavelengths might interact with such matter. The questions we posed included: Under what conditions of wavelength and particle spacing is the wave energy most likely to be absorbed by the matter? What circumstances will cause the waves to reflect off the matter? What conditions will cause the waves to pass through the matter but be refracted or bent? A key consideration was helping students understand the nature of color and how the perception of color is related to the wave properties of light and the reflective/absorptive properties of matter. We explored the question of whether a wave model or a particle (photon) model of light best contributes to our understanding of visible light and how each model provides important insights.

A lab experiment on light and lenses, which required students to produce images of a light source with different lenses and to draw the corresponding image diagrams, helped them discover the key principles of image production by lenses. This experiment provided information about the law of refraction and how it is the basis for understanding the lens mechanism the eye uses to focus light and, thereby, to form images on the retina.
Laboratory experiments were assigned in written form with specific instructions on how to perform the experiment, what data to collect, and what observations to make. The instructions included questions to challenge deeper thought. Students typically worked in pairs to complete the laboratory experiments. Each lab team prepared a written report on their lab experiment. We assigned occasional problem sets or readings as well.

BIOLOGY

Following the portion on physics, the biology emphasis started with lectures on the nature of chemical bonds and the structure of water, which served as an introduction to the structure and function of proteins with an emphasis on enzymes. The logical move to the structure of phospholipids and the cell membrane as an aggregate of phospholipids and proteins served as a transition to cellular organelles. As a background to neuronal cell function, the next topic was how ions and molecules get into and out of cells, including the importance of the phospholipid bilayer and membrane proteins being explained, as demonstrated in a laboratory investigation of diffusion of molecules and ions and the diffusion of water (osmosis).

We then employed the transport abilities of the cell membrane to explain the structure of the neuron and its ability to generate action potentials, followed by examination of the transmission of neuronal signals across synapses and how these can modify the actions of the next neuron for either excitation or inhibition. Using only the concepts learned to date, the following lecture described the memory network that modifies the gill-withdrawal reflex in sea slugs as an example of how neurons connect to form biologically meaningful function.

Moving from the cellular to the organismic level, the class reviewed the anatomy and overall physiology of the human nervous system and studied the action of reflex arcs. Laboratory investigation of the properties of sensory physiology (touch receptor fields, retinal receptor density, topography of the retina) allowed the students hands-on experience with calculations that revealed the properties of sensory receptors. We then transitioned to look specifically at the anatomy of the human eye, including refraction by the cornea and the lens, and investigated how it transduced the wavelengths of light, which had been introduced in the physics portion, into receptor potentials within the retina. Their laboratory dissection of a cow's eye energized the classroom discussion of eye anatomy for the students. A lecture on the retina followed, explaining the networks within the retina that result in action potentials that travel to the brain. The remaining class discussions focused on the various functional lobes of the brain, the pathways taken by visual impulses as they pass through some of those lobes, and then a final discussion of how networks could be envisioned to accomplish certain kinds of movement. Two quizzes and a problem set on neural circuits provided an assessment of student understanding throughout the biology portion of the course.
PSYCHOLOGY

The psychology portion of the class built on the coverage of light in the physics section and the physiological explanation of the stimulation of the visual nervous system. Since most of the students had never taken a psychology course, the first lectures covered an overview of the history of psychology with an emphasis on the scientific nature of early psychology. The next classes covered the classical psychophysical methods for studying vision and a brief conceptual overview of modern stimulus detection theory. Other classes devoted time to: divided and selective attention, theories of attention, and views of automatic and controlled information processing; the binding problem, how it relates to the mind/body issue, and the re-emergence of the study of consciousness; pattern perception, contrasting the historical Gestalt approach to pattern perception with the newer Multiple Spatial Channels Theory approach; the use of Fourier analysis and contrast sensitivity to illustrate how complex images can be converted to simpler images, including how this can be a model for human visual pattern perception; and a number of classic and more contemporary illusions. The last major topic presented was depth perception. After presenting the classic monocular or pictorial depth cues, we explored oculomotor and binocular cues for depth. Students spent time viewing stereoscopes, analygraphs, and stereograms as well as depth illusions.

The three labs for this portion of the course consisted of computer simulations from Colin Ryan’s Exploring Perception: A CD-ROM for Macintosh and Microsoft Windows, consisting of a CD ROM with 240 separate explorations of sensation and perception topics. The first lab explored psychophysics, with activities and questions about classical methods such as the method of limits and the just-noticeable difference as well as more modern stimulus detection procedures. The second lab included simulations of various Gestalt concepts such as laws of proximity and similarity. This lab also covered gratings and spatial frequency as well as classical illusions such as the Ponzo illusion. The third lab presented illustration of various monocular depth cues, such as interposition and shading, as well as binocular disparity and motion parallax.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

The computer science portion of the course examined the connectionist model of visual recognition and memory (e.g., Müller and Reinhardt). The first lecture introduced a simple computational model of a neuron and explained how two layers of such neurons, i.e., a simple perceptron, could perform recognition tasks. A lab exercise used an ordinary computer spreadsheet to implement a perceptron, and students trained their perceptrons to recognize shapes in a grid. Homework exercises, which could be done without computer assistance, reinforced and expanded on the lessons of the first lab.

The next two lectures built on this foundation by posing the exclusive-or (XOR) Problem, a discrimination task that is easy for human beings but
impossible to solve with a simple perceptron. We showed that a network of perceptron layers, each feeding forward into the next, could solve the XOR problem; we went on to describe the construction and operation of multi-layer perceptrons and the supervised learning process used to train them; and we advanced the argument that, given enough neurons, layers, and training, a multi-layer neural network is capable of any instantaneous recognition task that human beings can perform. Homework exercises reinforced the lessons in construction and training, and the second lab exercise (with a somewhat larger spreadsheet) demonstrated the enhanced recognition capabilities of multi-layer perceptrons; it also demonstrated the large numbers of connections and training repetitions needed to perform such simple tasks as counting and letter recognition. Training a multi-layer network is like teaching with flashcards or other rote techniques, a similarity not lost on students during the tedious last stages of their lab exercises.

The next lectures presented the problem of unsupervised learning and memory. Having shown that feed-forward networks could only perform tasks they were repetitively trained to do, we then introduced the principles of the Hopfield network, a simple model of memory that allows unsupervised learning. Again, homework exercises reinforced the basic capabilities of Hopfield networks, and a spreadsheet-based exercise explored the potential and pitfalls of a moderately complex Hopfield network.

The lectures, homework, and labs illustrated how the anatomical features of the brain, already described in the biology section of the course, could produce visual recognition and memory. The final computer science lecture compared parts of the eye, the optic nerve, and the visual cortex to the models we had developed and argued that the randomness inherent in biological networks, combined with the massive connectivity of the neural networks in living brains, would allow brains to perform these tasks better than electronic computers. Grades for the computer science portion were based on homework problems completed individually and lab reports completed in groups of two or three.

**COURSE WRAP-UP**

The last four or five classes in the course were devoted to retrospection. The guest philosopher led the first two sessions with the other faculty members present to participate in the discussion, thus providing students an opportunity to reconsider the mind-body problem, how it affected their study of visual perception, and how their views and attitudes about the mind-body might have changed as a result of the semester’s study. The last two or three classes were open forums with all faculty members present, giving students an opportunity to raise any questions about the course and giving faculty members an opportunity to offer suggestions about important conceptual threads that ran through the course or their disciplinary perspectives on scientific inquiry. Students were required to write evaluations of the course, which were used as a part of the
planning process for the next semester. Individual instructors drafted the final exam questions and distributed them to all the instructors for consensus on the pooled final exam. The six to eight questions were open-ended, and the final was a take-home examination to be completed individually.

**RETROSPECTIVE**

We feel that the course as we offered it had several strengths, especially its interdisciplinarity: the principles of the wave nature of light presented in physics were employed in the concept of pigment absorption by rods and cones in biology; the concepts of excitatory and inhibitory synapses from biology were used to explain lateral inhibition in psychology; and the networks in sea slug memory explained by the biologist laid the foundation for the concept of neural networks explained by the computer scientist. Students indicated in their end-of-semester evaluations that they grasped the nature of these concepts as explained and employed in different disciplines.

The “professor pool” model also seemed to work well. Students came to understand how individual faculty members, as representatives of their disciplines, would respond to their queries. They also began to understand us as professionals, how we viewed scientific questions, how we individually viewed our common enterprise, and what they each expected of us. At the same time, the presence of a coordinator served as a unifying element in the various panel discussions, exams, projects, and student evaluations. Another design principle that helped this course was that it was junior-level; the students who were in the class really wanted to be in honors and were willing to do the work.

What was difficult in the implementation of this class was the heavy teaching load for the non-coordinator faculty members during their presentation portions, when they were in essence teaching a four-credit-hour overload. As hard as it was to teach our portions as overloads, however, we would have been pleased to continue the course. What resulted in discontinuing the course was a largely insurmountable obstacle: the rapid growth of the university led the honors program and university administration to triple the number of students in the program, resulting in three Honors Analytics sections per year. This increase made the overload demands unmanageable for our small pool of Analytics faculty members. In addition, one of the faculty members involved in the course was moved partially into administration. We thus reluctantly decided to move from the interdisciplinary format of the Visual Perception course to a new format in which different Analytics sections were taught by individual faculty members from different disciplines.

The format of this course could nevertheless be implemented at other institutions under any of the following conditions: (1) the number of students is similar to ours, i.e., a single section of ten to fifteen students, and a budget is provided for a professor pool; (2) a particular faculty member is, by interdisciplinary expertise, able to serve as coordinator as well as cover two or three course sections; or (3) the same group of faculty (four in our case) is responsible for two
or more class sections—e.g., HON 332.01, HON 332.02, etc.—and the guest faculty are given teaching load credit for their contributions such that, for instance, teaching a quarter of three different sections counted as three credit hours of a teaching load.

Teaching this course was a wonderful experience for all of us and for the honors students. The small class size combined with five contact hours per week made for excellent relationships with talented students. The ability to plan coverage, discuss new ideas, and review the implementation with faculty dedicated to the students and to science provided a stimulating experience that combined the best of pedagogical creativity with the opportunity to become students ourselves.

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Because gender maintains a significant influence on our education, careers, decision-making, families, and everyday lives, honors programs that wish to explore issues of social justice and equality should include coursework that illuminates historical and contemporary issues from a gendered perspective. In spring 2011, the South Dakota State University Honors Program offered an innovative three-credit honors colloquium entitled “Women Shaping Their World.” This multidisciplinary course focused on examining the ways that women’s lives are structured in cultural, social, religious, economic, historical, political, and scientific contexts; it also explored the potential of women to transcend these barriers and shape their own lives. The colloquium attracted honors students from a wide variety of majors and offered them unique academic and personal opportunities. The three professors who taught the course hope to offer ideas for honors administrators and faculty members who wish to develop classes highlighting women’s studies. In order to suggest possibilities for other honors programs, we explain how our class was designed and implemented and how its various facets—including guest speakers, texts, assignments, and poster presentations—worked together to meet the course objectives.

THE IDEA TAKES SHAPE
(JULIE M. BARST, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH)

At SDSU, the honors educational experience requires students to take at least one multidisciplinary honors colloquium focused on a topic of contemporary interest. Faculty associated with the women’s studies program first proposed the idea of offering a colloquium highlighting women’s studies early in spring 2010, and several professors from various disciplines expressed interest in designing, teaching, and/or guest lecturing in the course. Timothy Nichols, Dean of the SDSU Honors College, chaired a subcommittee of these professors that met once a month for the two semesters leading up to the implementation of the colloquium. During these meetings, Dr. Nichols and the committee brainstormed possible texts, assignments, guest speakers, and course goals. In fall 2010, Julie D. Lane and I were chosen to team-teach the course, and we designed the course goals and student outcomes, narrowing down the texts and
assignments from a multitude of useful suggestions. We committed to a strong multidisciplinary content, believing, as Kathleen Black writes in *Honors in Practice*, that a strong honors program should encourage students to “see the commonalities as well as the distinctions among disciplines,” helping them become less likely “to isolate themselves within their own particular major” (197). Therefore, because Lane and I had expertise in the fields of English, political science, and women’s studies, we scheduled guest speakers who could bring their gender-related expertise, wisdom, and experiences into the classroom in other fields of study such as health, agriculture, art, and religion.

In addition, we incorporated a final course project that required students to build upon the major concepts and themes of the course by exploring the ways they (or a woman they know) have shaped their world; this project was a creative nonfiction essay directed by Christine Stewart-Nuñez, Assistant Professor of English, who specializes in creative writing. Accordingly, we scheduled four class visits during the semester in which Stewart-Nuñez would introduce the expectations of the assignment, guide the students by examples and in-class discussion, and answer any questions they posed about this genre.

After many fruitful discussions about desired student outcomes, Lane and I determined that during our course honors students would:

- enhance written and oral communication skills, accomplished via short papers and an oral presentation;
- enhance creative and artistic expression, accomplished via a creative writing project and a poster presentation that incorporates both visual and oral elements;
- demonstrate an understanding of some basic concepts of feminist theory, accomplished via class discussions and short essays;
- become familiar with the gendered contexts through which women’s lives are shaped, accomplished via exposure to feminist theoretical perspectives and application of these perspectives to course readings;
- enhance awareness of the challenges women encounter in other cultures, accomplished via reading three texts that draw on this theme and various written responses to the texts;
- increase their understanding of the interconnections between gender and race, accomplished via reading three texts that draw on this theme and written responses to the texts, and
- relate their own experiences to those of women in other cultures, accomplished via writing a comparative reflection essay on a text and giving a presentation on a woman who is a member of a different identity group.

Our achievement of these goals and outcomes took place in the context of our guest lectures, the course texts and related assignments, and the culminating project for the class, a creative nonfiction assignment.
In order to bring attention to the variety of ways that gendered constructs influence women’s lives, we brought in speakers who highlighted women’s issues within their diverse disciplines and careers. We asked them to identify the barriers that women encounter and to address the areas of potential for women to transcend these barriers. Ideally, our sessions would have included more speakers representing the sciences and mathematics, but we faced some constraints in availability as well as weather-related problems. For instance, we had scheduled a presentation on the roles of women in contemporary agriculture with guest speaker Linda Hasselstrom, a South Dakota rancher and writer, but the visit was canceled due to a blizzard.

In one speaker session, we focused on women and art. Leda Cempellin, Assistant Professor of Art at SDSU, gave a visual presentation on Artemesia Gentileschi, an Italian artist of the post-Renaissance era. Students responded to the ways Gentileschi visually represented rape in stark contrast to representation by the predominant male artists of the era. Cempellin also introduced the work of contemporary artist Nina Paley, an award-winning animator and filmmaker. We viewed two of Paley’s animated films, *Sita Sings the Blues* and *The Stork*, and Cempellin led a question-answer session with the artist via Skype. From her home in New York, Paley responded to students’ questions on topics ranging from her political statements on reproduction and copyright law to choices she had made in her career and personal relationships. Paley advised our students to “follow their bliss” and to remember that there is “nothing worth doing that won’t upset some people.” Our students were impressed with Nina Paley’s creative endeavors and responded positively to her intelligence, wit, spirit, and confidence to pursue her passions in spite of obstacles.

In a session on history, students further explored representations of women through art. April Brooks, Professor of History at SDSU, presented a visual lecture on women in the eighteenth century. Brooks interjected humor into her discussion of William Hogarth’s *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street* (1751) and explored Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s unique fashion choices. Brooks suggested that fashion was often the only means of expression available to a woman during the period, and she highlighted the importance of the legal status of a married woman, whose designation as a *feme covert* meant that she had no independent legal identity and was instead subsumed under the identity of her husband.

Anne Marie Bahr, Professor of Religious Studies at SDSU, was our guest for the session on religion. In preparation for class, students read selections from Megan McKenna’s *This Will Be Remembered of Her: Stories of Women Reshaping Their World*. The readings highlighted the efforts of three remarkable women working toward peace in the Middle East, each from a different faith:
Hanan Ashrawi, a Palestinian Christian; Lynn Gottlieb, an American Jewish rabbi; and Shirin Ebadi, an Iranian Muslim. Bahr fielded the many questions our students had about Islam that emerged from our ongoing discussions of Reading Lolita in Tehran, one of the major course texts, and she also led a thought-provoking discussion on the presence of women as priests and ministers in a variety of religions.

In a session on literature, Sharon Palo, Assistant Professor of English, brought in the poem “The Reasons that Induced Dr. S to Write a Poem call’d The Lady’s Dressing Room,” written by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in 1734. Palo led the class through a deconstruction of the poem, highlighting the biting satire Montagu presents in response to Jonathan Swift’s “The Lady’s Dressing Room” (1732). Palo guided the students through Montagu’s poem, giving particular emphasis to the distinction between the objective and subjective points of view and to the seeming neutrality underlying the narrator’s “objectivity” that disguises a gendered point of view subordinating women.

Another class explored body image. We had two guest speakers from the SDSU Wellness Center for this class session: Debra Johnson, the Clinical Counseling Supervisor, and Brenda Anderson, Head Nurse Practitioner. We first watched the video Killing Us Softly 3: Advertising’s View of Women. The film argues that most of the images of women presented in the mass media, particularly in advertising, are sexist. Our speakers facilitated a discussion of the video, drawing in their own experiences in working with young women and men and the problems with body image they encounter. The speakers highlighted the importance of maintaining personal health, particularly with respect to nutrition and exercise.

Women and politics was the last topic in the series. Our guest for this session was Stephanie Herseth-Sandlin, who served as South Dakota’s sole representative to the U.S. Congress for two terms. She spoke about her history in politics and the particular challenges she encountered, and she answered student questions about gender discrimination and related issues. Her presentation also highlighted balancing family and a political career and how this uniquely affects women. In addition, she discussed her efforts to address problems of poverty and intimate violence on American Indian reservations. The class concluded with a discussion about why so few women hold political office and what can be done to facilitate and encourage women to seek positions of political leadership.

One of the greatest advantages of the interdisciplinary colloquium format was that it enabled us to consider the impact of gendered constructs on all facets of women’s (and men’s) lives. The series of speakers was a key element in enabling us to identify commonalities in challenges that women encounter across time and place and in different social and political contexts. In particular, the series highlighted the common struggles of women in entering traditionally “masculine” arenas of art, literature, and politics. The series also helped us to achieve one of our most important course objectives: to enhance
awareness of the challenges that women face in other cultures. The speakers gave us the opportunity to focus on gender-related issues that women have encountered across cultures and time periods, including post-Renaissance Italy, contemporary American Indian communities, eighteenth-century Britain, and the present-day Middle East. They also inspired our students to think outside of their own culture and life experience in selecting subjects for their poster presentations.

**CONTEXTS:**

**COURSE MATERIALS AND ISSUES OF GENDER**

*(Julie M. Barst and Julie D. Lane)*

Choosing texts for this course was especially difficult given the many suggestions offered by our colleagues during the planning stages as well as the wide variety of women- or gender-related novels, creative nonfiction, poetry, and prose available. The process required a significant amount of research and reading, but we finally settled on three main texts: *GirlDrive: Crisscrossing America, Redefining Feminism* by Nona Willis Aronowitz and Emma Bee Bernstein, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* by Asar Nafisi, and *Home* by Larissa Behrendt. We supplemented these texts with articles, essays, poems, and other short pieces.

**GirlDrive (2009)**

We chose *GirlDrive: Crisscrossing America, Redefining Feminism* because the authors, women about the same age as our honors students, offer invaluable perspectives on some of the most significant issues of our course: they interrogate the word “feminism” and analyze what it means to be a “feminist” in today’s society; they travel throughout the country conducting interviews with a wide variety of women (and men) who offer their points of view on feminism, the status of gender relations, and their personal experiences related to gender issues; and they do so in a fresh and accessible manner. The photographs of interviewees provide faces to accompany the important voices within the text and offer readers an opportunity to see these women and men in their own meaningful surroundings. The provocative interviews capture the wide variety of races, ethnicities, sexual identities, class positions, and religious affiliations of the interviewees, allowing readers to contemplate how gender issues intersect with these other facets of identity in significant and sometimes unsettling ways.

Although we did not require a written assignment to accompany *GirlDrive*, class discussions and group activities focused on many of the issues raised in the text. We asked students to read the first half of the text before our first class period, and we began that session by asking if we still need women’s studies courses like this one, and, if so, why. We also inquired about the students’ knowledge of feminism and feminist theory, and we presented some historical
and contemporary contexts to women’s issues as well as a basic overview of feminist theory. Lane offered some statistics from the “Benchmarking Women’s Leadership” report published by The White House Project in 2009, which highlights the continuing wage gap as well as inequalities in leadership positions in most fields. Lane also discussed political underrepresentation, victimization, and other gender-related disparities that persist. We then began a more concrete discussion of GirlDrive. Students were eager to discuss the context, motivation, and goals for the authors’ road trip across the country and what feminism means to them. They agreed with the authors that the term “feminism” has negative connotations and that, as a result, people (especially young people) can be reticent or anxious about self-identifying as feminists. Then we formed small groups and asked each to choose two interviews and discuss the following questions: What interests you about this person’s opinion? Are your own beliefs about feminism similar to or different from this woman’s or man’s? How do you think her class, age, religious beliefs, race, sexual orientation, geographical location, or other facets of her identity influence her beliefs about feminism? How do you think those factors influence your beliefs?

We also discussed provocative issues raised in the text about women who work for or operate companies within the pornography or burlesque industries; body image, including among differently abled women; women who identify with various religious traditions or no religion at all and their views about women’s roles; and the impact of class and race on women’s abilities to access education and health care. We found this text especially useful for accessing our student’s previous knowledge about course topics and themes, providing some background to feminist concepts, and helping students gain an understanding of the significant roles that gender plays today. We observed during group and class discussions along with short in-class writing assignments that GirlDrive helped our honors students achieve several learning outcomes: a broader understanding of how women’s lives are structured in gendered and other contexts; an awareness of the challenges women encounter within our own nation as members of different identity groups or discourse communities; and an improved understanding of gender’s connections to race, sexual orientation, religion, and other facets of identity.


In designing the colloquium, we felt that it was particularly important for students to have access to the experiences of women in other parts of the world and to be able to connect the gendered contexts of these experiences to the lives of American women. Azar Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran* highlights the lives of Nafisi and seven young women living under the totalitarian regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In 1981, Nafisi was dismissed from her position at the University of Tehran because of her refusal to wear a veil. In *Reading Lolita*, Nafisi reflects on the two years following her dismissal when she met in secret with the young women to discuss forbidden western classics. The book is
divided into four major sections highlighting the works of Vladimir Nabokov, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, and Jane Austen. The book shows the variety of perspectives provided by Nafisi and the seven women on issues related to gender, religion, literature, politics, intimate relationships, and family.

At the beginning of our first session on this book, Lane gave a brief lecture on the political history of Iran. We then opened discussion so that the students could share insights based on thoughts that flowed from their reading of the text. As we began each of the four class sessions on Reading Lolita, we set aside fifteen minutes for students to write out a short list of two or three questions or comments that they might like to take up during the discussion. This process raised the level of intellectual discourse as students pondered difficult theoretical questions about oppression and subversive resistance, the role of gender and sexuality under the totalitarian Iranian regime, and the spaces for freedom that can be opened up through literature.

We also asked students to write a three-page page reflection essay, leaving room for students to respond to those aspects of the book that they found most meaningful. We placed few restrictions on the assignment, asking only that students seek parallels between their own lives and the lives of the young women in Reading Lolita. One student identified with Yassi’s defiant character, for example, while another related Azin’s experiences with personal relationships to her own. Other students thought in terms of the broader political, social, and cultural contexts that shape women’s lives. One student found remarkable similarities between the ways that American and Iranian cultures restrict sexuality and regulate women’s bodies. Another student pondered the ways that women can most effectively resist oppressive cultural and political forces.

Reading Lolita in Tehran provided a context in which students were able to relate their own experiences to those of women in other cultures, which was one of our course objectives. The reflection essays along with class discussions revealed thoughtful insights into the ways American culture restricts women’s sexuality through, for example, the derogatory labeling of some women as “sluts” and excessive attention to women’s appearance. Students also found parallels between Iranian and American women in the crucial choices that influence the course of women’s lives, including whether to leave the home for an unfamiliar place with greater opportunities and whether to pursue a career or focus on family when the two are not easily reconciled. The discussions and written reflections also met a second key course objective: to enhance awareness of the challenges women encounter in other cultures. Students explored the difficulties that Iranian women encounter in their attempt to reconcile religious faith with totalitarian dictates, in the inability to express themselves in a meaningful way, and in the sexual violations and other means of bodily control that occur under the regime.
We chose *Home* by Larissa Behrendt, an Australian Aboriginal lawyer and author, because it offers another significant global and historical perspective on women's issues, this time within the genre of fiction, that would add to our honors students' understanding of gender issues while challenging them to make connections with previous course content. Before students began reading the text, Barst gave a short lecture on the history of Australia, highlighting the Stolen Generations of Australia, the half-caste Aboriginal children who were forcibly removed from their homes between 1869 and the early 1970s; the government, believing that the full-blooded Aboriginal race would eventually die out, wanted to assimilate these children into white society and "breed out" the so-called "black blood." After removal the children were placed in boarding schools or forced to work as servants in white homes, and most were never able to return to their families. *Home* chronicles the agonizing journey of Garibooli, stolen from her family at age eleven, and then details the atrocities she suffered and the ripple effects on her children and grandchildren; it emphasizes the point that government policies such as this one have significant repercussions for generations after the process is halted. After students read the opening section of the novel, we watched the first twenty minutes of the film *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, which visually portrays the trauma of this removal policy.

Class discussion afforded opportunities for critical thinking and forging connections. Because most of our honors students had never heard of the Stolen Generations of Australia, we discussed how history is taught, including what content is taught, who decides what content is taught, and why certain elements of history and certain voices are erased from textbooks. We compared this facet of Australian history with our country's Native American history. Many students were not aware of the horrific treatment of Native American children and young adults who were forced into boarding schools and experienced the loss of their families, native languages, religions, and cultures. Our honors students offered insightful comments about the socially constricted lives of the novel's female characters across class and race boundaries, including Garibooli in her servant role at the Howard house, Frances Grainger as the head housekeeper, and Mrs. Howard as an upper-class woman with very few hobbies or interests outside of her home and husband. In contrast, the male characters enjoy more freedoms to pursue their desires. We also analyzed the meaning and definition of "home" for the various characters: home can invoke people, physical spaces, memories, associated objects, and psychological affiliations, but the idea of "home" is important to every character in the novel, white or Aboriginal, male or female.

In the associated writing assignment, a literary response essay of three to five pages, students discussed gender and other constructs within *Home*. We asked students to advance an argument about one or more of the women or men in the novel that explores how that character's gender along with one or two other facets of identity (such as race, class, or sexual orientation)
influenced the motivations, challenges, and structure of his or her world. We asked the students to incorporate elements of literary analysis—imagery, symbolism, metaphor, and other literary devices—to support their arguments. Because most of our students were not English majors, Barst gave a PowerPoint presentation that defined different literary terms and provided examples. Students applied many of these terms to our class discussions and their essays; they analyzed several different symbols in the novel such as Grigor’s camera, Frances Grainger’s maps, and the swaying grass in Candice’s story. They discussed the larger meanings and implications of these symbols in the context of Australian history, national identity, and gender/race relations.

One student, Hanna, crafted a strong essay highlighting an important theme within the text: the myriad ways that Frances Grainger, the head housekeeper for the Howards, “defines herself by her personal interactions and shapes her identity around other people, especially men.” The loss of her fiancé and two brothers in World War I, as well as the death soon afterward of both her parents, led to an identity crisis for Frances, one that can be compared to the crisis faced by Garibooli after she is stolen from her ancestral home. This similarity invites gendered comparisons across racial and class boundaries. Another student focused on the symbolism of the jade brooch given to young Garibooli (renamed Elizabeth) by her friend Xiao-ying (renamed Helen Chan), a young Chinese girl who has also suffered similar traumatic losses of identity and her sense of belonging. The honors students dug deep within this text, critically analyzing the symbols, themes, and imagery within and between the lines in order to illuminate the myriad ways that gender and other facets of identity have constructed the lives of both women and men in a global context and continue to challenge us today; these were significant student learning outcomes that we had hoped to achieve when designing the course.

CONQUESTS:
INTERCONNECTIONS VIA POSTER PRESENTATIONS
(JULIE D. LANE)

During the second half of the colloquium, we set aside time at the end of each class for two students to each present a visual display and explain the images associated with the display. For this assignment, students selected one particular woman (of no relation to them) and visually depicted the ways this woman has shaped her world, particularly identifying the challenges she has encountered and how she overcame them. Students selected a woman belonging to an identity group different from the student’s own and explored how racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, or sexual identity, as well as gendered identity, can influence the way a woman shapes her world. Since all the students in our colloquium self-identified as white, it was important for them to explore and understand the experiences of women who face challenges in addition to gender that place them in a subordinate status.
The students brought in fascinating biographies of a wide variety of women. Most selected women of interest to them because of their major, and therefore topics spanned disciplines. Our architecture major selected Maya Lin, the artist who designed the Vietnam War Memorial. Our nursing major highlighted the political impact of Margaret Sanger, who worked to legalize birth control. Our aeronautical engineering major gave a presentation on Elizabeth “Bessie” Coleman, the world’s first licensed African American pilot. Our music major selected German Composer Clara Schumann and highlighted her difficulties gaining recognition within the male-dominated world of music in the nineteenth century.

The primary objective of the poster assignment was for students to understand the interconnections among gender and other identities such as race, ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation. The assignment also enhanced creative expression. One student created a doll house and revealed photographs behind the “windows” as she proceeded through the presentation. Our music major supplemented his presentation with music clips in order to demonstrate how two of Clara Schumann’s compositions reflected significant changes in Schumann’s personal life. Lastly, the presentations provided a framework for students to relate their own lives to a woman from a different identity group.

RESHAPING AND RESISTANCE: THE CREATIVE NONFICTION PROJECT

(CHRISTINE STEWART-NÚÑEZ, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH)

The culminating project for the colloquium was a creative nonfiction essay, in which students were to draw from our explorations of gender by creating an account of the way one woman shapes her world. Some students selected themselves as the subject, and others selected a woman they know. The purpose of the creative nonfiction format was for students to work outside the confines of a traditional, highly-structured essay and play with alternative means of interpretation and expression. The creative element provided the means and the freedom for students to articulate the ways one woman navigates her life through gender-related challenges. In the following section, I use my own voice in the creative nonfiction format to describe the project.

1.

My first of four 75-minute sessions with the twelve students of the honors colloquium “Women Shaping Their World” ends after a flurry of assignment introduction. I have designed the creative nonfiction project (a genre new to all the budding engineers, doctors, and psychologists in the class—even the lone English major) to challenge students to write about themselves or a woman they know as one who shapes her world. Today, I have discussed the most salient elements of creative nonfiction: scene, dialogue, reflection, and arrangement, and I have read examples from my own work to illustrate each. I have also
explained the recursive elements of the writing process: drafting, shaping, and revision.

I use the mid-seminar break to gather my books and papers and head out the door into the dark, January night. One honors colloquium student stands at the building’s railing looking out over the snow, cellphone to her ear. “We have to write an essay,” I hear her say. “I’ve never written like this, and it seems really hard.” Her voice rises with anger, and I turn away so she will feel free to continue. “I have no idea why we have to do this,” she says.

Later, I will remember this moment for the way it foretold the emotional and intellectual resistances—and breakthroughs—honors students experienced in relationship to this assignment, but at the moment it reshapes the plan I have for the next three classes.

I walk carefully down the icy stairs, realizing my precarious position. As I chip away at the thin sheet of ice on my windshield, my reflection deepens. Perhaps she had not read the assignment sheet that breaks down the project’s goals: to enhance written communication skills by drafting and revising a creative nonfiction piece; to develop verbal communication skills by responding to peers’ drafts; to enhance creative and artistic expression by conducting research, reflecting on experiences, and developing literary scenes; and to apply knowledge of gendered contexts that shape women’s lives. Even if she had read it and still felt frustrated, this student’s resistance no longer surprises me. Few have ever been asked to write from personal experience in a meaningful way; for many, their education has taught them to delete the revelation of emotion in their work and to eschew the use of personal experience as evidence. Creative nonfiction often pushes students beyond their writing and emotional comfort zones, crucial work for honors students who may have already perfected the usual moves: memorize, understand, and apply. In my fifteen years of teaching, I have found that the most exciting learning happens when students discover a new source of knowledge and gain confidence in mapping new genre terrains, as students do in analyzing the texts of their own lives or the lives of someone they love.

Driving home, I plan how I will frame the next lesson. I decide to appeal to logic. One reason to write creative nonfiction in this class is that two of the books exemplify different types of creative nonfiction—a memoir in Reading Lolita in Tehran and a journalistic hybrid in GirlDrive—and can serve as reference points to develop specificity and integrate research or interviews.

In the next class that I visit several weeks later, students shift uneasily in their seats when I ask for a volunteer to discuss her (or his—there is one male) writing process. During the few seconds of silence, I wonder if the resistance to this assignment has spread, and I wonder if I have overestimated these students’ abilities. In compressing two weeks of instruction into one class period, perhaps I expected these honors students to absorb and learn too much too fast. Then
Tara, an engineering major, raises her hand. She reads lovely, detailed scenes about the experiences that shaped her choice to become an engineer, scenes she has analyzed through the lens of gender. As I respond to her draft verbally, many students relax in their seats; I understand that anxiety over sharing their work in class is the kind of resistance I sensed at the beginning of class. We discuss ways to strengthen Tara’s writing: tighten imagery, recreate dialogue, delete one whole scene that does not seem to fit well, add another that illustrates the challenges she faces as a woman entering a male-dominated field. Most of the students nod, smile, and raise their hands to ask questions about their pieces, allowing me to springboard into lessons on imagery, dialogue, and discovery.

This emphasis on discovery—what the writer learns about her subject and herself in the writing process—supports one of the reasons creative nonfiction is an excellent method of assessment in an honors class. Writing creative nonfiction involves connection-building and meaning-making. One of the rhetorical purposes of “the essay,” in its most creative, lyric forms, is to reveal the writer’s mind at work. Writer and writing scholar Brenda Miller says it provocatively: “In the lyric essay, it all shows up. The good and the bad—they jostle one another, rub shoulders, emit sparks. The stuff we try to remember, and the stuff that remembers itself” (26–27). In the second and third class sessions, I ask each student to make verbal connections among life experiences, events often separated by years, and then for homework I ask them to make connections among these experiences and the theories and stories they have read in class. “Immerse yourself in memories and details and pay attention to the tensions and lessons that bubble up,” I say. “And make this a part of your writing. In creative nonfiction, this self-analytical layer is essential.” One founder of scholarly work in the genre, Lee Gutkind, writes: “In creative nonfiction, a writer may philosophize and add insight, telling a reader what the scenes and stories being so vividly chronicled and recreated mean both to the writer and to the world” (136). As an instructor, I hope to assess student insight into their learning in the course.

3.

A more obvious emotional resistance to the writing process emerges in the third class. Jen, a student known for her activism in the Campus Women’s Coalition, wants to talk about her essay’s structure, a topic she had brought up in the second class but had seemed too unnerved to read aloud. She had backed down. “I’ll come to your office hours,” she said. But she did not. Now, when she raises her hand, the poise I normally associate with this articulate scientist/student/activist is complicated by a nervous rush of energy: the way she sits on the edge of her chair, the straightness of her back, and, when she speaks, the slight tremor in her voice. “I’m worried about flow. How all my scenes fit together—if, indeed, all my scenes fit.”
“Okay. We can resolve those issues,” I say. “Let’s project the piece onto the wall.” I lean over and turn the document camera on.

“Ummm.” Jen still refuses to put her writing up, but she agrees to explain it. I recognize this resistance, but I assume it stems from perfectionism—a trait shared by most of these honors students, a trait I have in common with them. I stand at the whiteboard, marker in hand, and take notes as she outlines each scene: her first moments in Spain learning to navigate the language, her grandmother’s deathbed, and the moment she begins to question her faith. I take a step back. Jen has chosen to write about tough, emotion-filled events, moments that, at first glance, seem disconnected. Yet I trust Jen’s intuition about how they all reveal her world being shaped. The common element tying them together surfaces. “Jen,” I say. “I don’t know if you notice this, but loss ties each of these moments together: the loss of faith, language, a loved one.” Jen sits back in her chair and sighs as if she had not considered this possibility, and then she continues to talk through each segment, reflecting on how these losses shaped her world. When she gets to the scene of her grandmother’s death, she begins to cry.

The process of writing creative nonfiction elicits emotions by allowing for the expression of emotional complexity and contradiction, as Jen’s experience illustrates. Creative nonfiction can follow the messiness of thought-in-process, especially as students rework and revise their attitudes and ideas. Brenda Miller and her collaborator, Suzanne Paola, write: “We make sense of the world and we do this through story. Writing from memory and personal experience takes this natural process one step further and problematizes it, since you have now chosen to make public what is more often a highly private, almost invisible act” (32). Over and over, students in my classes choose to make these invisible acts visible because they want to understand themselves better and rarely get the opportunity in their academic lives. The intellectual potential of creative nonfiction lies in the way it demands that students account for their own stances, their own perspectives. They must analyze a particular life experience and connect it to values, ideas, and convictions; their lives become a source for data, a site for research. This process is crucial to both personal growth and the development of critical thinking; it becomes a springboard for evolving social critique. We actively move into the realm of social critique via the gate of personal experience, which is one of several learning goals for this course but one that can be neglected in the education of honors students.

4.

When Lane, Barst, and I collaborative in assessing the creative nonfiction pieces, I learn that all of the students have succeeded in accomplishing the basic aesthetic goals of the assignment (imagery, precise details, and dialogue), and I am impressed by how quickly they adapted their writing to the level of specificity and intellectual flexibility I had hoped to foster in honors students. Zach reveals how he learned from his mother to respect of the diversity of
women’s embodied experiences; Casey details her experiences tutoring English language learners; Emma portrays how her cousin persevered through painful events (some of them sexist) to become a successful graduate of medical school and how her cousin’s story inspired her to “give medical school a second look” despite her family’s insistence that she pursue a career in nursing.

Yet a new resistance to this assignment emerged in two students’ pieces: two young women resisted analyzing their experiences through the lens of gender, opting instead to be “gender-blind.” Resisting the very premise of the course—that our gendered experiences shape our lives in often subtle and sometimes sharp ways—shocked me. I had assumed that the readings, guest speakers, and discussions had persuaded them that the lens of gender might be a good tool to use in their analysis of their experiences. Clearly, I was wrong.

This resistance offers ways I would change how I teach the creative nonfiction project. First, I would spend at least an hour discussing Reading Lolita in Tehran and GirlDrive in terms of how the writers link their experiences to their identities as women. I would ask students to find examples and ask them why being female mattered at any given point. I would point out that sometimes other salient identities (ethnicity, religion, social class) and roles (teacher, child, student) seem more influential. I would emphasize the fact that one need not identify as a feminist to analyze experience through the lens of gender. Then I would spend another hour discussing their scenes and experiences the same way. Finally, I would integrate a peer review session in which students help each other brainstorm these kinds of suggestions.

After Barst, Lane, and I finish grading, I am pleased to see that all of the students’ reflections revealed initial resistance to but final excitement about the creative nonfiction project. Libby’s artist statement, which accompanied her final piece, is typical:

Creative nonfiction is different from any other form of writing I have done in the past. I felt that it challenged me to investigate memories that may have been stuck in the corners of my mind and analyze them thoroughly. I relished the challenge of having to add in certain details where other logistics may have been forgotten. I enjoyed reminiscing with my mother to fill in the gaps of the events included in this piece of writing. It is truly amazing how the scenes that have previously happened in our lives continue to shape our values and futures.

Just as Libby feels this project challenged her to revise and analyze, my experience with honors students inspires me to reshape my teaching practice. I am reminded that some of the messy, in-process thinking about gender needs more time; I cannot assume that students will ramp their thinking through gendered lenses even in a feminist-framed course, but I am also reminded that this does not constitute failure, that even this resistance can be embraced by and be the subject of creative nonfiction.
CONCLUSION
(JULIE M. BARST)

One of the challenges we built into the course was asking students to help shape the curriculum rather than passively listening to instructors and guest speakers. Honors students were prompted to delve into the texts in pairs and small groups, to write discussion agenda items, and to bring up topics they wanted to introduce or pursue further. A second challenge was asking students to listen to the voices of a wide variety of women and to explore gender through the lens of women in other cultures and from different identity groups. A third challenge was asking students to try non-formalized ways of expressing themselves through the creative nonfiction essay, the unstructured essay on *Reading Lolita*, and the visual poster presentation.

Because gender continues to shape our lives in so many significant ways, and because it can sometimes be overlooked within the disciplines that honors students pursue, we believe that honors programs should include women’s studies courses in their curricula. Such courses can meet a wide variety of student learning outcomes, including enhanced critical thinking, improvement of oral and written communication skills, expansion of global perspectives, and understanding of how women can restructure and shape their lives. The creative nonfiction project challenged students to explore these broader concepts in a personal and innovative way. The team-taught format, with the addition of guest speakers, helped honors students see connections between and among disciplines.

In her final course evaluation, one student’s comment was representative of the class in showing how the honors students moved from anxiety and resistance to enjoyment and confidence in approaching a new topic in new ways: “For how nervous I was about taking a gendered class, I enjoyed the content. The sheer variety of material was impressive.” While women’s studies courses have been part of most universities’ curricula for at least four decades, they are perhaps less common in honors curricula. As our honors colloquium demonstrated, women’s studies courses can help honors students—who are often tentative about venturing beyond their academic disciplines—explore and express their social, personal, and emotional lives in ways they find rare and rewarding.

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Designing a First-Year Honors Seminar with A Whole New Mind

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. . . Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

—John Keats,
“On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer”

The book that swam into my ken was Daniel Pink’s A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future. It was fall of 2008, and I had been appointed director of the newly created Mount Ida College Honor Scholars Program (HSP). The mission of the HSP is to promote creative thinking, interdisciplinary study, and close mentoring relationships with faculty. Program requirements include a first-year honors seminar (for academic credit) and three honors “contracts” (independent studies completed in addition to degree requirements, for honors credit but not academic credit) supervised by faculty mentors. Honor Scholars are required to present at least one completed contract to the college community at an annual reception and poster session. Students also upload the contracts, along with accompanying reflection papers, faculty assessments, and other student achievements, to a customized honors e-portfolio that can be shown to graduate schools or future employers. Honor Scholars can also live in an honors living/learning community that creates opportunities for student mentoring, honors co-curricular programming, and social activities.

My appointment included teaching the honors section of the required first-year seminar. Previous first-year seminars had focused primarily on research and study skills, “college knowledge,” and critical thinking. Reading Pink’s introduction, I realized that, using the book as an anchor (or rocket booster), the first-year honors seminar could create something different: a focus on whole-brain thinking, academic curiosity and playfulness, interdisciplinary connections and—especially important for first-year college students—the
search for identity and meaning. The book could also serve as a gateway into the HSP and the honors contract process by connecting students to their work, showing them how to value process as well as product and to design honors contracts that were interesting and meaningful to them.

Pink’s general thesis is that, in a competitive and left-brain world focused on information intake and analysis, creative and whole-brain thinkers will enjoy a professional advantage because their abilities cannot readily be duplicated, outsourced, or computerized. Pink devotes the greater part of A Whole New Mind to describing and activating what he calls the Six Senses: human aptitudes—Design, Story, Symphony, Empathy, Play, and Meaning—essential for personal enrichment and professional success in the twenty-first century. The book has resonated with many readers and provoked widespread discussion; for me it was a game-changer. Pink’s whole-brain approach to professional success validated many of my ideas about the purpose of higher education and caused me to revisit my approach to student-centered learning. In Outliers, Malcolm Gladwell argues that, for any endeavor, a high level of success requires ten thousand hours of practice or experience (40). Like most experienced faculty, I had put in my ten thousand hours, but the honors seminar required a whole new framework for thinking about what teaching and learning could be.

Most teachers have favorite literary quotations. My current favorite is from Bram Stoker’s Dracula: chasing the elusive vampire and his minions, Dr. Van Helsing turns to his terrified comrades and warns that there is “work—wild work to be done” (359). In fall 2009, the first-year honors seminar was open for business, and I was ready for some wild work, despite feeling that I was building the bridge as I crossed it.

We spent the first two weeks of classes getting to know each other and completing the basic requirements of the first-year seminar, including an introduction to college orientation information; MLA format and style; library resources and staff; online databases; and the Angel course website. I added an introduction to the goals and requirements of the HSP and a workshop on the honors e-portfolio. My work/study classroom assistant provided information on co-curricular and leadership opportunities and mentored the new Honor Scholars, creating an HSP Facebook page and offering practical support and information on all aspects of college life.

Then we switched into high gear. Students read A Whole New Mind and supporting materials on their own; we discussed key concepts in class but mostly engaged in whole-brain exercises and group activities that illustrated the ideas we were exploring. As we worked our way through the book, we all found and contributed articles, poems, artwork, short stories, films, videos, and online resources that illustrated each of the Six Senses. We read poems by Wordsworth, Frost, Hopkins, and Dickinson; listened to classical and popular music; read letters on the creative process written by Picasso, Mozart, Freud,
and Einstein; and identified the right-brain vision and left-brain decisions that were the foundation for the works we examined.

We discussed an article in a medical journal that described a study in which medical students improved their visual diagnostic skills by studying works of art. We watched a NOVA program (“Fractals: Hunting the Hidden Dimension”) about the influence of fractal geometry on our understanding of nature and on everything from the stock market to ECG tracings, from cell phone technology to weather prediction and textile design; then we read about Benoît Mandelbrot, the godfather of fractals.

As an exercise in one of the Six Senses, Symphony (recognizing patterns or relationships in unexpected places or creating new combinations of objects or ideas), students created metaphors for the All College Curriculum (Mount Ida’s holistic general education program, which links courses in and outside the major). In doing so, they answered students’ perennial question about courses outside the major: “Why do I have to take that course?” Some student metaphors:

- The All College Curriculum is your cell phone with apps, instead of a boring landline with just one function.
- The ACC is a car, fully loaded!
- The ACC gives you many moves, like a basketball player who needs to succeed from any position.
- It’s like having a refrigerator full of foods that can be combined to make many different meals.
- It’s the ocean versus the aquarium; you never know what will wash up on the beach.

Exploring Pink’s emphasis on Play, we read studies of how babies and toddlers learn and spent an hour at the Longfellow Preschool on Mount Ida’s campus, where we could observe the connection between work and play, witnessing hands-on learning that used all of the senses. The ensuing discussion explored the following questions: why is college learning so different from preschool learning? Why are our classrooms squared off and face-forward, the antithesis of the colorful, free-flowing environment enjoyed by these joyful three-year-olds? Can a preschool atmosphere be recreated at the college level? How can we bring spontaneity and playful discovery back into the classroom? If Pink is correct and creativity and invention are the touchstones of professional success in the future, how can we nurture whole-brain thinking in higher education?

We read J.K. Rowling’s 2008 Harvard commencement address, “The Fringe Benefits of Failure and the Importance of Imagination,” and dozens of articles that emphasized whole-brain thinking, including articles on cutting-edge culinary physics at Harvard; the art and science of facial prosthetics; twenty-first-century playgrounds; laughter yoga; a Nintendo game that helps treat children with diabetes; and a lawyer who left practice and achieved fame building
intricate Lego sculptures. We viewed the films "Billy Elliot" and "The Illusionist," discussing the transformative power of art and the right- and left-brain aspects of magic. We also read a summary of the "Secret CIA Manual of Trickery and Deception," stranger than fiction.

Mount Ida’s first-year summer reading, Listening Is an Act of Love, reinforced Pink’s emphasis on the power of Story, Empathy and Meaning; both texts framed an often poignant assignment in which students recorded oral histories with family members and presented them to the class; some interviews were captured via audio recordings, some as YouTube videos, and others using print, family treasures, or photography.

Another assignment that emphasized symphonic thinking was an interdisciplinary research paper on a topic of personal interest. Cross-disciplinary research was a new concept to most of the students, but they seemed to appreciate the synergy created when a topic is approached from different perspectives and academic disciplines. Their paper topics included: the paintings of Vincent Van Gogh as seen from artistic and medical perspectives; horses in history and myth; the effect of music on the brain; and depression as a psychological and literary phenomenon.

To challenge their skills in Design, we held an HSP logo contest, with students working in small groups; the three winning entries were posted on the HSP webpage. Building skills in Empathy and Story, one exercise asked students to choose a photograph from an exhibit on women in the Middle East, step into the photograph, and write a fifty-word short story. Another exercise asked for a short story, monologue, or poem based on an Edward Hopper painting. Students shared their work with the class and discussed the right- and left-brain decisions that are the counterpoint of the creative process.

The class completed an autobiography arc in a cluster of assignments and in-class exercises that focused on Story and Meaning, including a traditional essay about the students’ backgrounds, interests, and goals; a list of six things, tangible and intangible, that they always carry with them; a six-word “memoir”; and a personal “still life” portrait—e.g., a collage, drawing, or collection—that used their talents in Design and expressed their identity without using words.

After viewing a Mount Ida Gallery exhibit on design, architecture and the green movement, instead of writing a typical reflection paper students collaborated on a work of “green” art that applied their aptitudes for Design and Play: I gave them a large branch, and they created “The Tree of (Daily) Life,” decorating the branch and building a base from found objects and castaways collected around campus. The tree found a permanent home outside my office in the School of Arts and Sciences.

The seminar’s focus on whole-brain thinking also called for whole-brain exams. I couldn’t rely on traditional left-brain assessment if I wanted to promote left- and right-brain thinking. All exams were take-home; I believe that, if we ask students to produce creative ideas and thoughtful analysis, we should
ELLEN J. GOLDBERGER

provide time and space for their work to take root and flower. The following is a brief sampling of exam questions from 2009 and 2010:

1. We recently visited Longfellow Preschool and their redesigned playground and saw the creative learning environment enjoyed by its mini-students.
   
   A) How does Longfellow Preschool promote the use of Pink’s Six Senses? Which of the Six Senses does it nurture, and how?

   B) Design the ideal classroom for our honors seminar. Describe what it should look like and contain, and explain why you chose these features. Please attach a drawing, blueprint or diagram of your design.

2. How can faculty challenge and stimulate students’ whole brains in the classroom? Choose a course and create a whole-brain in-class exercise for that course. Then design a detailed, whole-brain take-home assignment or exam for the course, explaining why it calls upon whole-brain thinking (R-brain vision and L-brain decision), and why it would be a valuable addition to the course. (Be sure to identify the course.)

3. Looking at the projects or papers you have completed this past semester, can you think of ways you could have added a whole-brain dimension to an assignment that was purely left- or right-brain? Give one example of a purely left- or right-brain assignment you completed, and describe how you (or the professor) could have transformed it into a whole-brain assignment.

4. Most colleges emphasize students’ high-school grades and SAT scores in their admissions decisions. Both of these criteria are heavily weighted toward left-brain aptitudes, as we learned in *A Whole New Mind*. What kind of exam could students take instead of the traditional SAT? In other words, what would a WBAT—Whole-Brain Aptitude Test—include? Design at least three components or types of questions, and explain why you are including them in your exam.

The last day of class was devoted to Play: we watched inventive YouTube videos; listened to movie soundtracks; decorated our classroom with drawings, quotations about creativity, and cut-paper designs; and created holiday cards, bead jewelry, crafts, and gifts for our families. One student remarked how good it felt to be laughing with friends and working on arts and crafts when exams loomed in the next few days.

The first-year honors seminar prompted many Honor Scholars to design whole-brain or interdisciplinary projects for their honors contracts. Honors contracts completed in our first year included: a photographic essay about animals and their caretakers in the Veterinary Technology Program; an original children’s book on Boston Harbor; the Dust Bowl migration as seen through history and fiction; animal abuse and the work of Andrew Vachss; a portfolio of graffiti as emblematic of popular culture; a psychological analysis of a fictional serial killer; a study, with intricate paper models, of famous doors; and the
effect of music on the human brain. My hope is that our Honor Scholars will find ways to retain their natural curiosity and creativity and to use their Six Senses to find playfulness, joy, and meaning in all of their academic and professional endeavors.

In fall 2010, the first-year honors seminar became the model for teaching whole-brain thinking in all twenty sections of Mount Ida’s first-year seminar. For the faculty teaching the seminar, crafting a whole-brain pedagogy that “walks the talk” has been a fascinating and challenging exercise; it is a work in progress. I have been experimenting with whole-brain exercises and assignments in my non-honors courses with good results. The question of how to assess whole-brain thinking (whole-brain assessment?) continues to occupy my interest and that of the HSP Advisory Board, but that, as they say, is a Story for another day.

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On Honors Students
Dreaming the Gothic

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INTRODUCTION

Filling an honors basic studies class in Gothic literature and culture was not a difficult challenge. By design, this course attracted students ranging from freshmen to seniors and from a wide variety of majors that included English, psychology, business, education, and chemistry. The trick was creating an even intellectual playing field, establishing and sustaining a high level of discussion in which everyone participated daily, and making the course intellectually rigorous for each student in the class. At the same time, I wanted to give to these students from different disciplines a flexible analytical method they could master for understanding the genre, but also one that excited and empowered them to better understand the workings of their intellectual lives and of the culture beyond the halls of academia. Dreaming the Gothic—From Dracula to Lady Gaga was structured to meet those challenges and to have students apply what they learned in the course beyond the study of literature to their lives. At this budget-tightening moment in higher education, when colleges and universities are increasingly pressured to focus on professional, practical, and core-specific courses, honors programs especially need to teach flexible critical thinking skills, especially ones that make meta-connections among disparate disciplines.

PEDAGOGY

Studying the Gothic was a novel idea for most of the students in the class. At the outset, they thought the course would be a lighthearted relief from the demands of their more serious classes, one that would provide credits but offer little of lasting value, but they ended up learning a rigorous analytical method and a new way of understanding what society has defined as unusual, abnormal, and perverse—and, just as importantly, what is “normal.” The course was particularly beneficial to honors students who often follow prescribed formulas for success and may not be as open to alternative ways of conceptualizing the world as they could be. Learning a sophisticated analytical method that disrupts expectations and defies received, normalizing knowledge is invaluable for honors students, who are typically well schooled in scientific method and proof-based inquiry and who are often fast-tracking for professional careers. When the honors students in my class saw that their own observations, many of which
they at first dismissed as trivial, could be developed into sophisticated arguments, they grew confident in their thinking and in new ways of perceiving their lives and their culture.

I made it clear to the students from the first day that we were learning a form of apprehending texts, and I let the Gothic themes, images, and motifs arise from their analytical forays into the texts. This subject-specific methodology empowered the students to discover the greater issues of the genre for themselves through small details. Because this was an honors course with high-achieving individuals, I could teach them a challenging methodology that they could apply to any text, no matter their background, and I could set high expectations. Once they learned the method they ran with it.

Although close textual analysis can be useful in teaching many literary genres, I chose it for this course because it is easy to learn, immediately empowering non-majors, and because I could reinforce it with the application of Freudian psychoanalysis to the Gothic genre. Just as a literary work is especially effective if it performs in its language or form what it is literally saying (e.g., Coleridge's use of hissing sibilants to reinforce the descriptions of snake-like qualities of the soon-to-be stepmother in "Cristabel"), so too did I want the class, with self awareness, to perform in its methodological approach the operational mechanics of the subject we were studying. In the case of the Gothic, a psychologically based genre that in popular culture surrounds our students, little critical distance exists between them and the texts, films, music, music videos, graphic novels, and cultural objects that have tremendous and unquestioned effects on them. I wanted the students to track, through textual analysis of both content and form, how connotations and associative textual chains construct often hidden contexts for reading a given work and how these contexts shape the meanings and effects of the words on the reader (it is no accident that we are predisposed to distrust Coleridge’s stepmother). This methodological approach is closely mirrored by the psychoanalytic approach we would learn in that psychoanalysis sees people as written by their experiences and culture and thus seeks to understand the individual workings of a person’s text (e.g., dreams) and how individuals construct meaning in their lives, particularly in relation to larger cultural contexts.

HISTORY OF THE GOTHIC

Historically, the Gothic developed in a variety of cultural realms and at staggered times—from architecture and art to literature and film—as a response to the strictures of an excessive rationalism that, while propounding enlightenment concerns, often suppressed basic human emotions along with evidence of such evils as Western imperialism, war, slavery abroad, and cruelty at home. The term was at first derogatory, suggesting barbarism, but was soon embraced by its proponents as an alternate aesthetic with an alternate history, one particularly based in Europe not Greece, and consequently opening up a different aesthetic and conceptual future. In architecture, the term originally developed
from the twelfth to the fifteenth century to describe cathedrals and abbeys and then saw a revival in the eighteenth century with the rise of Gothic literature, beginning with Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Gothic visual art such as that of William Turner and Caspar David Friedrich. This eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century “abnormal” aesthetic, including a fascination with ruins, mystical places, asymmetry, and unnamable feelings, blossomed as the dark side of the Romantic movement, taking the aesthetics of what was visibly left of a European mystical tradition and giving voice and venue to the irrational, to the repressed, to socially or politically unspeakable human desires, emotions, and urges. This aesthetic embraced imagination, originality, superstition, sexuality, and the forbidden. Although often viewed as an eclectic and aberrant genre with a predilection for morbid and often sensual or depraved creativity, as in “Kubla Khan,” it served for almost two hundred years to define by antithesis what Western societies deemed to be normal, constructive, and rational.

The Gothic did not remain in service as a mere foil. Walpole famously fashioned his Strawberry Hill Villa as a complement to his strange novel, and William Beckford lavished his fortune on his magnificently doomed Fonthill Abbey, rebuilding the tower again and again as, like the House of Usher, it repeatedly collapsed upon itself. In architecture, art, literature, commercial art, cinema, product designs, font typefaces, hair fashions, ironwork, carriage and then car designs, daytime television—in countless forms and in a series of waves—the Gothic genre, like its barbarian namesake, assailed Western culture throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today, if we take television, film, and popular music as indicators, from Wolverine to Willy Wonka and from *Twilight* to Lady Gaga, we can say that the Gothic has carried the field. There is no better time to study it.

Science has also not been immune to the Gothic. From psychoanalysis to Einstein’s “spooky phenomena,” we know that forces are at work within and around us that are beyond our control, that are perhaps forever unknowable and indeterminable. Many concepts once viewed as quackery (the unconscious, repression, the uncertainty principle) have in the past half-century entered mainstream parlance and been accepted as givens. Advances in computer technology, cybernetics, artificial intelligence, medical science, computer imaging, and myriad other areas in the techno-realm make what was derided only a decade ago as science fiction now science fact. But this new knowledge (based in science) is nevertheless oddly spectral and “unreal,” mystically enjoyed by many but rationally understood by few. What is more uncanny, and scary, than a “virtual world” accessible through a portal in everyone’s home? We blithely fly through cyberspace, knowing full well that predators await us—and our children—on the aptly named “web.” A course on the Gothic is particularly relevant as we are at a watershed moment culturally in our high level of anxiety about terror in the world. Aesthetically the Gothic is poised to become the norm in American culture.
ON HONORS STUDENTS DREAMING THE GOTHIC

CRITICAL TOOLS

The students in my course immediately wanted to talk about Gaga, X-Men, “Fringe,” Johnny Depp, Chuck Palahniuk, the new transsexual supermodel Lea T, and the latest computer games. They also wanted to know if rumors were true that we were going to analyze music videos and read a story narrated from the point of view of an evil sock monkey. Yes, I assured them, but I told them we could not have these discussions intelligently without first understanding how the genre to which they belong developed and how it functions. Twilight is a new spin on Bram Stoker’s Dracula, but it is also a vehicle for articulating mass cultural fears about the importation of diseases (real plagues but also cultural ideas from the East and moral corruption) that coincided with British imperialism; Stoker’s novel is also about a masculine fear of femininity (e.g., the vampiric harem of three women at Dracula’s castle), and the social positioning of the “New Woman” through Mina Harker, a critique of a dying parasitical aristocracy, and a new nationalism and racism built on a redefinition of what “blood” means. Perhaps Twilight is similarly complex, and, before we get to Gagaism, I inform my students, we need to understand that she too is doing cultural “work,” that she hit the scene precisely when the stage was set for her to do so, and that we need to develop critical tools to understand how she functions as a cultural phenomenon.

To appreciate knowledge, students must discover much of it for themselves. I would serve as their Vincent Price and give one lecture on the history of the Gothic as it arose in various cultural fields to set the stage pedagogically for serious inquiry. I would also give two half-class lectures on analyzing texts, one literary critical and one psychoanalytic. I would gently steer discussions, but their minds and participation would forge their understanding of the genre.

EXPERIENCING THE GOTHIC THROUGH TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

“Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright”

—Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, Or the Whale (169)

On the first day of class, two of the twenty-one students were obviously confident in the study of literature, but most of them were apprehensive if not downright scared. I went over the syllabus, explained the requirements: participation in discussions; sophisticated questions composed for each class session; two five- to seven-page textual analyses; and a lengthy research paper. I told them I had high expectations, and then I gave a lecture on the history and aesthetics of the Gothic in art (Caspar David Friedrich, David Fuseli, Joseph Beuys, and Hugo Ball), architecture (from Notre Dame to Gaudi’s Sagrada Familia), and literature (excerpts from Mary Shelley, Lord Byron, Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, Stephen King, and Maurice Sendak). I stressed specific elements in the
images and language, pointing out and connecting themes and motifs, in order to start the students’ familiarity with the genre. I used and contextualized terminology that would help them conceptualize the genre in the future (“the sublime,” “unnatural,” “repression,” “desire,” “asymmetry,” “corruption,” “creativity,” “transgression,” “the polymorphously perverse,” “alienation,” “the uncanny”), and I ran from early examples to modern manifestations and back again as much as possible. A bit taken aback but dutifully taking notes, they thus set out on this journey in serious fashion.

Many stayed after this introductory class to tell me they were not English majors. I reassured them that they would be taught all the tools they needed and that no students by dint of their major or background would have undue advantage over others in the course. I wanted them to know that the course was demanding, as I had demonstrated in the dense lecture and its technical terminology, but I also reassured them that, if they worked hard, they would excel in the class.

In the subsequent classes, I set about giving them the tools they needed, explaining, for example, how one goes about performing a close reading. The two English majors were familiar with this approach already, but the rest of the class was relieved to discover that textual analysis is an accessible process. Instead of speaking generally about the text, we went to specific passages in *Dracula*, discovering hidden connotations in the words Stoker uses. With the help of an overhead projector, the *Oxford English Dictionary* online, and our own connections, we began to build subtexts of these passages, often diagramming sentences word by word.

We wrote, for example, the English narrator’s first description of Dracula on the board: “His face was a strong, a very strong, aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere” (23). Taking the sentence apart piece by piece, we strung chains of connotations below. “His” is, of course, gendered and shows ownership. The word “face” means more than the front of the head for it also suggests according to the OED, a person’s countenance, his outward appearance, possibly a mask. A student connected the word to the “face of the cliff” above which Dracula’s castle, Harker’s prison, and thus life itself hangs “on the very edge of a terrific precipice,” a “thousand foot drop” into a chasm, perhaps hell (321). Continuing this kind of analysis for the rest of the sentence, students were seeing that the reader is being prepared to see Dracula as a dangerous foreign threat to Harker (and, by extension, England) and as a corrupting, disease-spreading creature that attacks both body and morality. The “unnaturalness” of Dracula’s description is in itself disturbing, and when we got to his teeth and hands, the class could see subtexts of Victorian fears of foreigners, violence, death, superstition, sexuality, and femininity:

> [. . .] The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp
white teeth. These protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed. The chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

Hitherto I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight, and they had seemed rather white and fine. [. . .] Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point. As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. (17)

Themes of death, sexuality, violence, and disease surfaced repeatedly in the course, and students learned to see how Stoker’s language functioned on a hidden level as we focused on passages they chose as well as a few randomly selected “normal” passages so that they could find important subtexts anywhere.

Although textual analysis may have been familiar to advanced English majors, I needed to give students from other disciplines methods for approaching texts so that they could eventually excel at applying them. Robert Scholes argues that we often neglect to teach reading strategies, even in English departments, focusing more on teaching literature or culture; Scholes called for a fundamental change in the approach to teaching texts (213), a prompt that made me think hard about what we would do in this class. After reviewing the students’ majors on the class roster, I described reading strategies using various major-specific metaphors, encouraging all the students to help me. Students in disciplines such as physics and chemistry, for instance, were relieved that they could arrive at the meaning of a text through a precise methodology rather than artsy intuition or years of reading literary classics. For the would-be forensic pathologist and the anthropologist, we metaphorically were piecing together a skeleton from a few fragments of text, not rushing to identify anything too soon. For the nursing student, we were making a diagnosis based on symptoms exhibited by the text. I stressed that the class as a whole formed a team of individuals with different strengths, all of whom could contribute something important. For the rest of the semester, I told them, we would be CSI-Honors Gothic: with each new text we would assume a literary crime had been committed (many were), and, using the OED and their own knowledge of the world, they would be detectives trying to figure out what that crime was, how each text worked. We would not jump to conclusions too soon, nor would we try to fit specifics of the texts into conceptual boxes that canonical scholars or popular culture had presented to us.

An important component of the course was the students’ responsibility for coming to class each day with one sophisticated question about the text. The
question was to be a 150 words in length and to have three parts: a specific curiosity in the text; a hypothesis about that curiosity; and a more refined and sophisticated question that follows from the hypothesis. Here is one sample:

Why are Dracula’s hands initially described by Jonathan Harker as “delicate,” “fine,” and “white”? Later his hands are described as “coarse, broad, with squat fingers,” and “unnaturally strong,” especially when he attacks Harker and then Lucy. Perhaps in the first instance the description of the hands is used to emasculate Dracula, to make sure the reader sees him as “unnatural” at a point in the text in which the reader needs to identify strongly with the “normal,” narrating Harker. Does this early description position the reader to see Harker as the “natural” masculine hero by assuming the readership will identify with a male protagonist? And if the depiction of the “monster” can change from “monstrously” feminine men to coarse pillaging, sexually aggressive foreigners, does that suggest that Dracula is a social anxiety cipher, that the monster shifts, serves as a various metaphors for larger social issues? Is masculinity itself privileged in Stoker’s very language?

I told the students that this form of asking questions will be useful to them in any major or profession, in a public lecture or in a business meeting. If you think of the first question, and then follow the implications so that you can ask a more sophisticated question, you can impress your boss and intimidate your competition. If they cultivated this art of asking questions and tried it out during the Q/A following the next public lecture they attended, every one of their professors in the room would lean over to the professor next to him or her and claim, “she was one of my students.” Such directly applicable skills got the students’ attention, and they came to class with specific examples from the text, prepared to begin the discussion at an elevated level. They submitted their questions at the end of each day, whether they asked them in class or not, and I gave them written feedback on them, also including the quality of their questions in their final grades.

After a short while, I would simply begin each class with a greeting and the question “where shall we go today?” This approach calls for patience with tangents and an open-mindedness to pursue what at times initially appear to be unfruitful leads, but the students established an easy and productive rapport among themselves. While serious inquiry was going on, the success of the student involvement depended on maintaining lightheartedness in the classroom. We had fun with the discussions, which were informal and lively. Research has repeatedly shown that, when students “are in environments where learning is occurring in a meaningful context, where they have choices, and where they are encouraged to follow their interests, learning takes place best” (Singer, Golinkoff, and Hirsch-Pasek 9). At the same time, I called on those who held
back to offer their insights until they were confident and actively participating on their own; no one was allowed a free ride.

**PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY AS A CRITICAL TOOL**

As I was more interested in training students to recognize, analyze, and decipher instances of the Gothic than in giving them a history of the genre, I prepared for the class by researching methods for teaching the subject as well as reading critical discussions of the genre. My training in psychoanalysis also helped me formulate the approach I used. Anne Williams’ *The Art of Darkness* was a particularly helpful source; in it she argues that the Gothic is a poetics and that the novels within the genre proceed thematically rather than in a rational plot. I introduced this concept early on, identifying themes that surfaced repeatedly in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* and beginning to show inter-textual connections as well. Imperialism as a disease, corruption of the body following infection by immoral thoughts, themes of incest and tainted bloodlines, sexuality associated with death, forbidden desire, suppressed anger toward family members, houses (and families) haunted by sins of the past: these themes and more emerged through class discussions of specific moments and descriptions in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Students did not have to fear being lost in the text, missing important plot details, or forgetting characters; what mattered was what was happening thematically through them. Once they understood this focus, they lost their frustration in reading daunting texts with odd and difficult language. Once they got the hang of this, then we read Freud.

Chapters six and seven of *Interpretation of Dreams* articulate the ideas of repression, condensation, and displacement; the unconscious, the preconscious, and the conscious. My third and final mini lecture outlined how Freud’s dream text functioned in the same way as a literary text, with connotations and subtexts forming around central themes. Texts, dreamy and otherwise, always reveal more than they say. A dream, Freud argues, is a rebus, the materials and keys of which are known only to the dreamer. The dream language for each individual is idiosyncratic. To understand what a dream signifies, and by extension what any utterance means, the Freudian psychoanalyst needs to learn how that patient’s language functions; what the word “ball” means to every individual is different because of our different experiences in life. This is why analysis takes years. I noted that our psychoanalytic diagrams on the board looked remarkably similar to those we drew when discussing how to do a close reading of a text. I suggested that, if language itself functions as manifest dream material linked by associations to latent material, then it would behoove us to psychoanalyze our cultural texts to understand what drives us, what neuroses haunt our culture, and what our culture unconsciously privileges. The students for the most part accepted this logic, but they generally denied that Freud was applicable to their own lives or that repression of childhood incidents, desires, and emotions continued to affect them as adults. They accepted the general theory, but, probably as a consequence of cultural misconceptions of Freud,
they rejected the specifics that concerned their own lives and the cultural texts they liked. So we did a little in-class dream analysis.

Once I made sure everyone understood Freud’s argument about how dream texts work, I asked if anyone would volunteer a dream for the class to analyze. A dozen hands immediately shot up. I stressed that we needed the class to be a “safe environment” and that any person could stop the discussion at any time. We chose a “safe word” to stop discussion if anyone became uncomfortable. I selected one student to share her dream, which she claimed to be mundane and nonsensical, not manifestly biographical at all. The class was invited to take notes but not interrupt; they could ask questions afterward. Following the recital of the dream, students began asking leading cause-and-effect questions (Did you ever have a dog like the one in the dream? Did you like your father?), and I had to steer them into asking associative chain questions (When you think of dog, what do you think of? And that makes you think of? And that makes you think of?). We wrote the dream associations on the board and then connected subtexts, leading to an “aha” moment for the student, to a specific incident from her childhood and a time when she was having a difficult relationship with her mother. The maternal metaphors had been clearly circulating in her discussion of the dream. She was satisfied with what we had uncovered and wanted to press on, but I made it clear we were trying to understand the psychoanalytic principles at work here and not to go too far down the road into students’ lives. Dream analysis is potentially a dangerous undertaking, and one must be cautious, but it can be eye-opening in a good way and convincing, which is what the students needed to learn. We ended up analyzing four different dreams, all of which circled early family relationships and suppressed incidents or feelings that the class, if not the dreamer, could clearly see at work. We were, they realized, immersed in hidden fields of a haunted language that shaped our dreams and thoughts. The class loved exploring their dreams and playing detective, and the trust they had in one another grew enormously, as did the confidence they had in speaking about literary texts.

The students initially most resistant to the psychoanalytic method became its firmest adherents. Once the hard-science majors realized that Freud sought to discover “the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied,” they dropped what I think was fear-of-not-understanding-the-irrational-based dismissive posturing (Freud 130) and enjoyed the analysis. The class saw the connection between thematic close reading of literature and the psychoanalytic method, which is based in and perfectly suited for understanding the Gothic, and they made the argument (with the enthusiasm of having just discovered it) that the Gothic functioned as the manifestation of the repressed unconscious of society, that every text (from “Kubla Khan” to the “Wrath of Khan”) was a dream text ripe for analysis. I invited them henceforth to bring cultural texts to class for analysis, and their CSI-mode went into overdrive. Every meeting afterward, in the final ten minutes of class, I asked whether anyone had artifacts to share,
and a plethora of advertisements ripped from magazines, you-tube clips, posters, and music videos emerged. Thus the discussions of alienation in Byron’s “Manfred,” of the daughter’s desire for and hatred of her love-smitten father in Coleridge’s “Cristabel,” and of the description of the girls as “more than sisters” in Christina Rosetti’s “Goblin Market” would resonate with current cultural texts such as X-men, “Two-and-a-Half Men,” and Dexter. On the academic front, the anthropology major wanted to analyze the images of “other peoples” in her anthropology textbook, and the physics major wanted to discuss fractal imagery; the physical therapy major described the strangely Gothic elements of a local nursing home. When we read the Situationists on the psychogeography of urban life, the students went on a situationist derive (a strolling, analytical “drift”) to map how the architecture and changes in ambience of our campus are creepy in the ways they emotionally and psychologically steer the students as they travel the university. Such mapping was probably not what our university exactly imagined in its recent push for more applied learning, but as far as critical learning goes, the students were “getting it” and using it.

Thus armed with tools, terms, and a methodology, the students were analyzing their own worlds, not just the texts we studied for class. For the remainder of the semester, we continued to discuss the assigned texts and marked the evolution of themes and motifs: the haunted castle in the eighteenth century became the haunted house in the nineteenth and then in the nineteen seventies the haunted supermarket, haunted car, and haunted planetary outpost, an ancient imperialism theme replayed through the fear of predatory aliens returning to earth.

By the end of the semester, having thoroughly deconstructed Philip K. Dick’s Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, the students were ready to make some prognostications for the future of the genre. Some suggested that the recent morphing out of the memoiristic teen angst closets of home into more traditional science fiction would continue for the genre post-9/11 and that the recent move toward protagonists with superhuman powers (Spiderman, the Green Lantern, the vampires and werewolves of Twilight) suggests that either we are getting more fearful and need more “super power” to combat our fears or that the “normalization” of the genre is accelerating so that the “normal” will be displaced, perhaps sparking a cultural showdown. Some suggested that our society is becoming less confining and more comfortable with ambiguity, but this was countered by the idea that we are in some kind of post-traumatic stress—a cultural crisis in which neuroses are evidenced everywhere, but with all our reliance on virtual technologies we are somehow dissociated from them, unable to feel them, relegated to spectral avatars watching our own cultural nightmare unfold. The class had much to say about the rage for Lady Gaga, but the students decided that, although provocative, her performances played upon existing cultural themes, stereotypes, and anxieties (fear of the womb, fear of liquids, masquerade as empowerment, eroticizing of the other/female/alien)
and that she is not ultimately very liberating for women. And, yes, we ended with a creepy murder mystery narrated by a sock monkey, which the class accepted as a reliable narrator.

CONCLUSION

We had a lot of good material to discuss, but the success of the class came from empowering the students to analyze the texts. The subject-specific analytical method of psychoanalytic dream interpretation that mirrored close textual analysis allowed the students to analyze their own lives and culture. Mastery of the analytical method allowed the students to uncover the themes, motifs, and issues of the genre; it kept them empowered, engaged, and learning. By the end of the course, the students were able to critically engage any Gothic text, image, or artifact and, beyond that, could analyze the world around them in a new way. In a way that is characteristic of honors classes, I may have learned as much about new ways of thinking as the students did; the class has encouraged me to be more flexible in my teaching methods, to take a more interdisciplinary approach to my classes, and to focus less on course content than on teaching analytical methods and skills that can be used beyond the class.

REFERENCES


WORKS CONSULTED


ON HONORS STUDENTS DREAMING THE GOTHIC


_____________________________
The author may be contacted at
borem@uncw.edu.
APPENDIX A

FROM BOREN SYLLABUS—ENG 290H GOTHIC HONORS

Course Description
This course will follow the development of the Gothic in literature and to some extent culture from its inception to the present, with a focus on the transatlantic shift in the genre. The genre characteristically deals with such things as the supernatural, sexual ambiguity, violence, perversions, and myriad marginalized social human practices and beliefs, and the works belonging to this genre follow well-developed and highly complex structures. Using psychoanalytic and genre theory, we’ll analyze the Gothic as both literary and social phenomenon in order to reveal, among other things, how this genre of deviance, which is more pervasive today than ever, functions to define less “deviant” genres, from children’s tales to romance novels and historical fiction.

Texts
Bram Stoker, Dracula; Mary Shelley, Frankenstein; Sigmund Freud, Interpretation of Dreams; Sigmund Freud, The Uncanny; Shirley Jackson, The Haunting of Hill House; Jim Grimsley, Dreamboy; Philip K. Dick, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?; Chuck Palahniuk, Fight Club; Ira Levin, The Stepford Wives; Penn Jillette, Sock

* Works by Byron, Rossetti, Coleridge, Melville, Faulkner, Guy Debord, and others will be made available through Randall Library. Films will be put on reserve for check-out.

Course Requirements
Each class meeting, students will bring to class prepared, insightful questions on the material covered. Ideal questions will be 150 words in length and will catalyze a thoughtful discussion that engages both with the specific textual material and a greater issue or two of the text. One might, for instance, begin with a short quotation or a pair of quotations and build from there. A typed copy of your best questions will be turned in at the end of the semester. Cumulatively, these will comprise 10% of your grade.

Come to class prepared to participate in an intense discussion of the work. Class participation is 20% of your grade. Everyone in this class should participate, and observe good conduct, which includes listening respectfully to the observations of others.

Because we will be jumping quickly to specific places in the texts, we will all use the same editions of these texts. Class discussions should not be disrupted by students fumbling to find discussed material in aberrant editions (searching for pieces of sentences in a Melville or Faulkner novel can be a ridiculous venture). Your books are to be written in.

Attendance to class is, of course, mandatory, with absences affecting your final grade. If you miss a discussion, ask a colleague for notes.
The first essay assignment will be relatively brief and will be an exercise in close reading; this essay should be well polished, show you’re working closely with textual matter. This essay will constitute 20% of your grade. The second essay will be significantly longer, be based upon the same methodology. At this point I am more interested in your analytical skills and ideas than what others have said about your area of interest, but you need to demonstrate you’ve begun to explore and collect the critical work necessary to undertake a final project. This essay will comprise 20% of your grade.

Final research papers are due on the date noted. This is non-negotiable. They will include bibliography and demonstrate critical research. The final paper will comprise 30% of your final grade. I will explain my expectations for the papers in class, and if you have specific questions about your project or writing, I’m happy to discuss them with you outside of class.

Daily Schedule (class met 2x a week)

Day 1: **Introduction. Lecture on the Gothic**

Week 2: Bram Stoker, *Dracula*
     Bram Stoker, *Dracula*  
     (Interactive lecture on close reading methodology)

Week 3: Bram Stoker, *Dracula*
     Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Week 4: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
     Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Week 5: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
     Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*  
     **Paper 1 due**

Week 6: Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*
     Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*

Week 7: Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*
     (Interactive lecture on Psychoanalysis; Dream Analysis)  
     Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*  
     (Dream Analysis continued)

Week 8: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Cristabel*  
     (Dream Analysis continued)  
     Official break from classes

Week 9: Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Cenci*
     Lord Byron, *Manfred*

Week 10: Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*
     Herman Melville, *The Tartarus of Maids, Benito Cereno*
     **Paper 2 due**
Week 11: Edgar Allan Poe, *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Black Cat*
William Faulkner, *A Rose for Emily*

Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House.*

Week 12: Jim Grimsley, *Dreamboy*
Jim Grimsley, *Dreamboy*

Week 13: Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
Ray Bradbury, *The Veldt*; Guy Debord, *Theory of the Derive*

Week 14: Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*; Folder containing all questions due
Discussion of assigned films (*Alien*; *X-Men*)

Week 15: Ira Levin, *The Stepford Wives*
Penn Jillette, *Sock*; Final Research Paper due
## APPENDIX B

### END OF SEMESTER STUDENT PERCEPTION OF TEACHING: OVERALL EVALUATION FOR INSTRUCTOR’S TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS (QUESTION 16) FOR BOREN, ENG 290-001

**GOTHIC HONORS, SPRING 2011**

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Trained in American environmental literature, I typically teach one to three interdisciplinary courses a year built in some way around this subject, with special attention to the rich American traditions of literary nature writing and environmental activism. Most often I teach Nature’s Nation, focusing primarily on literature, and Eco-Freaks, centered on activism (the title is offered tongue-in-cheek to suggest how activists tend to be seen by the mainstream). Beyond teaching about the key figures, movements, and milestones in the American experience of nature, I hope to inspire in students a desire to know more about our local biome, located in the southern foothills of the Ozarks; to give them ways to sharpen their powers of perception; and to encourage them to explore the relationship between knowledge and value, i.e., between ecology and ethics. In addition to the traditional readings, formal paper, and final exam, I include one more assignment in my seminars, to be pursued throughout the semester: students must select a specific place on campus that they will visit at least once every week for at least thirty minutes at a time, about which they will compile a “place journal.” I recommend using a simple, lightweight notebook, into which blank, letter-sized paper can be manually inserted. The entries comprising this journal are each composed of two parts: a page or so of original writing (by hand, preferably) and a page or so of original, handmade drawings.

Our campus is blessed with a fifteen-acre nature preserve featuring a mix of southern bottomland woods and remnant prairie; most students choose a section of it for this assignment, though they are free to choose any corner of campus they wish as long as it is outdoors. As one would expect, the students write about what they see, hear, smell, touch, and perhaps even taste during each visit. At the top of each entry they record the date; the time of day; the ambient temperature; the degree of cloud cover; and the direction and strength of the wind, if there is any. Although I acknowledge aloud, when introducing the assignment, the temptation students will surely feel to get some of these data off the web—after all, many of them carry smart phones—I urge them to set aside this crutch as best they can over the semester; being able to gauge accurately and unassisted the temperature, wind velocity, and other conditions is part of the sharpened powers of perception that I mean for them to gain from the course.
The Place of Drawing in Place Journaling

The rest of the written portion of each entry should record, describe, and reflect upon whatever the student observes during her weekly encounters, with particular attention to the slow changes wrought by the unfolding season, whatever that may be. Typically students struggle with the early efforts until their vocabulary improves along with their powers of perception. Predictably, students discover a direct relationship between these skills, for we often do not truly see or hear something for which we have no name or no descriptive words. To help students identify their local tree, flower, bird, insect, and mammal species (beyond generic terms like “bug”), I lend out field guides such as the Audubon Society’s guide to North American birds. A student who goes from saying “bird” to “starling” or “towhee” within a few weeks is already a more attentive, more placed student than she was at the start of the course; she is often a more self-confident one as well insofar as she is more at home in her world, more acquainted with her (nonhuman) neighbors. I also make available to the class a copy of Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape, a compendium of hundreds of terms for specific features of North American landscapes, terms that are in danger of being lost for lack of use as more and more of us spend our lives surrounded by walls, concrete, and glass. For example, in our part of the country, close to the Arkansas River, it is helpful to know the difference between a meander scar and an oxbow lake, both of which are explained in Home Ground (226, 255).

The drawing is a much less common requirement than writing for place journals assigned in humanities courses. Honors students at the University of Central Arkansas are accustomed to writing a great deal. During their recruiting interview, they learn that writing will be a central focus during their four years in our program, which is a stand-alone curriculum comprising twenty-seven credits of interdisciplinary seminars culminating in a senior thesis. They are not at all accustomed to drawing, however, and many are insecure about their skill, perhaps rightly so. Although the occasional art major does turn up in honors, we more frequently have students majoring in fields like philosophy, pre-med, English, sociology, and political science. Few of them have had instruction in drawing, so I make clear from the start that their sketches will not be evaluated for artistic merit and that the point of this exercise is learning to see, concentrate, and attend to details beyond what everyday language encourages or allows.

I do not send students out unprepared. Just as I offer aids in developing a vocabulary for what they will encounter outdoors, I also give them a few tools of the drawing trade. First I invite a drawing teacher from UCA’s art department to one of our earliest class periods. Using the classroom whiteboard along with a few props (a basic drawing pencil, an artist’s eraser, and a homemade viewfinder cut out of card stock), he reviews a handful of useful techniques for capturing in two dimensions what the students will typically see outside in three. After he has taken questions and elaborated as necessary on his lesson, I provide the class with a few pages from the second chapter of Clare Walker...
Leslie’s *The Art of Field Sketching*. This chapter reinforces and illustrates the techniques reviewed in class, such as contour line drawing, gesture sketching, and diagrammatic drawing as well as the different results that can be achieved by using the pencil and eraser in various ways. Finally, I provide the class with an example, a “journal entry” of my own devising (see Appendix).

More than once over the course of a semester, I offer reassurance that the students’ drawing skills will not be evaluated. I care primarily about good-faith attempts to get to know their specially chosen places. The written portions of their entries need not be polished prose, but, like the sketches, their writing should evince, over time, improved observational skills. As wildlife illustrator Roger Tory Peterson says in his foreword to Leslie’s book, “There is no better way to open your eyes to the natural world than to go afield with a sketchpad or notebook. You go beyond mere identification naming things [sic]; you begin to understand shape, function, movement, and behavior” (xiii). Such understanding is rudimentary to an ecological turn of mind, which, arguably, more of us need to cultivate in today’s world.

Student reaction to the place journal assignment has been mostly quite positive. They often begin by grumbling a little, especially when the weather is uninviting, and some of them do not initially see much point in the exercise (the environmental science majors are a welcome exception), but by the end of the semester I find on course evaluations that most of the students are astonished to realize how much they have learned about their immediate surroundings and how much they had previously neglected or indifferently taken for granted. What had been undifferentiated screens of green (in the warm seasons) or brown (in the cold ones) have now become unique places with distinguishable features.

Drawing complements our ability to name, describe, and reflect on things. Taken together, writing—“naming” in the broadest sense of the word—and drawing can prepare students to develop a personal interest in nature’s oxymoronic “ordinary wonders” and in their well-being. This insight is one facet of the relationship between knowledge and value, ecology and ethics, that I ask students to consider carefully as the semester unfolds. At the very least, this relationship bears on students’ understanding of the passion that motivates the writers and activists they are studying in my courses, many of whom have fought tirelessly and sometimes sacrificed much on behalf of the more-than-human world. I do not expect that students in my honors seminars will become tomorrow’s nature writers or environmental activists. But given that they will be tomorrow’s caretakers of the world we share with plants and animals, I would like them to become citizens who are thoughtful about this charge. To become, in other words, people who can see.

REFERENCES

The Place of Drawing in Place Journaling


The author may be contacted at
AllisonW@uca.edu.
January 20, 2011
12:45 pm  55°F
Clear, bright sky
Wind ~5 mph (?), from Southwest

One of these beautiful winter days when it actually feels nice to be outside, in the sunny parts anyway. I guess this is the southern version of a January thaw, because ordinarily it’s colder than this at this time of year. Today I’m going to concentrate on the biggest, most obvious feature of my spot, a largeish tree with serious-looking thorns all up and down the trunk & along many (are?) of its limbs. The thorns make it easy to look up in a book than many trees (especially at this time of year when there are no leaves on them), so I’m going to say this is a honey locust, *Gleditsia triacanthos*, I guess the common name comes from the tree’s attraction to bees, because according to Dr. Dwight M. Moore’s *Trees of Arkansas*, it’s “a good producer of nectar” (95). He calls the leaves “bipinnately compound,” meaning they’ve one long stalk with lots of leaflets up & down it, kind of like thin in his picture:

What I see on the ground today are just millions of these little guys, about ½” to 1” long, pale brown, almost a dull copper color.
This tree has gray-brown bark with ridges going up and down it, looking sort of like there's a gray skin being stretched too tight around a darker layer underneath, so that the skin pulls apart in places and leaves little gash-like openings. Maybe it really is a kind of shedding that's going on - the outer bark being stretched apart by the growing tree, creating patches that will eventually break away. I don't see any little swatches of bark on the ground nearby, though, so for now my theory is unconfirmed.

The thorns up close are like this:
(On the tree limbs, that is...)

On the trunk, for some reason the thorns appear in clusters:

This overall shape of the tree, brown, smooth, shiny.

Very dangerous! The ones near eye-level are particularly scary. Each thorn is quite hard and stiff, though somewhat bendable. Dark brown, smooth, shiny.
These thorns raise a puzzling question: whatever are they for? Usually such things are produced by evolution for the organism’s protection from predators, for example the quills of a porcupine. Or they can be modified leaves, which I think is the case with spiny cacti, intended to reduce water loss in dry climates. We get some very hot, dry weather here, but not as much as you find west of the Rockies, and besides, I think the heavy locust range includes much of the eastern U.S. So I’m not yet sure what to make of these particular daggers ... something to investigate further.
Almost every week throughout the year, the University Honors Program of Miami University holds recruitment programs for prospective honors students. High school juniors and seniors, often with assorted parents and family members in tow, file into an auditorium to learn about the key features, requirements, and benefits of our honors program. Smiles, nods, and eager questions greet comments relating to honors housing, honors seminars, advance course registration, and scholarships. Inevitably, when the mention of a required honors thesis arises, concerned looks, stony silence, and side glances emerge.

The hallmark of most honors programs across the nation is the undergraduate honors thesis, which represents a fitting culmination of a student’s college experience yet inspires fear and trepidation even among the most academically gifted and motivated students. Perhaps one reason for this reaction is the daunting goal of most honors theses: to demonstrate command of relevant scholarly literature and make a personal contribution to that scholarship. Although a thesis can take many forms—from scientific experiments to artistic performances—it usually involves a substantive written document that captures relevant background, methods, and techniques as well as details of the process used in completing the project.

Because of the daunting nature of the honors thesis, many honors programs offer or encourage various forms of support. Students, for example, are typically required to select a faculty advisor or committee of faculty members who offer guidance and feedback on work-in-progress. Sometimes, students have the opportunity to enroll in independent studies or tutorial courses with their faculty advisor while other programs provide a one-credit support course to help students develop a thesis proposal and identify a faculty advisor.

Like many honors programs and colleges, the University Honors Program of Miami University offers an optional pre-thesis support course that is one credit hour and ungraded. The course generally comprises twenty students from all different majors who are usually in their third year. A few seniors or sophomores also enroll. For six years, Carolyn Haynes, the director of the program, taught the course using the same structure: students would complete a questionnaire on possible interests; create an annotated bibliography of possible sources with the help of specialist librarians; develop and revise a draft proposal; identify and interview potential faculty advisors; and create a timeline for
project completion. The pedagogy drew primarily from the work of composition scholars such as Ballenger and Booth, Colomb & Williams, who emphasize a process-oriented approach to writing research papers that helps students through various stages, including brainstorming, identifying a question or topic, engaging sources, planning, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading.

This pre-thesis honors course has transitioned away from a systematic focus on each step in the writing process to an infusion of play and creativity into the early stages of the research process as well as higher expectations of student engagement and collaboration. We argue that the incorporation of play and peer-to-peer interaction into the pedagogy is particularly necessary for honors students who, perhaps due to their high need for achievement and drive for perfectionism (Hickson & Driskill; Mathiasen) as well as preference for independence and solitude (Rinn & Plucker), tend to follow accepted formulas for success and work in isolation. These tendencies can hinder creative and intellectual risk-taking as well as productivity.

EVALUATION OF ORIGINAL WORKSHOP

In evaluations of the original version of the pre-thesis workshop, students generally responded favorably to it. The most commonly cited benefit was that the course demystified the thesis process and debunked misperceptions about the thesis. Students learned, for example, that the length, genre, media, tone, and content of theses vary significantly depending on the purpose and goals of each creator. Another key benefit of the course was that it helped students recognize that, with careful time management, they can complete the thesis. The course represented the first step in this management process in that it provided students with a structure and set of deadlines for tackling the early steps. Because of their multiple interests and talents (Gagné; Kerr & Erb; Shute), honors students tend to be notoriously overcommitted with double majors, leadership activities, volunteer responsibilities, and other extracurricular endeavors. The pre-thesis course, while helping them make progress on the thesis, simultaneously taught time-management skills that they could use during the remainder of the project and in future endeavors. Finally, many students cited in their evaluations the value of having peers in the course who were confronting similar struggles yet enjoyed different interests and backgrounds from their own.

The diversity of students enrolled in the course served simultaneously as the course’s greatest asset and biggest challenge. Here are two typical student comments:

- It was great to hear all the different ideas from students. However, sometimes I felt talking with them was not helpful to me because they did not understand my topic.
- I think it is always beneficial having students working on different topics. But it would also be good to have some people working in the same or similar field as mine.
Similarly, some students lamented that they would have liked specialized feedback, pointed guidance on the content of their proposal, and concrete suggestions for source material. In other words, they craved more individualized attention and advisement.

Although this concern warranted consideration, the faculty instructor (Carolyn Haynes) was more worried about an issue not raised by the students on their evaluations. Because of the structure (brief brainstorming exercises followed by proposal creation) and the instrumental goal of the course (i.e., development of a thesis proposal), students seemed to move quickly into determining their thesis topic and structure. As a result, she worried that students might dismiss opportunities for more creative projects that foray across disciplinary boundaries or explore new media, methods, or approaches. Her concern has been echoed by other composition scholars, such as Cohen and Spencer, who complain that student research papers are often “mediocre, regurgitative, and uninspired” (222; see also Larson; McKeachie). Her concern was reinforced when, toward the end of one semester, she happened to ask Aaron, one of the students in the course, whether the course was benefitting him. Aaron’s thoughtful analysis of the course follows:

Upon beginning the original honors thesis workshop course, I already had a pretty solid idea of what type of thesis project I wished to complete. Having worked for three years in a biochemistry research laboratory, it only seemed natural to complete a thesis project pertaining to what I learned through this experience. Many other students in the class had also done similar work in their respective fields and thus had a strong foundation for their project ideas, but at the same time there were students who had only a nebulous idea of what type of project they wanted to complete. To try to bring these undecided students up to speed, Carolyn introduced several generic brainstorming activities that sought to help students decide on a topic that interested them. While these activities were useful for students lacking concrete project ideas, students like me were stuck performing what seemed like redundant exercises during the first weeks of class.

After a few weeks of these activities, students had each chosen a topic for their project and begun working on shorter assignments leading to their full project proposals (e.g., drafts and revisions of topic statements, annotated bibliography, interview with potential faculty advisors, and outlines). It was at this point that students like me were finally able to start making progress on their projects. This portion of the course was useful because it fully explained the requirements of a thesis project, taught students how to create a useful annotated bibliography, and helped
students to form a working project proposal that could be presented to potential faculty mentors. Upon completion of the course, we all had working project proposals that could be applied towards starting our thesis projects.

While the traditional format of the thesis workshop course was beneficial to all students, I felt it lacked efficiency and the opportunity for more creative exploration. Students who already had working thesis ideas lost weeks of time participating in redundant activities while students yet to form a project idea were pushed to quickly form an idea that may not have been an ideal project for them. The diverse interests in the class also contributed to the lack of efficiency in the course, particularly when it came to group work and peer review assignments, as students in disparate fields lacked the knowledge needed to provide constructive feedback for one another.

Aaron’s suggestions for improvement propelled the faculty instructor to realize a course transformation was in order and to solicit Aaron’s assistance in the revision of the course and its implementation. Aaron enthusiastically agreed to serve as the peer instructor alongside the faculty instructor.

**REVISED WORKSHOP DESIGN**

Given the students’ variable rates of progress and widely diverse class interests, Aaron encouraged a revised thesis workshop course that would better cater to students of all interests and at all points of progress in completing their thesis projects. He recommended that the new course advance four primary goals:

1. Set high expectations and actively engage all students from the start to maximize productivity;
2. Increase the quality and quantity of work produced by students;
3. Promote more creative project ideas by encouraging students to move outside of their intellectual comfort zones;
4. Facilitate class coherence and collaboration by lessening thesis project diversity issues.

One of the most important aspects of successfully teaching any course is engaging all students from the first day of class (Barkley). To accomplish this goal, the course began with a peer interview activity in which students were paired up with a fellow classmate and given a list of questions to ask one another. This assignment served two purposes: it built a trusting and positive class environment by facilitating discussion among students; and it posed questions relevant to that week’s assignment, a one-page personal mission statement that
articulates what students view as the purpose of their life, including their core values and goals. To help them get started, we encouraged students to consider such questions as: Is there a service you have always been drawn to giving or providing? Have you had flashes of intuition where you knew something was right for you? What is there in your life that under no conditions you would want to change?

The personal mission statement was designed to guide students throughout their lives, but most immediately it served as a reference for students during the next four weeks while they were completing the new signature assignment for the course, which the faculty and peer instructor called the “Four Ideas.” This assignment called for students to develop one-page proposals for four different types of potential thesis projects, using ideas generated in their personal mission statement:

1. *Empirical* projects in which students collect and analyze data;
2. *Interpretive* projects in which students analyze existing texts and other objects to produce a new view on the subject matter;
3. *Action-based* projects in which students participate in an experience or activity such as community service, shadowing or preceptorship, study abroad, or internship to address a problem or issue or gain insight into a topic or career; and
4. *Out of the box* projects in which students pursue a creative, multi-genre, or integrative project.

Each week, students shared a new idea in class and received oral peer feedback; they also submitted their ideas in writing to the instructors for written feedback. The “Four Ideas” assignment was successful in accomplishing many of the goals of the course over a short period of time. It actively engaged all students by helping those with undeveloped ideas to create four potential projects and helped those with well-developed ideas to better refine their projects by considering different ways they might approach their inquiries.

Following the “Four Ideas” assignment, students developed a full project proposal complete with annotated bibliography, project timeline, and an extended project description. The proposal could be a developed version of one of the original four ideas assignments, a combination of several or all of the ideas, or a completely new idea. Many students ended up synthesizing several ideas into one. For example, one student originally wanted to create a project that analyzed crimes involving alcohol use among students on our campus. However, after completing the “Four Ideas” assignment, he decided to diversify and enrich his original statistics-based empirical idea by including an analysis of the university’s alcohol policy and a personal account of his experience riding along in a patrol car one Friday night with campus police (an experience the police kindly agreed to provide).
As students were developing their final project proposals, specialized librarians were invited to review draft proposals and bibliographies of students conducting projects in their subject areas and to participate in one class session to offer students new strategies for identifying additional sources. Students also spent time brainstorming strategies for selecting and working with a faculty advisor. Upon completion of this second portion of the course, students met individually with the instructor for a progress check. In this meeting, each student’s project was critiqued by the instructor to ensure that the project fulfilled the honors program requirements, was coherent, and could be completed in a reasonable amount of time.

After meeting with students individually, the instructor had a good idea of the types of projects students planned to complete. Using this knowledge, the instructor divided the class into research affinity groups (RAGs) in which students with similar project interests worked in groups of three or four. In the third phase of the course, which lasted four weeks, students worked together in their RAGs on completing a significant work that would constitute a beginning to their thesis project. During the first week of RAGs, student groups discussed what would be a reasonable amount of work to submit for the final assignment at the end of the course. Final assignments included completing a chapter of a memoir, critically analyzing and summarizing multiple scientific articles, completing an introduction to an interpretive project, and completing the institutional review board (IRB) training in human subject research. Students used the entire course period during these weeks to work on their projects and communicate their progress with their fellow RAG members. Each RAG developed a plan for the final class sessions to ensure that all members of the group made progress. Through this approach, the often intimidating start of the thesis process was made enjoyable, and students were held accountable by their peers. Students submitted the completed assignment to the instructor during finals week.

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION OF REVISED WORKSHOP

Although students’ evaluations of the original version of the workshop were solid, the evaluations of the revised version were stronger. On a scale of 0–5 (with “5” representing “highly effective”), students in the original version gave an average rating of 3.5 to the statement “This course gave me a better idea of what a thesis should be.” The average rating for the same statement among students in the new version was 4.7. When rating the statement “The course was a positive experience,” students in the original workshop provided an average score of 3.2 while those in the revised workshop gave an average score of 4.9.

By implementing this new course format, we successfully improved the students’ level of satisfaction and increased their productivity. In the revised workshops, students not only emerged with a full and better-conceived project proposal but also took initial steps towards beginning their thesis projects. This
amount of quality work that students completed in the time frame of the new workshop design represented a significant increase in productivity over the original workshop in which students produced only a project proposal. The higher productivity is no small point. Academic procrastination is high among all college students (Day et al.; Ellis and Knaus; McCown and Roberts), especially when faced with written projects (Solomon and Rothblum). The extensive time frame in which to complete a major thesis-type project lures students into a sense of false security so that they often struggle to meet the project deadline unless faculty and peers are actively involved, as they have been in the new course format.

Continuous in-class peer discussion on individual project ideas kept students on track, built stronger class coherence, and facilitated motivation for the projects. The higher expectations and accountability measures among peers, coupled with the “Four Ideas” assignment, prompted students to think more deeply about their topics and form a more viable and personally meaningful project idea. Representative comments on student evaluations included:

- I saw the diversity among students and their topics as a benefit because it allowed me to explore new topics and pinpoint a topic I really wanted to explore, rather than just following through with my first idea.
- I was exposed to so many other ideas and possibilities which helped me to discover my own project idea.
- I liked the fresh perspectives that arose out of considering so many diverse perspectives.

Perhaps most significantly, a higher percentage of students in the revised version of the workshop (85%) persisted in the thesis process than in the original workshop version (66%).

The best lesson for the faculty instructor was the importance of listening to her students. A workshop that had frustrated her for years was easy to improve once she had the good sense to ask one of her students for feedback and assistance. This experience reinforced her long-held view that honors students are always smarter than the faculty—we just need to give them the opportunity to prove that point.

REFERENCES


The authors may be contacted at haynesca@MUOHIO.EDU.
APPENDIX A
SYLLABUS OF REVISED WORKSHOP

HON 290D, Developing an Advanced Honors Project or Thesis – Fall 2010

Class Meeting Time and Place: 009 Irvin Hall, Monday 4:25–5:15 pm

Instructors: Mr. Aaron Coey, coeyat@muohio.edu
Dr. Carolyn Haynes, 98 Bishop Hall; haynesca@muohio.edu

Office Hours: By appointment only (call phone number above)

I don’t write out of what I know. It’s what I don’t know that stimulates me.
—Toni Morrison

Course Description and Objectives:
Designing and implementing your own project is a learning process like no other. Unlike most college assignments where the faculty member tells you what to study and how to communicate your findings, the advanced honors project or honors thesis places you in the role of a scholar or a professional leading an initiative. It offers you the opportunity to tap into your own curiosity, formulate a question or topic to pursue, design a plan to address that topic or question, and communicate what you learned to other scholars, peers and others who care about your inquiry.

This workshop is designed for students who are in the earliest stage of the process. The workshop goals include:

• Understand the criteria and processes of advanced projects or theses
• Generate a variety of project or thesis topics and approaches
• Develop a thesis topic and proposal
• Create a timeline, annotated bibliography and action plan for completing the project or thesis successfully
• Gain tips on offering and receiving feedback on your and others’ work
• Locating a faculty advisor for your project.

Because University Honors students come from a wide range of majors—spanning most departments of the university—honors projects or theses will necessarily vary greatly. In many cases, students are able to expand on assignments from coursework or initiatives in their co-curricular experiences to create their advanced honors project or thesis. Honors projects or theses may feature any one or a combination of the following: critical or textual analysis, a case study, laboratory or field experiment, ethnography, a problem-solving argument, an interpretation, a service-learning experience, a business plan, a set of lesson plans or an original creative product. All theses involve some research, writing, and close mentorship from an advisor.
No matter which form or method you use for your thesis or project, it must include some writing, but the length varies greatly and depends on the type of project or thesis you select. Honors projects or theses involving an original creative product (e.g., a portfolio of poems, paintings, or photographs) or substantial field or experiential work (e.g., helping organize a political organization, conducting a scientific investigation, or developing a new educational curriculum or business plan) often include less writing than other projects because much of the work is conducted in action. Your advisor should be able to give you an idea of the typical written length or scope of research projects in your subject area. This writing should discuss the process of investigation or creation and should be grounded in the relevant professional literature.

The goal of this course is to assist you in the introductory stages of developing a successful honors thesis.

Course Requirements
Good writers do not work in isolation. Instead, they work closely with others. They continually seek advice and assistance from those whose opinions they respect or who have expertise in their field of knowledge. Consequently, in addition to attending, participating actively in, and completing all of the requirements of the weekly workshop, you are required to meet regularly (at least every 2–3 weeks) with your thesis advisor (once you have identified one). The length and substance of those meetings should be negotiated between you and the advisor. You should also make contact with the other readers of your committee and inform them of your progress at least once during the semester. Be proactive in these meetings. Your writing will not improve unless you seek constructive feedback, ask probing questions, engage in intellectual discussions, and share accomplishments, struggles and breakthroughs.

Course Assignments and Evaluation
Your course grade will be based on the following:

- Attendance and Participation .................................................. 10%
- Personal Mission Statement ...................................................... 5%
- Four Ideas Assignment ......................................................... (5% each) ... 20%
- Full Project or Thesis Proposal (four parts) .............................. 40%
  1. Statement ................................................................. 15%
  2. Timeline ................................................................. 5%
  3. Annotated Bibliography (at least 12 sources) ......................... 10%
  4. Advisor Interview and (for seniors) signed cover form ........... 10%
- Special Assignment (constructed in consultation with instructors) .... 25%

The items in the list constitute the minimum requirements for students enrolled in the course. Students are encouraged, for their own sake, to complete more than the minimum.
**Recommended Books**

A good handbook on writing and style guide in your discipline or field; and a good guide to the appropriate documentation system for your discipline or field.

**Tentative Weekly Schedule**

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Seminar</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS &amp; COURSE</td>
<td>Introduction to the seminar; paired interviews on individual interests and passions</td>
<td>Write a short personal mission statement on your passions, interests and values (one page), and bring to next seminar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO THE EMPIRICAL PROJECT</td>
<td>Activity and discussion related to the empirical project or thesis and the criteria and processes used to develop it</td>
<td>Complete parts 1 and 2 of Four Ideas Assignment.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>NO CLASS-HOLIDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERPRETIVE, ANALYTIC PROJECT</td>
<td>Activity and discussion related to interpretive or analytic projects</td>
<td>Complete part 3 of Four Ideas Assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO THE ACTION-BASED PROJECT</td>
<td>Activity and discussion related to action-based projects</td>
<td>Complete part 4 of Four Ideas Assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO THE CREATIVE OR INTEGRATIVE PROJECT</td>
<td>Activity and discussion related to creative, multi-media or integrative projects</td>
<td>Complete Part 5 of Four Ideas Assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>DEVELOPING A PROPOSAL</td>
<td>Discussion of the thesis or project proposal and its component parts. Peer review of project ideas to help you decide which project you would like to pursue</td>
<td>Using feedback, revise one idea into a proposal statement. Proposal statement includes topic summary, description of which research method you plan to use, statement of project significance.</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td><strong>CREATING AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SEMINAR:</strong> Discus the annotated bibliography—its purposes and possible formats. Invent a format that works for you. Discuss possible sources of funding for your project or thesis.</td>
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<td><strong>ASSGNMT:</strong> Continue working on the proposal statement and annotated bibliography. Email copy of proposal with bibliography, along with questions to ask librarian, to instructors.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 9</th>
<th><strong>CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE SEARCHES</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SEMINAR:</strong> Freewriting exercise on concerns and rationale for sources, followed by small group consultations with specialist librarians</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ASSGNMT:</strong> Expand your annotated bibliography to include at least 12 needed sources. Expanded version is due next class. If needed, make appointment to meet outside of class with specialist librarian for assistance.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 10</th>
<th><strong>SELECTING AN ADVISOR OR CO-ADVISORS</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SEMINAR:</strong> Share tips on selecting an advisor. Role-playing exercise and discussion of how to identify and work with advisors and other members of your team.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ASSGNMT:</strong> Set up an appointment with a potential advisor to interview him or her and to discuss your proposed project or thesis idea. Create one-to-two-page summary of the key findings of your interview. Interview summary is due in your individual conference.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 11</th>
<th><strong>SETTING UP YOUR INDIVIDUAL TIMELINE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEMINAR:</strong> Discuss guidelines for writing/research groups; divide into research affinity groups (RAGs) and collaborate to develop plan for RAG meetings. Sign up for individual conference with instructor.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASSGNMT:</strong> Complete your timeline, including an idea for your special assignment. Meet with instructor in one-on-one meeting. Bring copy of timeline and interview summary to meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 12</th>
<th><strong>INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEMINAR:</strong> Meet with instructor at appointed time and day.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ASSGNMT:</strong> Using feedback gained in your individual conference, revise your timeline as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 13</th>
<th><strong>RESEARCH AFFINITY GROUPS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEMINAR:</strong> Meet in your RAG, and complete tasks your group developed for this week.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASSGNMT:</strong> Continue to make progress on your timeline and special assignment(s) for the remainder of the semester.</td>
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</table>
Week 14  RESEARCH AFFINITY GROUPS
SEMINAR:  Meet in your RAG, and complete tasks your group developed for this week.
ASSGNMT:  Continue to make progress on your timeline and special assignment(s) for the remainder of the semester.

Week 15  RESEARCH AFFINITY GROUPS
SEMINAR:  Meet in your RAG, and complete tasks your group developed for this week.
ASSGNMT:  Continue to make progress on your timeline and special assignment(s) for the remainder of the semester.

Week 16  CONCLUSION AND CEREMONY OF RAG AWARDS
SEMINAR:  Final reflections, loose ends; awards for best RAG participants
ASSGNMT:  Submit your special assignment by Wednesday, finals week.
This assignment is separated into five parts. For each part, you will create a tentative idea for a project related to a general topic you wish to pursue for your honors thesis or Tier 3 project.

**Part 1: Brainstorming or Prewriting Exercise**

For this part, you will engage in some brainstorming exercises to generate possible topics to pursue in your honors thesis or Tier 3 project. If you already have a general topic in mind, then use this exercise to come up with more refined topics related to that general topic.

Find a place where you can really concentrate and are free from distractions. Read over the following brainstorming techniques. Choose two of the six techniques described below, and work on each for at least ten minutes or until you feel like you have come to a good stopping point. You can create the “brainstormings” by hand or on the computer. Make or save a copy to submit.

**Freewriting**

Simply write for ten minutes (later on, perhaps fifteen or twenty) about your general topic idea (or about possible ideas for a thesis). Don’t stop for anything. Go quickly without rushing. Never stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing. If you can’t think of a word or a spelling, just use a squiggle or write, ‘I can’t think of it.’ Just put down whatever is in your mind. If you get stuck it’s fine to write ‘I can’t think what to say, I can’t think what to say’ as many times as you want; or repeat the last word you wrote over and over again; or anything else. The only requirement is that you never stop.

**Clustering or Mapping**

Mapping or clustering is a nonlinear, graphic representation of your thoughts. This technique seems to integrate the functions of both hemispheres of the brain by combining visual with verbal learning styles:

“To create a cluster, you begin with a nucleus word (which can be the thesis topic), circled, on a fresh page. Now you simply let go and begin to flow with any current of connections that come into your head. Write these down rapidly, each in its own circle, radiating outward from the center in any direction they want to go. Connect each new work or phrase with a line to the preceding circle. When something new and different strikes you, begin again at the central nucleus and radiate outward until those associations are exhausted. As you cluster, you may experience a sense of randomness or if, you are somewhat skeptical, an uneasy sense that it isn’t leading anywhere. That is your logical mind wanting to
get into the act . . . Trust this natural process, though. We all cluster mentally throughout our lives without knowing it; we simply never made these clusterings visible on paper.” Gabriele Lusser Rico, Writing the Natural Way (J.P. Tarcher, 1983), 35–36.

If you have several possible topics in mind, create several clusters and compare. Which seems to offer the richest array of material? Which intrigues you the most?

**Listing**

Think out loud about possible topics, and create a list of phrases, terms or ideas that come to mind. You can jot down a random assortment of words or phrases that come to mind. Or you could take a more systematic approach by listing possible topics and then listing all of the subtopics or facts you know about your topic. It doesn’t matter as long as you are generating ideas. Once the associational list is fairly full, try to make sense of it. Do any ideas stand out? Can you combine related items? Sort them?

**Dialogues**

Write a conversation between two imaginary speakers with distinctly differing views about what your topic should be or how to approach a topic you have chosen. This method can help you consider wildly different topics, opposing viewpoints on a topic, find a controversial point of focus or hone your thesis. Once you have come up with a dialogue, you can then create a list of those that really stand out to you.

**Three Perspectives**

Start with a list of several topics you have in mind. Then, answer the questions for each of the three perspectives relating to your topic ideas. Once you have completed this task, look for interesting relationships or mismatches you can explore.

1. **Describe it.** Describe your topic in detail. What are its components? What are its interesting and distinguishing features? What are its puzzles? Distinguish your topic from those that are similar to it. How is your topic unlike others?
2. **Trace it.** What is the history of your topic? How has it changed over time? Why? What are the significant events or scholars that have influenced your topic?
3. **Map it.** What is your topic related to? What is it influenced by? How? What does it influence? How? Who has a stake in your topic? Why? What fields do you draw on for the study of your topic? Why? How has your topic been approached by others? How is their work related to yours?

**Cubing**

Cubing enables you to consider topics from six directions. After generating a list of 2–3 possible topics, respond to these six commands:

1. Describe it.
2. Compare it.
3. Associate it.
4. Analyze it.
5. Apply it.
6. Argue for and against it.

Look over what you’ve written. Do any of the responses suggest anything new about your topic? What interactions do you notice about the six “sides”? Do you see patterns repeating or a theme emerging that you could use to approach the topic? Does one side seem particularly fruitful?

**Part 2: Generating an Idea for an Empirical or Experimental Project**  
*(due with Part I)*

For this portion of the assignment, you will develop a possible idea for an empirical project related to one of your general topics. Select one general topic that you would like to pursue and write a three-paragraph statement that explains your idea for the project. Questions you should address:

1. What question or hypothesis would you pursue?
2. How would you test or answer that question? What method might you use?
3. What would be the benefits and challenges of this project?

Once you have created the three-paragraph essay, skip a few lines. Then, write a one- or two-paragraph essay attempting to write in the style of an empirical or experimental research article. The paragraphs can be on the topic you have chosen or on some other topic. The goal is to practice writing in the style of empirical scholars or experimental researchers to see how it feels.

**Part 3: Generating an Idea for an Interpretive or Analytic Project**

For this portion of the assignment, you will develop a possible idea for an analytic or interpretive project related to one of your general topics. Select one general topic that you would like to pursue and write a multi-paragraph statement that explains your idea for the project. Questions you should address:

1. Which phenomenon or object (e.g., texts or related texts, case, visual image(s), behaviors, event or performance) would you like to understand better?
2. Why do you think that this is an important phenomenon or object to analyze, interpret or explore more fully?
3. How would you go about analyzing or interpreting it? What approach or steps would you take?
4. What would be the benefits and challenges of this project?

Once you have created the essay, skip a few lines. Then, write a one- or two-paragraph essay attempting to write in the style of an interpretive or analytic scholarly article. The paragraphs can be on the topic you have chosen or on some other topic. The goal is to practice writing in the style of analytic scholars to see how it feels.
Part 4: Generating an Idea for an Action-Based or Experiential Project

For this portion of the assignment, you will develop a possible idea for an action-based project related to one of your general topics. Select one general topic that you would like to pursue and write a three-paragraph statement that explains your idea for the project. Questions you should address:

1. When reflecting on your general topic, what action could you take to gain a further understanding of it or to solve a problem or to address a need related to it? Describe the problem, need or question you wish to pursue that would involve taking action.

2. How would you go about solving that problem, addressing that need or answering that specific question? What specific steps would you take? What method(s) might you employ?

3. What would be the benefits and challenges of this project?

Once you have created the three-paragraph essay, skip a few lines. Then, write a two-paragraph essay attempting to write in the style of an action-based research report. The two paragraphs can be on the topic you have chosen or on some other topic. The goal is to practice writing in the style of action-based researchers to see how it feels!

Part 5: Generating an Idea for an Integrative or “Out of the Box” Project

For this portion of the assignment, you have two choices: (1) create a proposal that combines elements of the three previous proposal ideas you generated (parts 2–4) into an integrative whole, or: (2) develop a totally “out of the box” idea for a project related to one of your general topics.

If you select the first option, consider how your thesis or Tier 3 project could incorporate multiple methods to address the question, problem or issue you are pursuing. Then create a new and unified proposal that combines those aspects of the previous proposals you developed that you see as most promising. The goal is to develop the best proposal possible for addressing your topic.

If you select the second option, think boldly; think creatively! You might generate an entirely new project idea or generate a wild idea to pursue one of your earlier topic ideas. What new genre or mode might you explore? What new knowledge or disciplines would you pursue? What would you do if you had loads of funds or time? Dream big.

Then, write a multi-paragraph statement that explains your idea for this project.

If you select option 1, try to create a formal proposal with the following parts:

1. **Topic summary**: Here you address the following questions: What problem will this project attempt to solve, or what question will it attempt to answer? What is the scope of the project? What will and won’t it include?

2. **Statement Describing Research Methods or Plan of Action to Complete the Project**: Discuss the steps you plan to take to complete your project (e.g., research methods
or means of collecting the information you need; obstacles you anticipate encountering and how you plan to address them; other steps you plan to take to complete the project in general)

3. Discussion of Project’s Significance: Explain why this project is important to you, for your field, for your intended audience, or for society at large. What is new or unique about your project?

If you select option #2, here are some questions you should address:

1. What topic, theme, message, question or idea would you want to explore? Why?
2. How would you go about completing this project? What specific steps would you take? What method(s) might you employ?
3. What would be the benefits and challenges of this project?
APPENDIX C

GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH AFFINITY GROUPS

Step #1: Get better acquainted.
Move around the circle. Each person should:

• Introduce themselves.
• Explain your project idea.
• Summarize what you hope to accomplish in your special assignment for the end of the semester.
• Explain what you hope the group members can help you to do or better understand.

Step #2: Select a leader or co-leaders.
Discuss among your members:

• Will one person be in charge of facilitating the meetings and the overall structure of the group?
• What will be the responsibilities of this facilitator? Keeping the group on track? Reminding participants of what they are supposed to bring? Taking notes during the meeting?
• Does this position rotate? How?
• Who would like to undertake this responsibility? Try to come to a consensus on the leadership of the group.

Step #3: Establish some ground rules for how to work together.
Once a leader has been selected, he or she will then facilitate a discussion on how the group will work together. The leader may ask another member to take notes on key points of agreement. Possible questions to discuss:

1. How often will the group meet? Besides meeting in class, should we meet again? If so, where will the group meet? Coffee shop, library, residence hall living room?
2. How will the members communicate between meetings? Phone, email, messages in mailboxes?
3. What system will members use to decide who will submit writing or work for any particular meeting? For example, a group of four might meet, with two people submitting writing for each meeting.
4. Will members submit the work ahead of time? If so, how will this exchange work? Central drop-off point, campus mail, e-mail, Web page?
5. What happens when members who are scheduled to share their work are unprepared or can’t attend the meeting? Cancel, postpone, skip a turn?
6. How short or long should submissions be? A tricky sentence, a few paragraphs, 3–5 pages, up to 10 pages?

7. How will members respond to each other’s work? By commenting directly on the draft, oral comments in the meeting, on a separate response sheet, via e-mail?

8. What will you do during the meeting? Discuss general problems, offer oral comments on writing or explain written comments, suggest research sources or methods, debate options for a particular text, offer support, check in about the week’s writing activities, state writing goals for the coming week?

9. What kind of feedback are members most interested in, and how will members specify these needs at any particular point?

10. If any members feel that the group is not meeting their needs, how will they make their concerns known?

Summarize your group’s “ground rules” on a sheet of paper.

**Step #4: Create a meeting plan and schedule.**

Once you have determined your group’s ground rules, decide what your group will focus on at each meeting and what each person’s responsibility will be for each meeting. Create a weekly schedule for your meetings which includes meeting goals or agenda as well as the expected responsibilities for each group member.

A possible schedule might look something like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Day and Time</th>
<th>Meeting Goals, Purpose, Activities</th>
<th>Group Member Responsibilities for Meeting</th>
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Possible group activities might include:

**Touching base**

- Mutual support can be one of the most important functions of a research affinity group. Sometimes encouragement and the knowledge that others are interested in and committed to your work and your progress as a researcher can be just as helpful as feedback. To that end, your group may want to reserve some time in each session to “touch base” or “check in” with one another. During this time you could:
  - Describe your project-related activities since the last group meeting in terms of pages written, parts of a project completed, or hurdles overcome.
  - If you haven’t done much since the last meeting, you could talk about the obstacles that have hindered your progress (writer’s block, having a big exam this week,
needing to gather more data before you can write, etc.).

- Explain how work that was discussed during the last meeting is now evolving in response to group comments. You might explain which comments you chose to act on, or tell how a section of the piece has been reorganized or rethought in response to the group’s feedback.

- Share your plans for the coming week so that your group members will know what kinds of writing they will see and so that you can help one another stick to your goals.

- Decide, as a group, on a theme for the next meeting—brainstorming, drafting, proofreading, style, writer’s block, etc. Choosing an issue to tackle together will help you understand the challenges each member is facing at the moment and enable you to plan meetings that will help group members meet those challenges.

**Systems for sharing work**

Some groups ask members to distribute their work in advance of the group meeting, particularly if the work is lengthy. You might distribute your writing at one meeting for discussion at the next or send work via e-mail. Readers can offer the most helpful feedback when the writer has provided a list of questions, trouble spots, or issues for them to consider in their responses.

The following ideas might help you respond to work that has been distributed beforehand:

- Group members could write comments and suggest editorial changes on their copies of the paper and give those to the writer during the group meeting.

- Group members could prepare a written response to the paper in the form of a letter to the writer, a paragraph, a written discussion of the work’s strengths and weaknesses, or on a form developed by the group.

- Group members could respond verbally to the piece, each offering a personal, overall reaction to writing before opening the discussion to a broader give-and-take.

- The author could come prepared with a list of questions for the group and lead a discussion based on those questions.

- One group member, either the author or (perhaps preferably) a different member of the group, could keep careful notes on key reactions and suggestions for the author’s future reference.

Some groups prefer to bring writing, particularly shorter pieces, to the group meeting for immediate discussion. Since the work presented during the meeting will be new to everyone except the author, you might try these additional strategies:

- Read the paper aloud to the group before launching discussion. The author could read, or another member of the group could read while the author notes things that sound like they might need revision. You could either read the entire text or break
it into chunks, discussing each after it is read.

- Group members could also read silently, making notes to themselves, before launching the discussion.

- Sometimes, especially with long and daunting projects like a thesis or writers needing a boost of confidence, it can be helpful to share writing without anticipating feedback. This kind of sharing can help writers get over fears about distributing their work or being judged.

**Brainstorming as part of the group process**

Research affinity groups can provide not only feedback and a forum in which to share work, but also creative problem-solving for your writing or research troubles. Your group might try some of these brainstorming ideas:

- Identify a writing or research problem that one group member is having. Ask each group member to free-write possible solutions.

- Cut up a copy of a paper that needs organizational changes so that each section, main idea, or paragraph is on its own slip of paper. As a group, move the pieces of paper around and discuss possible options for reorganizing the work.

- After reading a piece, generate a list of items that the group might like to know more about. Organize these questions into categories for the author to consider.

**Writing during writing group meetings**

Your group may choose to write during some of its meetings. Here are some ideas for what to write:

- If everyone in the group has a major deadline approaching, use one session as a working meeting. Meet in a computer lab or bring your laptops so that everyone can write and work independently, taking breaks periodically to assess your progress or ask questions.

- Use some group time to free-write about your writing project—new ideas, to-do lists, organizational strategies, problems, or sentences for your drafts would all be appropriate topics for free-writing. You could also free-write about the writing process (you could all write about “How I start to write” or “The writing environment that works for me” or “When I sit down to edit . . .”) and share your responses with one another.

- Write about the dynamics of the research affinity group as a way of getting everyone’s ideas out on paper. You could free-write about the kinds of feedback that help you, what you like about each other’s writing, your frustrations with the group, and your suggestions for improving the way the group works.

**Reading during writing group meetings**

Just as writing during group meetings can prove beneficial, reading can sometimes help research affinity groups work together better:
• Pick a book on writing or research such as *Bird by Bird, Writing with Power, Writing Down the Bones, Writing Without Teachers,* or *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day* and assign yourselves sections to read for each meeting. Discuss the reading during some part of the group’s meeting each time.

• Bring a piece of writing (an article in your field, an article from a journal or magazine that you enjoyed, or a piece of fiction) that you think is especially well-written. Read over it as a group and talk about what the author did in the piece that made it so effective.

• Bring pieces of data or evidence that you are using in your project and share them with the group. If the group becomes familiar with the things that you are researching, they may be better able to help you write about them effectively.

**Bring in a guest**

Just as guest lecturers in courses sometimes spice up the classroom experience, guests in research affinity groups can enliven the discussion:

• Invite a faculty member or other guest writer to your group to talk about his or her writing and research process and to offer suggestions for improving your own.

• Bring in a friend who is working on a project related to the project of a group member. This may help your group member develop a network of people interested in his or her particular topic and may also show your friend how helpful a writing group could be.

**Planning**

Your group can also help you plan your research schedule for the week:

• Discuss your writing or research goals, both broadly and for the immediate future. Ask your group if those goals seem realistic.

• Ask group members to e-mail you with reminders of deadlines and encouragement.

• Give each other writing “assignments” for the next meeting.
New Ideas for Honors Administration
Developing an Electronic Repository for Undergraduate Theses

FOSTER LEVY, REBECCA PYLES, CELIA SZAREJKO, AND LINDA WYATT
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate honors theses represent an intellectual asset that a university should recognize and manage as such. However, when theses were submitted exclusively in print copies, the work often faded into obscurity, forgotten by all but the student and mentor. While theses for advanced degrees have been accessible for many years via interlibrary loan or abstract services, similar access options have been unavailable for undergraduate theses because these works are most often associated with and maintained by the institutional honors program without involvement or support from the institution’s library system. At best, an index of undergraduate theses might be available to the public, but print copies—often the only versions of theses—are traditionally housed in honors and are difficult, if not impossible, to obtain.

As undergraduate honors theses have become more commonplace and as online access to research has become virtually universal, honors programs do a disservice to their students, faculty, and the public if they do not provide access to the original scholarship produced by undergraduates. Furthermore, introducing undergraduates to electronic publication provides educational value by exposing them to the publishing demands they will likely encounter in their future education and professional careers. Two additional benefits to students are that an electronic publication saves the student time and expense in producing their final work and, most importantly, makes their work available worldwide to potential research partners and employers.

An electronic thesis repository provides several instruction-based opportunities to advance learning. For example, courses within an honors college often enroll students from a variety of disciplines. In research methods courses, students can easily examine examples of theses to familiarize themselves with the writing styles and formatting in their discipline. Similarly, in a colloquium-style course that addresses diverse topics, students can use the repository to become familiar with research approaches and writing styles outside of their discipline; this is a particular advantage for undergraduates because, as they progress in...
their course of study and certainly once they begin graduate or professional programs, they rarely have time for this type of cross-disciplinary interaction. In addition, faculty in diverse disciplines can assign repository reviews, either in courses or when mentoring honors students, to demonstrate the level of scholarship expected in honors thesis work. Although these goals could be accomplished using hard copies, our current students are more comfortable with and more likely to access electronically available materials.

East Tennessee State University (ETSU) has made undergraduate theses available to the campus community and general public through an electronic repository and catalog maintained by the university library. The electronic system we implemented and others of similar quality provide a user interface developed for manuscript submission, review, and approvals. This type of system takes students’ research experience to a final level of completion and assures that they learn how to navigate a process analogous to manuscript submission. Because adapting our institution’s system for graduate theses and dissertations was not a feasible option and we could find no general guidelines to direct our efforts, we developed our own undergraduate honors thesis repository, and we hope that our efforts in this process will provide insights and guidelines for other institutions.

**SURVEY OF USAGE AND PRACTICES**

Interest in developing an electronic repository for undergraduate theses led us to conduct two assessments to gather knowledge of current practices. The first assessment, completed during the winter of 2010, was a survey of public access practices for undergraduate honors theses at seventeen ETSU peer institutions <http://www.etsu.edu/iep/09FB/09TOC.htm> and eight non-peer institutions. The non-peer sample comprised all institutions we could locate that had accessible (website) submission details about their honors theses and that provided contact information for relevant personnel. These non-peer institutions included honors programs at Boston College, Cornell University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Tufts University, University of Colorado at Boulder, University of Delaware, West Virginia University, and the Swedish University of Agricultural Science. ETSU, its seventeen peer institutions, and three of the selected institutions are listed in the online membership directory of the National Collegiate Honors Council. We also found that ETSU, eleven peer institutions, and two of the selected institutions are included in the online membership directory of the Council on Undergraduate Research.

In our initial assessment, we attempted to address three questions (Table 1) through an examination of each institution’s website and personal contacts via email or telephone. While all institutions surveyed provided some manner of public access to undergraduate theses, relatively few of our peer institutions offered either electronic access or cataloging within their university library system. The majority of the selected non-peer institutions provided both access and cataloging (Table 1). Our selection of non-peer institutions was far from
random and designed specifically to find those institutions actively engaged. From our perspective, we felt the results from our peers were probably more indicative of the common situation: the absence of an electronic repository for undergraduate theses that is integrated into the institutional library.

Our second assessment was a survey of systems in use at institutions that have a functional electronic repository. Sampling for this survey consisted of an Internet search using the search terms “undergraduate” or “honors” plus “thesis” and “electronic.” We found that electronic undergraduate thesis repositories can be found in schools that include small, private liberal arts colleges (e.g., Washington and Lee University), regional universities (e.g., ETSU), state land grant institutions (e.g., Texas A&M University), and major international universities (e.g., Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences). Almost all electronic repositories have been recently established, a few before 2005 but most after 2008. Many repositories offer full text access to the general public, but some restrict access to campus users (i.e., those with university accounts). As of September 2011, the number of theses in electronic repositories ranged from a few in newly established systems to more than two thousand at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Most electronic repositories contain from twenty to three hundred theses at this time.

Little has been written about implementing an undergraduate electronic repository. A search of ERIC, Google Scholar, and Wilson OMNI returned no published journal articles. A search of the proceedings from the 2007 through 2011 International Symposia on Electronic Theses and Dissertations revealed only two presentations: one focused primarily on the process of instituting a thesis requirement for the West Virginia University Honors College (Garbutt & Simis); the second outlined problems related to integrating electronic undergraduate theses with theses and dissertations for advanced degrees (Fonseca).

In recent years, outlets for publication of undergraduate research have proliferated (for listings, see: <http://www.jyi.org/resources/ugradPubs.html>; <http://urca.msu.edu/publishing>). Some electronic journals are discipline-

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**Table 1: Responses to Three Questions from ETSU Peer and Non-Peer Institutions**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Peer (17)</th>
<th>Non-Peer (8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does your institution use an electronic undergraduate thesis system for cataloging honors theses?</td>
<td>4 14</td>
<td>5 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are undergraduate theses/projects available for public access?</td>
<td>18 0</td>
<td>8 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are your honors theses available through an integrated library system?</td>
<td>5 13</td>
<td>7 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
specific while some are broad-ranging; most are refereed to some extent (some use in-house referees); and many are hosted by an academic institution but accept submissions from outside. Regardless of alternative avenues to publication, an electronic thesis repository serves an additional function in that it is an open record of all thesis works completed at a specific institution.

Undergraduate electronic journals are not a substitute for eThesis repositories. Students might prefer, for instance, to publish their work in a professional journal with a wider audience, and students submitting theses that include works of art or that are based on performances may seek alternative types of presentation venues. Furthermore, especially in the sciences, an undergraduate project is part of a larger research agenda where the results may be included in a more comprehensive publication. Undergraduate publication venues, unlike eThesis repositories, might not permit subsequent publication.

SYSTEM SELECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The ETSU Honors College launched its initiative to publish undergraduate honors theses online in 2009. Because staff of the ETSU Charles C. Sherrod Library had experience supporting electronic publication of master’s theses and doctoral dissertations from our graduate school, we immediately sought to collaborate with our librarians in our endeavor.

We considered and quickly rejected incorporating undergraduate honors theses into the existing system because configuration to accommodate a different audience and workflow would have been difficult and disruptive to existing users. Instead, our library pursued electronic publication of undergraduate honors theses at ETSU as an opportunity to identify and evaluate alternatives to replace the existing system for graduate works.

We were looking for an electronic publishing system that would manage the process of professional publication and would provide for discovery of and access to the final work via the web. Selecting a system that serves both purposes is a complex undertaking, especially since the final choice also depends on the resources available. Features that we desired included:

- System-supplied, unique ID/access URL for each work.
- Compliance with Open Archive Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH) so that the contents of the collection could be automatically indexed by search engines.
- Customizable web interface that could inform visitors of policies on access and use; incorporate external links to integrate with other university websites; and provide guidelines and help to authors.
  - Search and browse with multiple browse options (author, year, discipline, department, or program).
  - RSS feed so visitors who discover the collection and want to be notified when additions are made can subscribe.
• Ability to use multiple files and content file types, including documents, presentations, images, audio, and video, each with appropriate data fields to describe content and/or access restrictions.
  ○ A file conversion utility to convert document formats like Microsoft Word to Portable Document Format (PDF) in the submission workflow.
• Structure that would provide for a professional publication process, including author submission, editorial review, revision, final disposition, and communication between author and reviewers.
  ○ A customizable submission interface that would provide the organization for students to describe their work, supply index terms for subject access, choose access restrictions if needed, acknowledge submission agreement(s), and submit all necessary files.
  ○ Ability to support and tailor multiple publication workflows so that the submission, review, and approval processes might be used by different groups for different publication types.
• Variable time embargoes for individual files (text or other) to address those disciplines with publisher restrictions about open access prior to formal publication and to provide options for protection of audio and video files. We wished to provide author, title, and abstract data openly but restrict access to the full text and apply access restrictions at the file level on both the main content and supporting files.
  ○ Structure that provided a summary page for each work that could include content description and specify any restrictions on access and use.
• User authentication that could be integrated with the existing campus computing environment. We wanted our students and faculty to log in to the honors thesis repository using the same username and password assigned for campus services. At our institution, we needed the system to support Windows Active Directory domain authentication via Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP), and SSL, in order to maintain secure user login via a web browser interface.
• Access/use statistics collection and reporting that would detail frequency of access by types of users and could be used by both the institution and authors to assess exposure of research to the outside world.

In addition to these features, we also had to evaluate systems (Table 2) based on two resource-related issues: (1) a hosted or local installation environment, which determines who is responsible for on-going computing maintenance and support; and (2) commercial or open source software, which would directly affect our budget. Commercial software developed and supported by a vendor would represent a large one-time immediate cost with smaller annual maintenance fees or a subscription service for an on-going annual charge but with maintenance included. Open-source software, on the other hand, requires
DEVELOPING AN ELECTRONIC REPOSITORY FOR UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

neither upfront cash nor the competitive procurement process that is often required in state-supported organizations, but it requires technical staff and computing resources to install, configure, maintain, and support it. Each university must evaluate its budget, staff time, and campus expertise to determine the relative cost-effectiveness of open-source versus commercial options.

A review of open-source electronic publishing systems produced at Johns Hopkins University (Cyzyk & Choudhury, 2008 and n.d.) brought EPrints to our attention. EPrints is free software developed for open-access publishing in the United Kingdom at the University of Southampton’s School of Electronics and Computer Science (Gutteridge, Miles-Board, & Brody). EPrints uses software components with which we were already familiar, and a search of the Registry of Open Access Repositories (ROAR) revealed several institutions that had been using EPrints for master’s theses and dissertations for several years. Three exemplars included Glasgow Theses Service <http://theses.gla.ac.uk>, University of Birmingham <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk>, and University of Nottingham eTheses <http://etheses.nottingham.ac.uk>. The Glasgow Theses Service illustrates the exceptional extent to which the EPrints user interface can be customized. Further investigation of resources available for documentation, training, and support convinced us to choose EPrints as the open-source software alternative that could be implemented using existing resources.

At the time of our system selection, Digital Commons (Berkeley Electronic Press) was the only commercial alternative that satisfied most of our functional requirements and required no local information technology (IT) resources to

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Table 2: Alternatives for Undergraduate Honors Thesis Electronic Publication Based on Resource Impact

HONORS IN PRACTICE
Digital Commons is a software suite designed to showcase an institution's scholarly work and includes an electronic publishing system (EdiKit) that supports editorial and peer review. Digital Commons is offered as hosted “Software as a Service” (SaaS) for an annual cost roughly equivalent to one half-time programmer/analyst. Exemplars currently using this software for graduate theses and dissertations include the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, University of Iowa, University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and University of Kentucky. We selected Digital Commons as our preferred option if we could find a budget source for the on-going subscription costs.

In 2009, we decided to install EPrints locally in order to move the project forward using existing resources while seeking support for Digital Commons. The EPrints ETSU Honors Thesis repository can be found at: <http://honors.epub.etsu.edu>. In 2012, we will be moving undergraduate honors theses as well as graduate theses and dissertations to Digital Commons.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EPRINTS SYSTEM

ACCESSIONING AND CATALOGING AN EThESIS

The first thesis was accessioned into the ETSU Honors Thesis repository in 2009. After an initial voluntary trial period, we gradually expanded the requirement for use of ETSU eThesis across different programs within the ETSU Honors College. The first year, students within each honors program were offered eThesis as an option, and use of the system became mandatory the following year.

Support for students consists of written instructions available online <http://www.etsu.edu/honors/Thesis/eThesis.asp> and yearly in-person training sessions. During our search for repository examples, we also reviewed repository policies, copyright statements, and forms for open-access publishing permission to use as models for our needs at ETSU. Duke University’s DukeSpace <http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace> emerged as the model we chose to emulate, not only for its breadth, depth, and organization, but also for its presentation of information about open-access publishing, rights and responsibilities of authors, explanations of benefits, and policies and procedures for managing the publication process. We modeled our Undergraduate Honors Thesis Availability Agreement and Non-Exclusive Distribution License form on the one used for electronic theses and dissertations by the Duke University Graduate School (Duke 22).

After two years, we have found the process works quite seamlessly and without any recurrent problems other than occasional assistance for some students to convert files to PDF format. Students and faculty find the system easy to use and fast; the entire submission process can be completed in about fifteen minutes. As of November 2011, there were forty-two theses in the repository comprised of one from 2009, nine from 2010, and thirty-two from 2011. We expect at least fifty in the coming year and then approximately a hundred each subsequent year.
Submit Electronic Repository for Undergraduate Theses

Submission Procedures

Typically, honors students defend their thesis in a public presentation and then complete final edits suggested by thesis readers and others. These traditional roles have not changed. Upon approval by the thesis committee, students submit written text to the repository in PDF format. Audio files, images, and video materials may be submitted in any format, a feature that is particularly well-suited to theses from both our University Honors Scholars and Fine & Performing Arts Scholars programs, which often include videos of performances, still photographs of artwork, and audio of musical compositions. Artists may have concerns about placing original artwork on the web, so our system enables students to upload video files or photographs at resolutions that allow viewing but are too low to permit quality or merchandisable duplication. Students may also protect audio and video works by restricting access either to repository users (honors students only) or to authenticated campus users.

Personnel

Management of our eThesis system is a collaboration between a librarian and members of our honors college, specifically the directors of various honors programs and the director of undergraduate research (DUR). Access to the system is limited to students expecting to complete a thesis. Each year, the directors of honors programs forward the names of thesis writers to be given access that year and our librarian enters those students into the system. This control ensures that the system does not get overloaded with superfluous submissions.

After a thesis is submitted, it becomes available for review by the DUR, who checks the submission for completeness and formatting. However, unlike dissertations that often have very specific format and page guidelines, we permit a wider variety of styles for undergraduate theses at ETSU. We encourage students to use a format identified with a journal that represents a potential publication outlet for their work. In addition to the electronic submission, we require hard copy of the cover page signed by the mentor and thesis readers as well as a signed release form that grants ETSU permission to post the thesis. The release form offers an option to embargo a thesis from public viewing for up to two years so that researchers can publish work that has not been previously published. On approval by the DUR, the files are moved into the repository and indexed, and an abstract page is generated. Catalog records for works added to the repository are generated automatically on a monthly basis but may be generated and loaded manually as needed.
ANTICIPATED QUESTIONS

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO INSTALL AND CUSTOMIZE EPrints?

Software installation is quick and relatively painless; it can be done by an experienced analyst/programmer in a matter of hours. Customization is more difficult, and the time depends on prior knowledge and the complexity of desired outcomes. The changes we made were few and simple, and the work was done in a matter of days. We found the documentation on the EPrints Wiki helpful and the technical support responsive.

WHAT KINDS OF SKILLS ARE REQUIRED?

At ETSU, an analyst/programmer and a librarian formed a team to implement EPrints for honors theses. The programmer was responsible for installing the software; SSL certificate; configuring the web server; and scripting backup and data-conversion tasks. The librarian completed the application configuration and customization in consultation with honors college staff. The same librarian currently helps manage honors repository user accounts; monitors the transfer of data from the repository into the library catalog; and corrects catalog records. We made no attempt to redesign the web interface beyond simple branding because we felt it was unnecessary; the “out of the box” interface is clean, functional, and intuitive.

HOW DO PEOPLE FIND ETSU HONORS THESIS?

The content of ETSU honors theses is searchable using Internet search engines such as Google and Google Scholar. Within the honors repository, users can browse by year, subject, or program (labeled Division) and may search by keyword. The library catalog provides the ability to search the ETSU eTheses and Dissertations collection by author, title, subject, or keyword and to sort results by date, title, or relevance.

HOW DO YOU GET HONORS THESIS INTO THE LIBRARY CATALOG?

A locally developed Perl program handles exporting catalog data from the honors repository in XML format and converting it to MARC format for loading into the library catalog. A separate program on the library system fetches and loads the data file. The process runs automatically on a regular schedule.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A comprehensive electronic repository of honors theses should include those produced before 2009 that exist only in hard copy. While hardware is available to scan these paper documents into electronic form, the cost of
Developing an Electronic Repository for Undergraduate Theses

Personnel to complete the task is currently an issue. Staff would be needed to supervise the scanning process, annotate the resultant products, and secure requisite permissions from students and their faculty mentors. The latter is complicated because both our graduates and some faculty members have relocated. Getting permissions thus becomes progressively more difficult the farther back we go in time. However, we continue to seek ways to begin this task, knowing that the effort will better serve our programs, faculty, and graduates.

After implementing the ETSU eThesis system, we dropped the requirement for submission of a paper copy, requiring only the signed cover page. However, we now recognize that digital copies alone do not represent a sufficient long-term archive. We currently are planning to require students to submit one printed copy to accompany the digital copy, but we are also examining other archival options. Our particular concern is how to archive image, audio, and video files that are part of a thesis. A potential solution is the subscription service OCLC Digital Archive for long-term preservation of honors theses and associated media files.

If the time and effort are expended to create an electronic repository, it is desirable to know the extent to which items are accessed. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient data to answer this question at present. To have reliable data, we need to distinguish between access to the abstract pages and file downloads and access related to the submission, review, and approval processes. We expect to be able to obtain this type of use data when honors theses are moved to Digital Commons.

We also want to know what influence our repository may have on our programs and students. Do honors students use the works in the repository to give them ideas for further research? Does the online availability of theses improve the quality of the work being done? Has the work in the repository generated new interest among faculty or students? Are there long-term benefits to our students who use the repository for their research? We plan to include assessments of these topics in our senior exit evaluations and alumni surveys. Together with the access/use data, we hope this information will detail the benefits of the ETSU eThesis repository for our students, faculty, and administration.

Advice and Recommendations

Our experiences may not be typical of all institutions. However, knowing our own difficulties in locating guidelines and advice to assist in creation of our eThesis system, we are providing our most significant recommendations below. Be sure the system you select offers the following:

- Support for non-document object files (e.g., audio, video, and images) and the descriptive data associated with those objects;
- Processes available that enable images to be adjusted in resolution to ensure they cannot be downloaded in quality form and also options for protecting content of audio and video files;
• Support for variable time embargoes for individual files (text or other) to address those disciplines with publisher restrictions about open access prior to formal publication and to provide options for protection of audio and video files;

• Content that is discoverable on the open web and search capabilities in the local catalog that support identification of undergraduate theses separate from graduate theses and dissertations; and

• Easy conversion of catalog information to the main university library catalog, including checks for errors in any text conversion.

Our most important advice is to understand that undergraduate honors theses represent an intellectual asset of the university that should be recognized and managed as such. An institution's library is a natural for the role of custodial care given its historic responsibilities for managing collection, description, and accessibility of resources that support the teaching and learning mission of the university. You also must provide processes or options to protect any original creative property produced by students. Finally, the issue of long-term archival storage is always a concern with electronic documents because technologies are changing at such a rapid rate. Consideration of permanent archival versions of all documents is a necessity; at a minimum, use of paper copy or microfilm is recommended. Our current conundrum of finding an appropriate archive for video and audio recordings has yet to be resolved.

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An Outcome-Based Honors Program: The Honors Option Points (HOPs) System

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INTRODUCTION

University honors colleges and programs come in many shapes and sizes, but one commonality exists: orientation around the completion of a group or series of courses. In some cases, the required courses are honors versions of regularly offered courses, and each semester honors students are able to choose from among those offered. In other cases, the core honors courses are designed to form a sequence, beginning in the first semester and often progressing to a senior thesis or capstone project.

Regardless of the structure, many honors programs face the challenge of designing a program that students can successfully complete in four years. This problem is especially acute at a time when university budgets are being cut; because honors courses are typically smaller than their non-honors counterparts, administrators may be tempted to reduce the number of honors sections offered to balance their shrinking budgets. While the Slippery Rock University Honors Program has been fortunate to have strong support from our administrators, our honors students have frequently expressed frustration at the difficulty of completing the program’s academic requirements. In response, we recently took a hard look at the course-oriented structure of our program. In that process, we re-envisioned the program by focusing on the characteristics of some of our most successful honors students: they have diverse academic interests; they participate in international experiences; they have engaged in successful research/creative activities; and they are involved in leadership roles. We then restructed the program in a way that we hope will lead to the development of these valuable characteristics in all our honors students. The result is an outcome-based approach to honors education that is centered on Honors Option Points (HOPs, for short) rather than one that follows the traditional model of honors coursework.
AN OUTCOME-BASED HONORS PROGRAM

THE SRU HONORS PROGRAM: THEN

Slippery Rock University is a medium-sized state university (approximately 9,000 students) that is part of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) along with thirteen other universities ranging in size from 1,600 students (Cheyney University) to 15,000 students (Indiana University of Pennsylvania). The mission of PASSHE is to provide high-quality education at a reasonable cost, and many of the students who attend PASSHE schools, including SRU, are the first in their family to go to college.

The honors program at SRU was initiated in 1985 and has been functioning successfully since then. In recent years, the number of students in the program has ranged from 225 to 275. Before the introduction of the HOPs system in the fall of 2010, our honors program had a traditional structure. Students were required to complete seven honors courses, either courses designated as honors or honors contract courses, by the time of graduation. In addition to their coursework, honors students were expected to participate each semester in other activities that are an integral part of the honors experience. (This part of the program has been maintained with the new HOPs system.) These activities include attendance at cultural and academic events (e.g., plays, concerts, lectures, and movies with discussion, typically held on campus) followed by a write-up, community service, and participation in leadership roles in campus organizations. Beyond the explicit requirements of the program, honors students have opportunities to participate in other honors events such as local trips to Pittsburgh to attend musicals, plays and concerts; a regional trip every spring to some city of cultural interest (e.g., Boston, Washington, D.C., Savannah, GA, Charleston, SC); and attendance at the National Collegiate Honors Council annual conference. Given the background of many of our students, these opportunities can be eye-opening experiences. Some may be flying for the first time or travelling further than they ever have before.

On paper, the academic requirement of seven honors courses seemed reasonable: honors students would take one honors course per semester, putting them on schedule to graduate with honors designation after four years. But the reality was that students often had difficulties completing this requirement.

The reasons for these difficulties were varied and reflect some of the particularities of the curriculum at SRU. One difficulty was that the majority of honors offerings were lower-level courses that were part of our general studies program (called “Liberal Studies” at SRU). Students at SRU are required to complete a minimum of forty-five credits (typically fifteen courses) in a variety of areas including: the arts, global community, human institutions/personal relationships, and science, technology and math. Approximately thirty credits are offered as lower-level and fifteen as upper-level courses. Most students have completed their lower-level liberal studies requirements by the end of their sophomore years. Upper-level courses, even those that are part of the liberal studies program, are more specialized; since honors sections of these courses are not likely to attract the requisite twenty to twenty-five students, they are
infallibly offered. Consequently, even if students have been able to take one honors course in each of their first four semesters, they would still need to take three more to graduate with honors designation, and these would probably be introductory courses that did not contribute significantly to the student’s program.

The problem was exacerbated by the fact that more and more incoming freshman arrived at SRU having already completed some college courses through their high school programs or at community colleges; these would often be introductory courses that might be offered at SRU as honors courses such as English Composition, U.S. History, and Introduction to Psychology. With limited options for taking honors courses after their sophomore year, many students ended up relying heavily on contract courses to complete their requirements.

The specialized curricula of many majors at SRU made it difficult for honors students to complete the course requirements. Students getting a degree in education, for instance, have a curriculum with highly prescribed requirements for certification in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Within their liberal studies course options, honors students often lacked the choices available in other majors and were required to take specific courses that were not necessarily offered as honors courses. For example, a student getting a BS in education with a major in social studies/history is required to take Introduction to Anthropology and Introduction to Psychology as two of their liberal studies courses, and these are offered as honors courses only occasionally or not at all.

In addition to having many education majors, Slippery Rock University has a number of highly specialized programs in health-related fields, including exercise science, pre-physical therapy, pre-medicine, pre-pharmacy, and pre-chiropractic. These programs offer more choices in liberal studies, but the requirement to take specific courses in sequence created scheduling difficulties even for freshman and sophomore honors students, limiting their ability to take required honors courses early in their academic careers.

The SRU College of Education and the specialized health-related majors include a large number of the university’s majors, and honors students in these majors struggled to incorporate the requirements of the honors program into their college experience. Adding to the problem is that exercise science and the health-related programs at SRU are well regarded and highly competitive; they attract some of the most academically qualified students at SRU, many of whom are eager for the opportunities and challenges of the honors program. Approximately a quarter of the students in the honors program are pursuing a major related to exercise science or physical therapy.

Clearly, not every honors program has the same constellation of issues we face at SRU, but SRU is not unique in struggling to make sure that students can complete their honors requirements in a timely fashion.
AN OUTCOME-BASED HONORS PROGRAM

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOPS SYSTEM

Despite the challenges for the students, we were able to maintain high graduation rates of students in the honors program. Nevertheless, our overreliance on honors contract courses put an unnecessary burden on both the students who had to develop the contract courses and the faculty who had to direct them. To address this problem, the previous director of the SRU Honors Program, April Longwell, initiated a review of the program in the fall of 2009 to determine if improvements could be made. A subcommittee of the Honors Program Advisory Committee, consisting of faculty teaching in the program and previous directors, was formed to conduct this review, in the course of which we decided to rethink the program structure and develop an alternative.

The guiding idea behind the development of the HOPs system was to encourage honors students to participate in activities that would help them develop into the kind of people we considered ideal honors program graduates. In the jargon of contemporary higher education, our approach was outcome-based. By looking at recent graduates who we thought exemplified the traits that we wanted the honors program to promote, we identified the relevant characteristics mentioned earlier: diverse academic interests, participation in international experiences, engagement in research/creative activities, and involvement in leadership. These particular characteristics were identified by members of the Honors Program Advisory Committee who worked with honors students, primarily as faculty teaching honors courses. The characteristics were not based on possible further measures of success, such as attending graduate school or finding jobs after graduation, but rather on what we found embodied in our ideal honors students, those who had taken advantage of the rich array of opportunities offered by our program and university as opposed to those doing the minimum required to get the “honors designation.” We also came to realize that for our students, many of whom would enter the job market upon graduation rather than going on to graduate or professional schools, these characteristics would likely be more valuable to them in the future than taking another honors course.

Given the traits that we wanted to promote among honors program graduates, we needed to find a way to combine new requirements with honors coursework to provide a cohesive program. The basic idea was to build a program that rewarded the desired outcomes. While such a program obviously would not exclude honors courses, neither would it privilege them. Courses would provide the foundation for pursuing research and creative activities, and they would also be a necessary preliminary to international experiences, but we determined to expand our conception of an honors education explicitly to include alternatives to coursework as a central academic component of the program. All that remained was to systematize our new conception: we needed to specify exactly what other activities would be incorporated into the program and how they would be combined with honors coursework.
THE HONORS OPTION POINTS SYSTEM

In developing the HOPs system, our committee was faced with the problem of how to correlate the new system with the existing program. We didn’t want to increase substantially the amount of work required to complete the program, nor did we want to make it significantly easier to complete, so, as we discussed incorporating new elements into the program, we tried to keep in mind the amount of work associated with the existing requirement of completing seven honors courses. We came up with a rough metric to weight the new components of the program, but, in order to avoid thinking explicitly in terms of courses, we came up with the idea of HOPs. Rather than require that every student complete seven honors courses, students are now required to earn fourteen HOPs, each roughly equivalent to half of an honors course. We have not eliminated honors courses from the program, and students are still required to complete a minimum of four honors courses (eight HOPs), but the remaining HOPs can be earned through a variety of new options.

The new options are designed in accordance with the desired characteristics of a successful honors student. We also polled the entire group of honors students during one of the regularly scheduled honors meetings for their input on which options would be most helpful as well as their ideas for additional options. Honors students can still earn honors credit for honors contract courses, which, like honors courses, each count as two HOPs. Now, however, they can also earn two HOPs for a semester-, summer-, or year-long study abroad experience. Conference presentations can also earn HOPs: a regional conference presentation in a discipline relevant to their major (one HOP); a national conference presentation in a discipline relevant to their major (two HOPs); or a presentation at the National Collegiate Honors Council conference (one HOP). Students can also receive two HOPs for a faculty-directed independent research or creative activity that is not part of a course or contract. Publication of research can lead to additional HOPs: publication in a refereed undergraduate journal (one HOP); publication in a refereed professional journal (two HOPs). A second major earns two HOPs; a minor earns one. Finally, SRU offers a year-long, three-level leadership program that culminates in a leadership presentation; students who complete level three of this program receive two HOPS. (See Appendix A for the planning guide provided to honors students based on the HOPs system; Appendix B is the Honors Option Points Verification Form used by students to report HOPs activities.)

Determining whether to award one or two HOPs led to significant discussions. In particular, we had concerns about honors students earning multiple HOPs for what was a single research project. As the system is set up, a student could write a paper as part of a contract course (two HOPs), present the paper at a conference (two HOPs), and get the paper published in a professional journal (two HOPs). After lengthy discussion, we came to realize that each stage of the process involves distinct skills. To present a paper at a professional conference, the student needs to go through the submission process, which probably
AN OUTCOME-BASED HONORS PROGRAM

involves editing and reformatting the paper and writing a submission letter. Then, the student needs to prepare an appropriate presentation for the conference, often involving the use of PowerPoint. Similarly, to get a paper published, the student needs to go through the submission process and in all likelihood make revisions based on the comments of referees before final acceptance. While the actual amount of time required for these activities might not be strictly equivalent to a course, the skills needed to complete each stage of the process go well beyond what a student would normally learn from a course, and the development of these skills is valuable to the student.

Students have no limit to the number of honors courses they can take. Furthermore, honors contract courses are normally limited to two, and students can earn no more than two HOPs (one course equivalent) in any of the other categories, thus ensuring that honors students who complete the program by earning HOPs beyond their coursework will have developed in a variety of ways rather than, for example, just completing a second major and two minors. Honors courses still form the basis of the beginning of the honors students’ academic career, but as they move into more advanced and specialized courses in their majors, they are rewarded for pursuing in-depth research and creative activities with the goal of presentation and publication.

EVALUATING THE HOPS SYSTEM

The HOPs system was put into place in the fall of 2010 and is now in its second year. While it is still too early to evaluate thoroughly its success, some preliminary observations are possible.

Prior to implementing the system, our committee met with a focus group of honors students at different stages in the program. They were uniformly excited about the proposed changes and approved wholeheartedly. The only slightly negative response was from an English major who expected to be able to complete the seven required courses without great difficulty. For him, the additional options would not make any difference. Since the system has been implemented, many students have said that they love the program, especially students already in the program who can see the advantages over the old system. Honors students majoring in education have quickly discovered that they can earn HOPs by completing a second major or doing their student teaching abroad (we have a program in Mexico City).

We have some limited data on which to base an assessment of the HOPs system. Honors program students have assessed the SRU Honors Program for the last four years in the spring of each year via an online survey. In spring 2009, 101 out of 150 active students responded to the question “Is it easy to complete courses?” Of these, 55% said yes and 45% said no. These results are part of what motivated the review in fall 2009. The HOPs system was introduced in fall 2010, and the next student survey was administered in spring 2011. The number of students responding was 171 out of approximately 235 active honors program students. Most of the questions in the survey asked the
students to rate different aspects of the program using a Likert-type scale: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, N/A. Students were also invited to comment on the HOPs system, and 137 students (80.1% of total respondents) did so. Of those who commented, 80 students (58.4% of those commenting) made positive comments; they said, for instance, that they like the HOPs system or that they are happy to have another way to complete honors requirements. Twenty-six students (19% of those commenting) did not know what HOPs were, and 23 students (16.8% of those commenting) said that they were not applicable. This last group probably included students who were graduating. Finally, only four students (2.9% of those commenting) made a negative comment about the HOPs system. Based on this limited data, the HOPs system is functioning as we had hoped. In coming years, we will be able to gather more data based on the annual survey. In addition, I plan to gather data on the extent to which students use the various options to complete their honors requirements, allowing us to better understand the impact of the HOPs system.

Given the number of students unfamiliar with the HOPs system (based on the most recent survey), an important task in implementing the new system is educating current and incoming students about the details of the system, and we have approached this task in a variety of ways. All of the students who were in the program in fall 2010 were given an SRU Honors Course Requirement Planning Guide (Appendix A). For new and current students, the system is explained at one of the regular honors program meetings that occur twice each semester. Through multiple and flexible meeting times, we typically reach 80–85% of the students in the program through these meetings.

The SRU Honors Program also has a mentor/mentee program for incoming students each fall. During the summer prior to their first semester at SRU, new freshman and transfer students are assigned a mentor from among the current honors students with the same or related majors. Early in the fall semester, we have an evening event, with food, during which one of the main objectives is to review the particulars of the HOPs system, and mentors have reported that the new students like the HOPs system. Even with all of these efforts to inform the students about the HOPs system, they still need to be reminded about their options, but I am hopeful that, after it has been in use for a few more years, the system will become a familiar aspect of the program.

The positive response from students indicates that the restructured program is beneficial to them. One benefit is solving the practical problem of enabling them to complete the requirements of the program and graduate with honors designation. Surveys of honors program students in the last two years have indicated an improvement in the perceived ability to complete the program requirements. Somewhat anecdotally, as the program director I have seen numerous students submitting HOPs Verification Forms to receive honors credit for their achievements.

A more important benefit is the development of valuable skills. By shifting some of the focus of the program from coursework to other academically and intellectually valuable activities, our students are better prepared for the sorts of
positions in which they will find themselves after graduation. Those who plan to continue their education in graduate school may benefit most from pursuing research presentation and publication. Those more likely to enter the job market can develop their leadership skills and possibly acquire a broader perspective through an international experience. All will have a more richly developed and diverse academic portfolio because of the HOPs system.

The adoption of the HOPs system also has had a positive impact on the connections between the honors program and the faculty as a whole. Previously, a relatively small number of faculty taught honors courses, and honors students tended to approach a particular group of faculty members to do contract courses. With the additional opportunities for students to earn HOPs, a broader range of faculty have become engaged. For example, faculty in the SRU Department of Modern Languages and Cultures are more likely to realize which of their students are in the honors program when these students participate in study abroad programs. Also, when honors students engage in research for presentation and publication for HOPs credit, the faculty member supervising the work becomes aware that the student is in the honors program. The HOPs system is helping to raise the profile of the honors program among the faculty at SRU as it provides faculty additional opportunities to get to know and work with some of SRU’s strongest students.

CONCLUSION

We developed the HOPs system at SRU as a deliberate attempt to move beyond the traditional course-based honors program and create a program based on how we would like to see our honors students develop. While all the details of the HOPs system may not be transferable to every type of honors program or college, our experience suggests that a re-examination of program structure in terms of desired outcomes almost certainly produces benefits for any program.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the work of my colleagues on the HOPs subcommittee: April Longwell (honors director at the time), Jodi Katsafanis (special education), Cindy LaCom (English), Krishna Mukherjee (physics), Langdon Smith (geography), Steve Strain (biology), and Linda Zane (secondary education). I would also like to acknowledge the helpful suggestions of Jean Jones and an anonymous referee for this journal.

The author may be contacted at
bradley.wilson@sru.edu.
Your Honors Program courses and Honors Option Points (HOPs) are designed to give you an opportunity to excel both academically and professionally. It is to your advantage to complete as many HP courses as you can during your freshman and sophomore semesters. (See the Honors Courses section below for the minimum requirement for this area.) By the end of your freshman year, it will also be important for you to identify or consider areas in which you can earn Honors Option Points, if you are so inclined. These option points will not only assist you in completing your 7 Honors course requirements (5 if you are a 3+3 student), but offer you the opportunity to develop the breadth of academic and professional experience that will showcase your accomplishments for graduate school and career opportunities.

Mix and match choices from the categories below, combining Honors courses, contract courses, and HOPs to equal your 7 course requirements (5 if you are a 3+3 student). The list below will help you to familiarize yourself with all options available. Please note that two HOPs equate to one Honors course, so plan your course work accordingly. Use this guide to track your accomplishments. Your HP director can assist you in getting started.

**Honors Courses (Try to complete 4 Honors courses, if possible.)**

**Honors courses** are enriched liberal studies courses, not liberal studies courses made harder, and grading standards are the same as in other college courses. Honors courses avoid the passive learning approach to education. They stimulate your thinking and provide the informal, small class environment that encourages discussion and debate on important topics. Honors courses also introduce you to Honors faculty who can assist you with your academic development as an Honors student. Strive to enroll in 1–2 Honors courses each semester during your freshman and sophomore years. List your Honors courses below. Make an appointment with the HP director if you cannot meet this minimum.

**FOR HP CREDIT: Sign up for your Honors courses in the HP office.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course: ____________________________</th>
<th>Course Totals: ____________________________</th>
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2012
AN OUTCOME-BASED HONORS PROGRAM

Contract Courses (Try to keep the contract course option to a minimum.)

A Contract course is designed to allow you to gain Honors credit for a course that is not an Honors course. The course can be in your major or minor program of study or an area of interest to you. A contract course involves your completion of a 20-page research paper or project of equal value under supervision and guidance from your professor. Papers and special projects create wonderful opportunities for you to present your work at regional and national conferences and our SRU Research Symposium. The completion and approval of a contract proposal is required prior to beginning a contract course. Make an appointment with the HP director, if you want to do more than two contracts.

FOR HP CREDIT: Schedule a meeting with your HP director before beginning this process.

Contract: _________________________________ Course Totals: __________________
Contract: _________________________________ Course Totals: __________________

International Experience (See individual HOPs values below.)

Maximum 2 HOPs

International Study Abroad Programs allow you to study abroad for a semester or year of study. These 19 programs are either exchange (students from each university swap places) or direct enrollments (SRU students enroll at the host university at a reduced cost.) Both offer the most affordable options, but at times enrollments may be limited due to the need to balance exchange programs. Contact the International Services office in Carruth-Rizza Hall to get started. (2 HOPs)

International Student Teaching is offered in Dublin, Ireland during fall semester, or Mexico City, Mexico during spring semester, and is six undergraduate semester credits. Contact the International Services office in Carruth-Rizza Hall to get started. (2 HOPs)

FOR HP CREDIT: Complete and submit the Honors Options Points Verification Form.

Intl Study Abroad: __________________________ HOPs Totals: __________________
Intl Student Teaching: _________________________ HOPs Totals: __________________

Conference Presentations (See individual HOPs values below.)

Maximum 2 HOPs

This option gives you the opportunity to present your research or creative activity at a regional or national conference. Contact the HP director or your professor to get started.

Regional conference presentation in a relevant discipline (1 HOP)
BRADLEY E. WILSON

National conference presentation in a relevant discipline (2 HOPs)
National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) presentation (1 HOP)

FOR HP CREDIT: Complete and submit the Honors Options Points Verification Form.

Presentation: _______________________________ HOPs Totals: ________________
Presentation: _______________________________ HOPs Totals: ________________

Research Project/Thesis (See individual HOPs values below.)
Maximum 2 HOPs

This option offers you the opportunity to carry out research or to experience writing a thesis under the direction of a faculty mentor. Contact your professor or academic advisor about this option.

Research/creative activity project done under the direction of a faculty member that is not part of a course or contract course (2 HOPs)

Thesis/independent study project completed under the direction of a faculty member not as part of a course or contract course (2 HOPs)

FOR HP CREDIT: Complete and submit the Honors Options Points Verification Form.

Research Thesis: _______________________________ HOPs Totals: ________________
Research Thesis: _______________________________ HOPs Totals: ________________

NOTE: If you would like to use Honors Options Points that exceed a maximum, please contact the Honors Program Director.

Publication of Research (See individual HOPs values below.)
Maximum 2 HOPs

Contact your professor with your interest in this area.

Refereed undergraduate journal in a relevant discipline (1 HOP)
Refereed professional journal in a relevant discipline (2 HOPs)

FOR HP CREDIT: Complete and submit the Honors Options Points Verification Form.

HOPs Totals

Published Material: _______________________________ HOPs Totals: ________________
Published Material: _______________________________ HOPs Totals: ________________
Major/Minor Options
(Maximum 2 HOPs)

Dual Majors or Dual Degrees (2 HOPs)

If you desire to earn two or more majors or dual degrees you should first seek the advisement from the specific academic departments that would be involved. This should take place normally after your freshman year.

(This does not include Pre-Physical Therapy or LECOM.)

Minors Earned (1 HOP)

A minor is a set of courses that meet specific guidelines and that allow you to complete a sub-major concentration in a specific area of study. Discuss your interest in a minor with your advisor as well as the academic department of that area of study.

FOR HP CREDIT: Provide a Degree Audit showing major/minor completion.

Dual Majors/Degrees: __________________ HOPs Totals: ______________
Minor: __________________ HOPs Totals: ______________
Minor: __________________ HOPs Totals: ______________

Compass Leadership Completion (2 HOPs)

The Compass Leadership Program is designed to enhance your academic experience by assisting you to develop your skills, abilities and practices of leadership. The process fosters critical thinking about leadership through workshops, active experiences, discussions and reflection. You will develop and demonstrate your understanding of the following competencies: leadership theory, the role of leaders in supporting diverse communities, skills of facilitation and advocacy, ethical leadership, conflict resolution and communication skills, service learning and community service, and the articulation of your personal leadership plan through a culminating leadership presentation.

FOR HP CREDIT: Turn in a copy of your final Compass Leadership certificate of completion.

Compass Leadership: __________________ HOPs Totals: ______________

Student Name: ______________________________________________

Grand Total (Courses and HOPs): ________________________________

Revised: 1/20/2012
APPENDIX B

SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
HONORS OPTION POINTS VERIFICATION FORM

Student Information
Turn in form & paperwork when Option is completed.

Name ____________________________________________

Major/Minor/Specializations _______________________________________

Local Phone No. _________________________________________________

Email _________________________________________________________

Class Standing (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior) __________________

A: International Experience
• International Study Abroad: Semester(s)
• International Student Teaching: Semester(s)

Location _______________________________________________________

Attach a copy of either a grade report or transcript with form.

B: Conference Presentations
• Regional Conference Presentation in a relevant discipline
• National Conference Presentation in a relevant discipline
• National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) Presentation

Name of Conference _____________________________________________

Title of Presentation ___________________________________________

Academic Discipline _____________________________________________

Description ___________________________________________________

Professor’s memo should include competitiveness of proposal acceptance rate (required minimum is 50–60%) and a description of the student’s presentation.
C: Research Project/Thesis
- Research/Creative Activity Project that is not part of a course or contract course
- Thesis/Independent Study Project that is not part of a course or contract course
Description

Professor’s memo should include a brief description of the research and explain the student’s role. (May include preparation prior to research as well.)

D: Publication of Research
- Refereed Undergraduate Journal in a relevant discipline
- Refereed Professional Journal in a relevant discipline
Name of Journal
Title

Professor’s memo should include attachment of publisher’s email/letter verifying student’s work and date of publication.

E. Faculty Memo (Needed for sections B, C, or D)
- A signed memo from your professor verifying that all information is true and accurate must be attached to this form.
Faculty Name (Please Print)
Date
See above for important memo content requirements.

F. Approval

Honors Program Director Signature and Date

Revised: 1/20/2012
Most research about honors has focused on general education honors. Less research is available on honors in management-related fields, two examples being Leong and Wagner’s work on honors accounting and Siegfried’s on economics. A guide to implementing a departmental honors program at minimal cost might thus be useful as honors programs continue to grow in number and in context. The revival of a departmental honors program in management and marketing at Rhode Island College (see Appendix A for background) provides the model for a nine-step process that can apply to other business school departments in institutions with existing general honors programs or to any department where there is already an institutional commitment to honors studies and where a path to a thesis already exists.

Most institutions attract a diverse population of students whose breadth of ability levels does not necessarily include the best and brightest. Nonetheless, accommodating gifted students is as important as accommodating remedial students (Waggoner); not all bright students are destined for the Ivy League, and many seek lower-cost alternatives in institutions with honors programs (Long; Hébert & McBee). Thus, for many decades institutions of higher learning have offered honors programs to attract and retain the brightest students while keeping costs low (Long).

Honors programs in business school departments are particularly important because students in these fields rarely find research opportunities as undergraduates. The nature of an undergraduate education in management or marketing tends to direct students into professional schools during their post-graduate careers, but gifted students who eagerly wish to attend MBA programs need innovative classes and enthusiastic teachers. A departmental honors program is an effective way of engaging faculty and students in undergraduate research, and it also shows young business majors that careers in research and academia are available to them as well as careers requiring an MBA. Table 1 summarizes some of the benefits of a departmental honors program in business as well as some of the challenges.
The following essay provides a model for implementing a departmental honors program in business and explains nine steps to implement such a program, summarized in Table 2.

**Table 1: Expected Benefits and Concerns Encountered from Implementing a Departmental Honors Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Challenge the best students</td>
<td>• Accept slow initial participation rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give students a job market advantage</td>
<td>• Prepare students for time commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prepare students for graduate school</td>
<td>• Streamline the feedback process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide research opportunities to faculty</td>
<td>• Use social networking as a marketing tool</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Nine Steps to Implementing a Departmental Honors Program**

1. Assess existing resources
   - Information available
   - Interested faculty
   - Student interest
2. Define the program
   - Purpose
   - Admission criteria
   - Requirements for Honors designation
3. Attract students to information sessions
   - Emails to eligible students
   - Flyers distributed and posted
   - Faculty announcements
4. Hold information sessions
   - Presentations
   - Further inquiry encouraged
   - Faculty support
The discussion of these steps includes concerns we encountered in developing a departmental honors program in management and marketing at Rhode Island College (RIC) and possible solutions to these concerns. The conclusion summarizes the costs of the program and suggests ideas for future research.

**STEP 1: ASSESS EXISTING RESOURCES**

An honors program director in business should first take an inventory of existing resources and answer three questions: 1) what information is available about existing honors programs at the institution, especially within the business school; 2) which faculty members are interested in participating either as Honors Committee (HC) members or thesis advisors; and 3) how many students know about the program and are interested in participating. At RIC, three faculty members volunteered to constitute the HC, and six offered to serve as advisors. The HC then asked faculty members to poll their students informally regarding their knowledge of and interest in the departmental honors program.
Results from this informal poll showed that few students knew of the program, but many were interested once they knew it existed.

**STEP 2: DEFINE THE PROGRAM**

For students to be attracted to the program, they have to understand its benefits to them, its criteria for admission, and its requirements for achieving departmental honors. The framework should start with clear aims such as:

- Challenge students to discover and study topics of special interest
- Encourage development of research skills
- Recognize outstanding performance in the major

Next comes the need for an admission process. For instance, at RIC eligible students apply for admission by submitting an application and research proposal to the HC chair. On the application forms, which students can obtain from the HC chair or on the department’s web page, the criteria for admission are defined:

- At least 60 but no more than 90 credits earned, i.e., students in their junior year
- At least a 3.50 GPA in the major and 3.25 overall (including transfer credits)
- Completed application form, including all transcripts from institutions of higher education, letter of recommendation from a current faculty member, and formal research proposal (see sample checklist in Appendix B)
- Successful review of the application and research proposal by two of the three HC members and the department chair

Once students have been accepted into the program, they need to know how to maintain their honors status. These criteria might include maintaining their GPAs at a minimum level, taking required courses, and meeting specific deadlines. At RIC, students must maintain a 3.5 GPA in the major and 3.25 GPA overall while also earning at least B- in all major courses and C- in courses outside the major. Students complete their honors project while enrolled in two successive 400-level independent study courses under the supervision of a member of the department, for which they receive three credits each. Each student’s advisor provides a letter grade for these courses based on evaluation criteria defined in the student’s accepted research proposal. Honors projects must be completed by April 1 for spring graduation or November 1 for winter graduation. The HC then determines whether the finished project is worthy of departmental honors.

Finally, students need to know what they have to achieve to receive credit for departmental honors, such as an evaluation of Satisfactory by the HC.
Evaluation of the project should be based on criteria announced prior to project production and dependent on the type of research conducted, as described in the research proposal. In the case of an Unsatisfactory evaluation, the committee may suggest revisions, which, if completed in a timely fashion, may result in a Satisfactory evaluation.

**STEP 3: ATTRACT STUDENTS TO INFORMATION SESSIONS**

A good way to start getting students interested in an honors program is to make a list of all majors in the department who meet both GPA requirements for admission and send them students personal invitations to the information session via email. Next, distribute flyers (Appendices C & D) explaining the event, its time, and its location to all faculty for announcement in class. Third, post flyers in all classrooms in which the department’s classes are taught as well as in a display case in the lobby of the business school. Finally, distribute pocket-sized versions of the flyer during class and strategically place them around the business school so students can keep them as a reminder for the session.

The idea is to blanket the area students frequent and to sell the information session actively in order to attract as many students as possible. Personal invitations to qualified students let them know the department recognizes their achievement and wants to give them a special opportunity to further challenge themselves. Students tend to respond positively to the invitation and should be thanked personally and sent a reminder for the event the day before it takes place.

Flyers help, but they are not necessarily the most effective way of gaining students’ attention. Between emails, tweets, instant messages, and podcasts, students are always looking at electronic devices rather than old-fashioned bulletin boards. Departments should take full advantage of the digital age in organizing the information sessions and communicating with students about the honors program. For example, social media (e.g., a Facebook page) might work better than flyers. A department might ask students to design the page as a way to get them invested in the program and to give them another skill that might be useful in finding employment. A cash-strapped department can rely entirely on no-cost technology rather than older strategies like flyers.

**STEP 4: HOLD INFORMATION SESSIONS**

The honors committee should plan an information session each semester and invite key faculty and administrators to give five-minute presentations. Students feel welcome if the session is held in a comfortable place and free food is served. Invited speakers can address topics such as:
DOING THE HONORS

- Why do Honors? (department chair)
- Junior Honors Colloquium and College Honors (head of college honors program)
- Departmental Honors (head of department honors program)
- How to Choose an Advisor? (professor currently advising a student)
- What Is It Like to Do an Honors Project? (student currently conducting an honors project)
- How Do I Get Started? (open forum for questions and answers)

The information session will convince a few students to join the program and prompt others who could not attend to inquire about the program. Students often begin thinking about the honors program and ask about its requirements before the information session is announced.

The HC should hold the information session during the first half of every semester, prior to the registration period, so that first-semester juniors may register for any preparatory classes the institution might offer, and second-semester juniors have time to complete an honors proposal by the end-of-semester deadline. At RIC, students may take a two-credit junior honors colloquium to learn what an honors project entails and begin formulating their proposals. Other students may immediately seek an advisor and begin creating their proposal. It is important to run the session every semester to inform new majors of the honors program and to encourage existing majors to join if they meet the qualifications for admission.

At first, the turnout might not be large, especially if the program is new. It may take several tries before the information session garners significant interest. Attendance can also depend on the time and day chosen to hold the event, so program administrators should conduct the information session during a period when most students do not have class or other commitments.

STEP 5: FOLLOW-UP

Each time an information session is held, the presenters should meet afterwards to debrief. Part of this process should be to consider what can be improved for next semester; this is also a good time to discuss appropriate advisors for the interested students and ways they can help define research topics. At this time, the HC chair should send one more email to the students who attended, thanking them for their participation and encouraging them to contact any of the HC members if they have further questions or are interested in conducting a project.
STEP 6:
HELP THE STUDENTS GET STARTED

Students tend to apply to the honors program knowing they want to conduct honors research but not necessarily knowing their research question or who their advisor should be. Therefore, HC members should be available to listen to their ideas, help them narrow the focus of the project, and recommend who among the faculty who volunteered to be advisors (see Step 1) is the best person to guide them through the process. It is then up to the student to talk with that professor and begin the project. At RIC, students are also made aware of a college fund to which they can apply to help defray up to $500 of their project costs.

At this time it is important to remind students of the time commitment involved in an honors project. Students may show interest in doing a project but, on discussing it with a potential advisor, decide they do not have time for it. Because students know they will receive credit for two courses, they should expect to spend as much time on the project as they would for two regular college courses, but they might underestimate the extra time it takes to conduct research and complete an honors project. Time-management issues can be especially problematic at community colleges and other institutions with commuter campuses where students often balance full class schedules with full-time jobs and family responsibilities. If students start and stop a project, they get frustrated, and they also place a burden on advisors and HC members. Therefore, time commitment should be a concern addressed by both the HC and the student’s advisor before the project starts.

STEP 7:
EVALUATE THE HONORS PROJECT

While the HC should monitor the thesis progress, at this stage the student and advisor do the work. How advisors guide students through their thesis year differs depending on the nature of the research. Some advisors run an independent study course during the first semester to expose students to theory and research on their topics; students might write short papers throughout the semester as a way for advisors to chart their progress, evaluate their efforts, and give them material for their theses, which students then construct and finalize during the second semester. Other advisors might assign starter reading lists and tell students to find other articles to fit the outline of their proposals; students can teach the material back to their advisor and create a database of material so their advisor can chart their progress and evaluate their efforts. In this latter model, students can spend the second semester drawing on their earlier research to construct their theses. In either model, students should submit their theses to their advisors in chapters, writing successive sections while their advisors comment on previous ones.
The HC should remind students of the project due date a month beforehand and then develop a schedule for evaluating the project, giving feedback, and accepting revisions with the students and their advisors. It is important to streamline the evaluation process through the HC chair. Having each member evaluate the project and give feedback to students individually could produce conflicting advice, confuse the students, and create unnecessary work for them. Ideally, the HC should meet after each member individually evaluates the project but before giving feedback to students, much as a dissertation committee does, and decide, as a unified group, what needs to be revised. The HC chair should then communicate these revisions to students and their advisors. The HC chair should likewise coordinate future revisions to ensure timely and uniform feedback. The length of this process will depend on the extent and nature of the requested revisions and the availability of the HC. Once the HC has deemed the project Satisfactory, the HC chair signs the approval form and forwards the project to the department chair for final approval of departmental honors.

STEP 8: SHOWCASE THE PROJECT

The institution should hold an event or reception to showcase each honors student’s work. For instance, just prior to spring commencement, RIC invites all students who have completed honors projects that academic year to showcase their projects at a poster session called the Convocation of Scholars. The college’s library also makes two bound copies of each honors thesis available. Alternatively, a department could ask honors students to give an informal thirty-minute presentation of their project to department faculty. The institution could also encourage honor students and their advisors to submit projects to undergraduate research conferences, possibly offering financial assistance if a student’s project is chosen for presentation.

STEP 9: MAKE IT OFFICIAL

Once the honors project is deemed Satisfactory and signed by the HC chair and department chair, the department chair should inform the institution that the student has received honors standing within the department. Departmental honors (along with other honors, if applicable) should then be added to the students’ official transcripts. Typically, honors recipients are also indicated in the graduation program distributed at commencement.

CONCLUSION

While the departmental honors program in management and marketing at Rhode Island College is still small, it holds promise and, because it is so inexpensive to run, the administration is encouraging its continuance. A
departmental honors program can be developed and implemented without huge inflows or outputs of funds. Implementing the program did not take a Herculean effort at RIC. Professors who act as advisors receive compensation for one credit hour of teaching per semester for each independent study they conduct with honors students. Faculty on the HC put in no more extra time than professors would normally spend on service activities for their institution. There is no need to develop a new curriculum or hire new people to teach it. The cost of printing flyers amounts to $9 per semester (and then only because they are in color), so the financial outlay is minimal. Thus, any department can implement a viable honors program at almost no expense.

The literature on departmental honors programs in management and marketing is still rather sparse. Further research on assessment of such programs and on relationships between admissions standards, program formats, and outcomes would be useful to honors programs in management and other business fields. Comparative research might focus on what traits have the highest impacts in business honors programs. Finally, researchers could explore ways of incorporating practical skills into business honors programs so that graduates of these programs are prepared for both professional and academic careers.

REFERENCES


The author may be contacted at jurda@ric.edu.
APPENDIX A

BACKGROUND ON THE DEPARTMENTAL HONORS PROGRAM IN MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING AT RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

Rhode Island College is a public institution, founded in the mid 1800s, that enrolls approximately 9,260 students, 7,883 of whom are undergraduates. The School of Management has 24 faculty members and 1,002 students within three academic departments comprising six majors: Management and Marketing (MM), Accounting and Computer Information Systems, and Finance and Economics. The Management and Marketing Department has 10 faculty and 535 students, of whom 399 are management majors and 136 are marketing majors, including double majors (another field plus management or marketing; Rhode Island College, 2010).

Rhode Island College offers general education honors and departmental honors. General education honors is a college-wide program to attract academically advanced high school students and provide challenges beyond the normal curriculum. These students take special honors sections of the four core general education courses required of all undergraduates. Because the college is publicly funded, financial constraints prohibit it from offering separate honors curricula for each major. To receive departmental honors, students prepare senior honors theses. Additionally, students may receive what is called College Honors if they complete their general education requirements in honors courses, attend a two-credit junior-year research colloquium to prepare them for writing a senior thesis, and then successfully complete their major’s requirements for departmental honors.

The Management and Marketing Department Honors Program

The Marketing Departmental Honors Program (MMHP) had existed in various forms for over twenty years. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the honors program has existed at least since the late 1980s. However, the former program director retired leaving no documentation dating before 2001. The program had lain dormant for at least eight years due to faculty and student apathy. Despite the availability of information about the program posted on the department’s website, students did not know the program existed. At the same time, students were searching for opportunities to differentiate themselves academically from the thousands of other graduates of local colleges and universities. A growing number of highly talented MM students also desired more challenging work than what they received in their normal course of study, and some expressed interest in working with faculty on research projects just to gain experience. Additionally, faculty needed more research opportunities because the School of Management was seeking AACSB accreditation. Because Rhode Island College was historically teaching-oriented, faculty did not normally have a series of research projects in the pipeline. Thus, during the fall of 2008, the MM faculty resurrected the MMHP as a means to challenge their best students, give their graduates an edge in the labor market, and create more opportunities for faculty to conduct research.
APPENDIX B

HONORS PROPOSAL CHECKLIST

The student, in consultation with his or her advisor, must prepare a 4–6 page proposal for a two-semester independent study. The proposal must be approved by the faculty advisor, whose signature on the cover sheet indicates the document has been evaluated in light of the required components below and satisfactorily addresses them.

The proposal should be summarized in a 100–150 word abstract on the cover sheet. The body of the proposal essentially should expand on the abstract by providing more detail. It should contain the following elements:

- A brief summary of the current state of the area in which the student intends to do research. This summary of the intellectual background of the area should provide a context for understanding what the student is trying to accomplish. It should refer to works in the bibliography (see last bullet), briefly indicating how each work is related to the area.

- A clear statement of what the student intends to do and how it relates to the current state of the area.

- The methods, theory, techniques, or materials to be used in the project, and why these have been chosen.

- An approximate timetable for the project, divided between two semesters.

- A means to evaluate progress.

- A bibliography of at least five works that relate to the area.

The cover sheet and the proposal should be submitted to the departmental honors committee for its approval no later than April 15, if the project is to begin in the fall semester, or November 15, if the project is to begin in the spring semester.

Once the honors committee approves the proposal, the student should sign up for independent study with the project advisor.
Departmental Honors Information Session

Management and Marketing Majors

Please come and learn about:

- Why do Honors? Chair, Dept. of Management and Marketing
- Junior Honors Colloquium and College Honors Director of General Education and College Honors
- Management and Marketing Departmental Honors Head of Management and Marketing Honors Program
- How do I choose an adviser? Honors Program Adviser
- What’s it like to do an honors project? Honors Program Participant
- What do I need to get started? Q&A between students and faculty

Thursday, December 3, 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m., Room 103
Hey!

• Looking for a challenge?
• Have a good GPA?
• Interested in research?

Then why don’t you do the honors?

Find out more about Management and Marketing departmental honors

Wednesday, March 2
12:45-1:15, Room 105
The Institutional Impact of Honors though a Campus-Community Common Read

TIMOTHY J. NICHOLS
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

The common reading program at South Dakota State University, coordinated and spear-headed by the SDSU Honors College, has in just three years of existence had powerful, positive, institution-wide impacts, including significant learning outcomes for both honors and non-honors students. The role that honors can play in the design and execution of a common reading program is one strategy for making an honors college or program an important contributor not only to its own students but to the mission of the institution. The specifics of SDSU’s program—its background, goals, approaches to meet those goals, and assessment results—might thus serve as a model for other honors programs seeking to improve the quality of education throughout their institution.

BACKGROUND AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

South Dakota State University (SDSU) is a public land grant college founded in 1881. Enrollment is nearly 13,000 students (more than 11,000 undergraduates), with more than ninety percent from South Dakota and its neighboring states. Most students are white, and many are low-income, first-generation college students. More than 150 academic options are organized into the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Agriculture and Biological Sciences, Nursing, Pharmacy, Engineering, and Education and Human Sciences; University College is home to undecided students. The SDSU Honors College, founded in 1999, enrolls approximately 450 students in honors courses each semester; these students represent each of the university’s academic colleges.

SDSU has participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) since 2000. Data from this instrument track freshman and senior students’ perceptions of key indicators relating to student engagement. NSSE data comparing SDSU to several of its peer institutions have revealed lower scores among SDSU students on indicators that include level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student/faculty interaction, and active and collaborative learning.
THE INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT OF HONORS

PROGRAM GOALS

SDSU’s common reading program was designed to have a positive impact on the institution’s performance on specific NSSE items. The work of George Kuh, which documented the effectiveness of the “common intellectual experience” at campuses across the country, helped guide the effort. The SDSU Honors College stepped forward to coordinate and launch this new initiative on campus, viewing it as an opportunity to provide leadership for a campus-wide academic endeavor. This role for honors is particularly important at SDSU, where honors is rapidly growing and working to enhance campus awareness and appreciation of its students, faculty, and programs.

Common read program objectives were to: (1) increase student knowledge of contemporary global issues; (2) enhance student awareness of social, economic, and cultural diversity; (3) involve students in meaningful classroom interactions with fellow students and faculty; (4) engage students outside the classroom through a series of enriching educational experiences; and (5) encourage students to become involved in campus and community service.

SDSU’s common read also addressed NSSE indicators such as level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student/faculty interaction, and enriching educational experiences. All of these themes resonate with the core values of the SDSU Honors College and the objectives espoused by the National Collegiate Honors Council, many of which were recently articulated by Scott Carnicom in his 2011 essay “Honors Education: Innovation or Conservation.”

PROGRAM APPROACHES

South Dakota State University implemented a common reading program for the first time during the fall semester of 2009. More than a thousand students in introductory and orientation courses across campus read Tracy Kidder’s Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World. In 2010, some 1500 students in an expanded series of courses read Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace, One School at a Time by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. Students participating in the program’s comprehensive assessment effort numbered 782 in 2009 and 1421 in 2010. Honors students participating were enrolled in Honors 100: Honors College Orientation (2009 n = 52; 2010 n = 106).

The approach to the common read varied widely depending on the subject matter and faculty associated with participating courses, which included introductory and freshman orientation classes in General Studies, Agriculture and Biological Sciences, Pharmacy, Plant Science, Animal and Range Sciences, Nursing, Engineering, and the Honors College. Outside of the academic environment, the common read texts were introduced to incoming students and their parents during New Student Orientation. Residential Life staff members read the texts and, in many cases, incorporated common read discussions in the
residence halls. In the Honors Living and Learning Community, for example, students gathered weekly for “tea times” in 2010 to discuss *Three Cups of Tea* and to share tea. Various pedagogical approaches included classroom lectures, on-line and face-to-face discussions in and outside of class, reflective essays, and service projects. A common read Facebook page and Twitter feed posed questions and program updates.

With both *Mountains Beyond Mountains* and *Three Cups of Tea*, a series of enriching out-of-class educational experiences was designed to enhance student engagement in the issues of the text. During the common read of *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, which recounts the role of Partners In Health and Paul Farmer in bringing health care to the poor in Haiti and around the world, campus events included a lecture by the SDSU men’s basketball coach, whose family adopted a child from Haiti; a lecture by the head of UNICEF’s HIV/AIDS division; and a hunger banquet/community night, which showcased local opportunities for service and involvement, including the Brookings Rotary Club’s solar oven project and a student/faculty visit to Haiti with Engineers Without Borders.

*Three Cups of Tea* tells the story of Greg Mortenson and the Central Asia Institute’s work building schools, mostly for girls, in the rugged mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mortenson describes the culture of the people, in which sharing tea is significant: with the first cup, people are strangers; with the second cup, they are friends; and, after the third cup, they are like family. Out-of-class activities included a diversi-tea, in which students engaged in conversations about issues of diversity while sharing three cups of tea; an interfaith dialogue featuring Muslim, Christian and Jewish perspectives; a lecture on the history and geopolitics of the region; and a presentation by a local volunteer who had recently returned from work with a women’s empowerment project in Afghanistan. Building on the success of the first year’s hunger banquet (in which food was distributed according to actual world food distribution), panelists for the 2010 event included representatives of local literacy initiatives along with students and community members who had traveled to Pakistan doing hunger relief work.

Also in 2010, the city of Brookings’ Human Rights Commission partnered with the university to make the common read a campus and community endeavor. With generous support from local benefactors, every student in the Brookings public school system was furnished an age-appropriate copy of *Three Cups of Tea*, including a young reader’s edition for middle-school students and a children’s picture book for the elementary grades.

Both years, students engaged in service project fundraisers (featuring a competition by class) on behalf of Partners in Health’s malaria net challenge in 2009 and the Central Asia Institute’s Pennies for Peace program in 2010. The central character of each story, Paul Farmer in 2009 and Greg Mortenson in 2010, visited campus and delivered a culminating address. Funding from the SDSU Honors College’s Griffith Endowment supported these events, which were among the best-attended lectures in the history of the university.
THE HONORS EXPERIENCE

Honors Orientation was classified as a high-engagement common read course, requiring a higher level of participation in common read events and activities. For example, in lower-engagement courses, common read students might be required only to read the book, take a quiz, and attend the culminating lecture. Honors Orientation students’ requirements included attending at least four of the common read events, four on-line discussion posts about segments of the book, contributions to fundraising initiatives, and reflective essays. In addition to these higher-level expectations for participation, honors students had opportunities to practice leadership by helping to facilitate common read events and discussions.

The role of our honors college’s student leaders has expanded since the common read’s first year. In the common read of Mountains Beyond Mountains, honors student involvement consisted of ushering at events, independent fundraising and attending a special reception with Paul Farmer. In 2010, honors students served as small-group discussion leaders at the diversitea, were masters of ceremonies at the hunger banquet/community night, shared dinner with Greg Mortenson, and led the question/answer session after Mortenson’s lecture, with more than 5000 in attendance. They also posed a fundraising challenge to the campus and community that raised some $13,000 for Pennies for Peace. For the fall 2011 reading of Warren St. John’s Outcasts United: An American Town, A Refugee Team, and One Woman’s Quest to Make a Difference, honors students served on the book-selection committee and assumed leadership in helping to conceptualize and implement the semester’s activities.

IMPACTS ON CAMPUS

An assessment of the common read program’s impact included quantitative and qualitative data from faculty and student participants. Students involved in the common read reported positive progress toward each of the program’s objectives. Student responses to survey items on Likert-type scales, with 1= not at all; 2 = very little; 3= some; 4 = quite a bit; 5 = very much, are presented in Table 1.

In 2010, variability among approaches to the common read was assessed between courses. Based on a review of course syllabi, common read courses were categorized into high, medium, and low engagement. High-engagement courses reported the strongest progress toward program objectives. While means for most of the items were lower in 2010 than in 2009, the doubling of the number of participants—many of whom were in large-section classes with low engagement in the common read—provides some explanation for the downward shift. In all cases, a minimum of “some” progress toward student learning outcomes was achieved, and, also in all cases, Honors Orientation results were higher than the average for other common read courses.
Table 1: Common Read Student Progress on Program Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent did participation in the common reading program . . .</th>
<th>Fall 2009 Mean (n = 782)</th>
<th>Fall 2009 Honors Mean (n = 52)</th>
<th>Fall 2010 Mean (n = 1421)</th>
<th>Fall 2010 Honors Mean (n = 106)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increase your knowledge of contemporary issues</td>
<td>4.105</td>
<td>4.641</td>
<td>3.701</td>
<td>4.265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enhance your awareness of social, economic and cultural diversity</td>
<td>4.052</td>
<td>4.482</td>
<td>3.901</td>
<td>4.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involve you in meaningful interactions with fellow students and faculty</td>
<td>3.915</td>
<td>4.435</td>
<td>3.623</td>
<td>3.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engage you outside the classroom</td>
<td>3.704</td>
<td>4.612</td>
<td>3.615</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involve you in a campus or community service activity</td>
<td>3.777</td>
<td>4.487</td>
<td>3.579</td>
<td>4.191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cause you to consider how you might use your talents to serve others</td>
<td>3.962</td>
<td>4.512</td>
<td>3.713</td>
<td>4.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Raise the level of academic challenge in this course</td>
<td>3.328</td>
<td>3.897</td>
<td>3.328</td>
<td>3.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase the level of active and collaborative learning in this course</td>
<td>3.615</td>
<td>4.282</td>
<td>3.588</td>
<td>3.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase student/faculty interactions</td>
<td>3.676</td>
<td>4.641</td>
<td>3.594</td>
<td>3.598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide enriching educational experiences</td>
<td>3.764</td>
<td>4.641</td>
<td>4.112</td>
<td>4.727</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common read students wrote evaluative reaction papers based on their experiences with the texts and common read activities. These papers helped to identify what students saw as best approaches and program benefits. Among the most popular features were the Griffith lectures (featuring Farmer and Mortenson), service projects, and class discussions. Students cited “diversity awareness,” “self-improvement,” and “helping others” as the most common program benefits. Other emergent themes included “a sense of enlightenment,” “understanding the importance of education,” “a desire to make a difference,”
and “enhanced connection to the SDSU community.” Qualitative data were particularly compelling indicators of the program’s impacts.

Students perceived the common read as enhancing their engagement with fellow students in the campus community, as evidenced by these remarks:

This experience opened my eyes and I think opened me up to more things at State. I am more willing to get out of my comfort zone and expand through going to different campus activities.

At first I resented all the out of class activities, but now I get it. These were great opportunities I would not have taken advantage of if I wasn’t required to attend for Honors Orientation.

This [the common read] just made it [the course] better, creating an environment that everyone on campus is being a part of. This book is creating unity throughout campus. It’s fun to see Honors students in the lead of such a major campus initiative.

The texts and series of activities also had deeper impacts on honors students during the important transitions of their first year at college. In response to a prompt (“After reading the text and participating in the semester-long series of common read activities, submit an essay in which you summarize 1) what you learned; 2) which aspects of the book and experience had the greatest impact on you; and 3) what you will do as a result of your experience”), one undecided freshman wrote, “Never again will I judge another based on their culture or income level. I also hope to take time for form strong relationships with those around me”; a freshman majoring in mathematics wrote, “I now feel called to some sort of action. The common read has encouraged me to participate in service to my community. I can make a difference in the world around me”; another commented, “This experience made me want to be a better person”; and an honors student majoring in agricultural economics summed up his experience by writing, “As I go forward from this experience, I will continue to educate myself about the world and its cultures . . . thus eliminating ignorance and arrogance from my life.”

**SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS**

In its first two years, assessment results of the common read program, which was initiated and led by the SDSU Honors College, suggest that it has had a positive impact on students, faculty, the broader campus, and the community by engaging participants in a common intellectual experience and providing them with an array of compelling co-curricular learning opportunities. The effort shows promise and progress toward outcomes that include enhanced knowledge of contemporary issues, awareness of diversity, and raised levels of academic challenge and student engagement in the campus and community.

These results, along with the broad participation across campus and the quantity as well as quality of assessment data, have led SDSU to integrate the
common read as a foundational component of both its First Year Experience and its comprehensive model for Student Success. In addition, the university’s faculty-led Academic Senate and Academic Affairs Committee have worked to incorporate the common read into a freshman seminar requirement as part of SDSU’s new institution-wide general education core curriculum. These developments demonstrate the systemic institutional impacts of an honors college initiative and firmly establish honors at SDSU as “central rather than peripheral to the academic enterprise” (Carnicom). Best practices from SDSU’s common read have been shared through presentations at local faculty development conferences, state-wide college student success meetings, and Upper Midwest and National Collegiate Honors Council meetings.

At times, honors programs and colleges are criticized for being isolated and elitist or for offering little more than “perks” (Knudsen) for top students. By providing leadership through initiating, coordinating, and assessing an institution-wide common intellectual experience, the SDSU Honors College has provided much more than perks: it has created far-reaching benefits to student learning and success at SDSU, and it has offered a potential model for other institutions.

Thus, SDSU’s common read is consistent with what Carnicom describes as important reasons to value honors: “[Honors] fosters the best educational practices of our culture’s history, maintains a tradition of critical inquiry that transcends disciplinary boundaries, promotes creativity and prepares students to become learners, thinkers and leaders for the rest of their lives.” The comments of a freshman Honors common reader reflect these ideals:

The biggest thing I take away is a better idea of where I am in the world. The book, the events, the class . . . have all found a way to influence my idea of myself. I don’t honestly know what I’ll do because of my experiences. I do know, however, that these experiences will affect what I do, how I do it, and how I think about it. That’s the most I can ask of any experience. I think that’s the most anyone can ask of anything.

This student’s spirit of inquiry and analysis is what we hope for in honors students and, ideally, in all students. A common read program is one way to pursue this ideal.

REFERENCES


THE INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT OF HONORS


____________________________________

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Affirming Quality Teaching: A Valuable Role for Honors

KEVIN W. DEAN AND MICHAEL B. JENDZURSKI
WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

“I praise loudly, I blame softly.”
—Catherine the Great

Frequently university students as well as faculty and administrators need to be reminded of Catherine the Great’s advice: we are wise to affirm the good in others. “Knowing how powerful [celebration] is, it is shocking how overlooked it is in most areas of life, especially education” (Clifton 177). Blanchard adds that, while individuals far prefer receiving “one-minute praises over one-minute reprimands,” evaluation practices more frequently find individuals seeking to catch others doing something wrong rather than catching others doing something right (76–85). Although the culture of honors education traditionally promotes and recognizes excellence in student performance through multiple rituals such as postings on Dean’s Lists and induction into academic honor societies, we often neglect affirming quality teaching.

Considerable research has shown that affirmation of good work is essential to productivity. Hackman and Johnson claim that “compliments, celebrations, and other rewards play an important role in effective leadership,” helping create productive communities (106). Thus, withholding recognition of quality teaching is a missed opportunity, for well-placed praise produces positive outcomes and helps preclude the negativity that flows from low morale. Nuhfer suggests, for instance, that student affirmation of teaching heightens an educator’s “self-esteem and enthusiasm [which] are important traits for successful teaching” (21). Smith observes that harboring the attitude that individuals do not need affirmation because they are “only doing their job” or “that is what they are getting paid for” results in low morale and reduced performance level (57). Wheelan notes, “Positive feedback increases cohesion . . . and facilitates group development” (78). Finally, Gardner suggests that “nothing is more vital to the renewal of an organization than the arrangements by which able people are nurtured,” yet he bemoans the reality that organizations [i.e., universities] are more often preoccupied with “running a tight ship” than with developing and praising people (127).

At universities, faculty members often find praise hard to come by. True, classes conclude with an opportunity for student feedback, but these last-moment attempts to gain insightful reflections occur when students want to bolt
from the classroom as quickly as possible to meet more pressing deadlines. In a technological age, social media have made attempts to address the lack of evaluative feedback available on good teaching by creating such websites as ratemyprofessor.com (RMP). However, these websites have their detractors. Most notably, critics of the widely accessed RMP charge that students equate “good teachers” with “easy graders.” Edward Nuhfer argues, “Pseudo-evaluation damages the credibility of legitimate evaluation and victimizes individuals by irresponsibly publishing comments about them derived from anonymous sources. This is voyeurism passed off as ‘evaluation’ and examples. Neither <http://www.pickaprof.com> nor <http://ratemyprofessors.com/index.jsp> provides faculty evaluation through criteria that might be valuable to a student who seeks a professor conducive to their learning, thinking, or intellectual growth” (2).

Further research cautions that exclusive rewards produce negative effects, including ruptured relationships because only a few individuals are recognized (Cohn). Indeed, we experienced some of this backlash in the early years of our honors college as we attempted to host a Teacher of the Year award. This award proved problematic on a number of fronts. First, the recognition typically went to a faculty member teaching within the honors college. While recognizing those colleagues who give their time and talents to honors education is praiseworthy, the award rang hollow on the larger campus as perceptions of inbred favoritism abounded. When an effort to diversify the pool of potential candidates arose, however, a second challenge surfaced: because of the wide diversity of academic majors, no single faculty member received more than a few nominations. Thus, little justification existed for selecting just one recipient.

Despite these initial challenges, we continued to believe that affirming quality teaching was a valuable role that honors should claim within the campus community. Because of its recognized commitment to academic excellence, honors is well-poised to be a visible campus advocate for identifying, modeling, and celebrating outstanding teaching practices. What we needed was a model of celebrating teaching excellence that provides specific definitions of “excellence” and recognizes a wide range of individuals.

West Chester University can now present a model of honors-college-sponsored professor affirmation that has been refined and in place for nearly two decades.

MODEL OF TEACHER AFFIRMATION

Ten weeks into the fall and spring semesters, students enrolled in honors seminars (an average of 180 per term) are given the opportunity to recognize an outstanding professor. Students are provided a nomination form and asked to identify a faculty member who, they believe, exhibits outstanding qualities as a teacher and also to indicate the specific pedagogical practices the individual uses that merit commendation (see Appendix A for sample nomination form). Specificity is a key element in our approach. Smith cautions that the
ambiguity in phrases like “you did well, I am proud of you, and thanks a lot,” while well-meaning, fall short of establishing benchmarks or models of excellence (55–57). The individuals being commended benefit from knowing precisely what they did well; such information becomes both a touchstone for “best practices” worth repeating and quality benchmarks for others to use as a model. All nominations are anonymous, thus limiting concerns over student patronage toward faculty.

The nominations, distributed and collected by members of the Honors Student Association’s Awards and Recognition Committee (HSA-ARC), are collated in a standard letter (see Appendix B for sample text of award letter). Nominees receive the letter through campus mail the week prior to final exams under the signatures of the Director of the Honors College and the President of the Honors Student Association. Additional copies of each letter are sent to the nominee’s department chair and college dean.

In fall 2010, the HSA-ARC made strides toward a more public and accessible domain for recognition by posting each nominee’s name, department, and accolades on the honors college’s website. Nominees appear alphabetically under the listings of the departments within each college unit. These postings, updated each semester by members of the HSA-ARC, now serve as an online database for student-reported best teaching practices, which has become a beneficial resource for students when selecting courses and compatible professors for greater academic success.

In April of each year, our honors college hosts an Outstanding Faculty Reception in one of the most historical and beautifully furnished venues on campus. Nominated faculty from both fall and spring semesters and all the honors students are invited to attend this open-house event. Approximately three weeks prior to the event, invitations are generated for nominees. Members of the HSA-ARC and Executive Board personally deliver the invitations, along with a polished red apple, three weeks before the event. Generally, the delivery is made by a student who has taken the professor for class but has not submitted a formal nomination for them. This personal contact, along with the inclusion of an “apple for the teacher,” enhances the power of affirmation and has yet to fail in receiving a warm response.

On the day of the reception, programs on parchment paper list the name and department of each year’s nominees; name tags and light refreshments make mingling more comfortable and personable; and brief remarks of welcome and appreciation are made by the Director of the Honors College, the President of the Honors Student Association, and a senior member of the university administration. The faculty members being celebrated can sign a registration sheet and provide personal contact details to learn more about opportunities in and affiliation with the honors college.
RESULTS

The benefits of recognizing outstanding teaching have included the enhanced self-esteem of the honored faculty; documentation of teaching effectiveness; acknowledgment of honors by the campus-wide community as advocates for quality teaching; empowerment of honors students; and effective role-modeling for all students seeking an enhanced educational experience.

Over the years our office has received countless communications from appreciative faculty members such as “You made my day”; “I never expected this, thanks so much for caring”; and “We so often hear grumbles and complaints, having such specific feedback about what is working well is a gift.” These comments generally continue by praising both honors students and the honors college. “While I am not sure who may have written these kind words about my teaching,” shared one nominee, “I know how much I have enjoyed working with honors students. Keep them coming my way!” Others more directly extend their appreciation to the honors college for supporting the recognition of teaching effectiveness, “Beyond the obligatory end-of-term fill-in-the-bubble-computer sheets, I do not often get feedback about my teaching. Thanks for promoting teaching and providing such useful and specific feedback.” These snapshot comments reinforce the work of Blanchard (75–85), Clifton (177–193), Hackman (103), Kouzes (114–127), Smith (55–59), and Wheelan (78), demonstrating that praise is a direct contributor to enhanced self-esteem and community building.

Beyond the “feel good” experience that faculty celebrations provide recipients, a more tangible positive outcome is the documented evidence of effective teaching. Most institutional administrators value student feedback. In fact, the Center for Educational Development and Assessment (CEDA), offering adjudication of faculty performance since 1988, claims that, “Student ratings of teaching serve as an important component of many faculty evaluation systems. Either by design or default, institutions often place great weight on student rating data in making decisions that impact faculty rewards, career progress, and professional growth.” While our model does not replace standardized evaluations, jointly approved by campus administrators and faculty governance entities, the honors college’s commendation letters for teaching often find their way into faculty tenure and promotion packets. Such letters provide unsolicited documentation heralding the professor’s pedagogical practices as experienced and expressed by their students.

The honors college enjoys a direct benefit from this project beyond enhanced public relations. Such celebration events increase the pool of proven professors with potential to teach in honors. In institutions like ours that have no designated honors faculty, the honors college director must recruit colleagues to teach honors seminars, which, while offering in-load credit, frequently represent new or additional preparation. We follow up our annual spring Outstanding Faculty Reception with notes of invitation for faculty to submit proposals to teach a special-topics seminar. Because of the affirmation
afforded by appreciative students, faculty members are predisposed to put forth the extra effort required to propose, produce, and present a seminar offering.

The practice of celebrating teaching excellence also garners campus-wide appreciation of honors education. Key administrators often express gratitude for our program. The chair of our chemistry department, for instance, remarked, “We tend to hear a lot from students about how hard our courses are. It was really great to see that we had more chemistry faculty identified by honors students for outstanding teaching this semester than any other department. I hope that news gets around.” College deans also routinely send notes of appreciation for the recognition that honors extends to their faculty.

A new campus initiative resulting from our celebration of teaching began this year with a partnership between the honors college and the university division of library services. In a joint promotion of teaching excellence and student reading, six of the outstanding faculty nominees were photographed holding a favorite book. Using a template program developed by the National Association of Libraries, the photos, enlarged to poster size, proclaim “READ” and include the professor’s name, department, and recognition as an outstanding teaching nominee by the honors college. The posters are prominently placed in the main floor of the library along with a display case of the selected books. The posters remain on display for the full spring term and then rotate with new additions in the following fall.

Beyond the value expressed by faculty and administrators, the teaching celebration program benefits students, both those formally affiliated with honors and those in the broader campus community. Honors students take their role of nominating faculty seriously. As one student noted, “So many students have strong opinions about poor teaching strategies and are able to complain and vent about professors they struggle with. Identifying the good work people do through their profession reflects an improved mindset and perspective. Good professors make a difference in our lives; it is our turn to help make a small difference in theirs.” As faculty teaching in honors have noted, the nomination process requires that students articulate specific pedagogical skills, thus enhancing their critical thinking. As a professor of education shared, “Any time we can get students, particularly those outside of education who may not be trained in such methodology, to reflect thoughtfully on what styles of learning work best for them, it is a win. Having students develop a language for extending praise towards a professor, through such affirmation as the teaching nominations, is truly a win/win situation.” Additionally, honors students value the impact they have in advocacy for quality educators. “I feel,” one student said, “that my comments in the letter sent out through the Honors College, helped [the professor] get the promotion that was certainly deserved.”

Finally, the largest cohort to benefit from the honors commitment to public recognition of quality instruction is the student body at large. The website posting of Outstanding Teaching Nominees offers students a model for assessing quality instruction. By affirming a range of teaching styles instead of inviting
students to comment on a professor’s personal appeal, students learn to appreciate various educational approaches as they contemplate those that have contributed most profoundly to their learning. By displaying only positive commentary, students receive, if only subliminally, the wisdom of Catherine the Great, that it is better to praise than blame. While still in its infancy, we hope to track the hits to our Outstanding Faculty website, gain feedback on its utility, and provide further opportunities for helping match students with educators who can best meet their needs.

By championing public recognition of quality teaching, honors provides an appropriate and valuable service to the campus community. Our largely student-directed and relatively low-cost program of identifying and recognizing outstanding teachers is a model that honors programs and colleges of any size could readily adopt. Moving beyond the usual emphasis of honoring only honors faculty, this approach lifts up excellent educators in and beyond the honors curriculum. Serving the inherent mission of honors, to promote academic excellence, celebration of the fine work of colleagues is one way the honors community can encourage teachers who motivate students to stretch beyond what they think they can achieve.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We offer special thanks to Richard Swain, Director of Library Services, for his visionary partnership in promoting both teaching excellence and student reading.

REFERENCES


The authors may be contacted at

Honors@wcupa.edu
APPENDIX A

SAMPLE NOMINATION FORM

HONORS COLLEGE
CORE CURRICULUM & SEMINAR PROGRAM

OUTSTANDING FACULTY NOMINATIONS

Fall 2011

Class Rank: FR SOPH JR SR Gender: Male Female

We continue to recognize excellence in teaching with our Outstanding Faculty Nominations.* Please identify and describe one professor you believe exhibits outstanding qualities as an educator.

1. Name of Professor and Department (please print clearly since many professors are new)

___________________________________________________________________

2. Clearly state WHY you think the professor deserves this recognition. Consider what specific pedagogical practices the individual uses that merit commendation. Use complete sentences and explain by examples why you advocate for this individual. (Write 4–5 sentences please!)

___________________________________________________________________

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The Outstanding Faculty Reception will be held on WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2012 from 3:00–5:00PM in the Philips Autograph Library.

Please mark your calendars so you will be able to attend!
APPENDIX B

SAMPLE AWARD LETTER

West Chester University Honors College

To be honorable is to serve

December 2, 2011

Dear Professor ________,

During priority scheduling this year, we asked honors students to identify and describe outstanding faculty they have met while at West Chester University. We are writing to let you know that your name appeared on our compiled list. Specifically, here is what students had to say:

Insert student comments

On behalf of the Honors College, we would like to thank you for the extra effort you gave our students through your teaching. We encourage you to visit the Honors College web site <http://www.wcupa.edu/Honors/outstanding.asp> where you will find your name listed with other colleagues recognized for quality teaching. All the best!

Sincerely,

Kevin W. Dean, PhD
Director, Honors College
Professor, Communication Studies

Michael B. Jendzurski
President, Honors Student Association

Cc: Department Chair
    College Dean
The Genesis of an Honors Faculty: Collective Reflections on a Process of Change

ROBERT W. GLOVER, CHARLIE SLAVIN, SARAH HARLAN-HAUGHEY, JORDAN P. LABOUFF, JUSTIN D. MARTIN, MIMI KILLINGER, AND MARK HAGGERTY

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

INTRODUCTION

In the early twentieth century, Woodrow Wilson introduced the concept of “preceptors” at Princeton University (Office of the Dean of the College). At the University of Maine a century later, we have adapted Wilson’s concept by hiring faculty members who lead small-group discussions in our interdisciplinary, two-year, four-course core Civilizations sequence, which is a requirement for all first- and second-year honors students. Like Wilson, we hope to “import into the great university the methods and personal contact between teacher and pupil which are characteristic of the small college, and so gain the advantages of both” (Leitch). During the 2010–2011 academic year, the University of Maine Honors College tripled its number of salaried preceptors, expanding from two to six. With that expansion came new challenges: an innovative, albeit periodically strained, collaboration with the UMaine College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and four of its departments; an experimental and precarious foray into non-tenure-track interdisciplinary academia with fresh consideration for undergraduate research; and an evolving sense of what it means to be honors faculty members—or, more broadly, academics—at a twenty-first-century university rife with change. Various perspectives illustrate the difficulties and possibilities endemic to this faculty formation and collectively belie the assumption that faculty members necessarily best cohere around a single discipline and familiar professional constructs. We suggest that a university today, as it has done in the past, can and should coalesce around and be invigorated by untried models and pioneering colleges whose faculty members are willing and eager to take risks.

Administrators and search committees at other institutions, as well as prospective honors faculty members, may be able to learn from our experience...
THE GENESIS OF AN HONORS FACULTY

at the University of Maine. To this end, we share multiple perspectives on our new preceptor positions by the dean of the UMaine Honors College (Charlie Slavin); two honors faculty members (Mark Haggerty & Mimi Killinger) who served on the search committees; and the four new hires (Rob Glover, Sarah Harlan-Haughey, Jordan LaBouff, and Justin Martin). Our seven personal narratives each engage thematically with several central issues: newness and institutional resistance, identity formation, interdisciplinarity, and faculty retention. We try to be as honest as possible as we present our individual assessments of the initiative so far. We believe that a discussion of such thorny issues as non-tenure-track appointments and the creation ex nihilo of a new kind of position will enable other institutions to make informed decisions as they consider implementing such a model.

COLLEGIAL SYNERGY

(CHARLIE SLAVIN, DEAN OF THE HONORS COLLEGE)

In the spring of 2010, our outgoing university president approached me with the possibility of providing funding for additional faculty lines in the honors college. He talked about wanting to support the growth and centrality of the honors college while also addressing the challenges faced by our college of liberal arts and sciences (CLAS) in the wake of years of across-the-board cuts that were particularly grave given the disproportionate role CLAS plays in providing service courses to the entire university. The president’s proposal resonated positively with me, but, given the fiscal situation of the university, I wanted to be sure such an initiative would have some traction.

After consulting with the provost and being assured that the president’s proposal was being seriously considered by the executive leadership, the dean of CLAS and I began to develop a proposal for a cohort of teacher-scholars. The concept that we envisioned immediately diverged from the purely teaching model that the president had publicly proposed to hire “lecturers to teach in college departments where there is student demand, and in the Honors College. . . Without the usual research expectations, we will expect these scholars to apply their demonstrated teaching skills . . .” (Kennedy). The CLAS dean, provost, and I all saw an opportunity to attract individuals who would not only excel as teachers but also engage undergraduates in research activities. At the same time, we realized that, in order to provide fresh and current research experiences for undergraduates, these new preceptors would need to establish research programs, albeit with an eye to connecting undergraduates to their research. The notion of “undergraduate engaged research” became the hallmark of the new positions.

Developing the proposal involved negotiations both between the CLAS dean and me about whether to split the positions fifty/fifty or in some other proportion; exactly what would we call them; and how we would determine which departments in CLAS received them. Further negotiations took place between the two of us and the provost about how many positions there would
be and what they would be paid. When the proverbial dust settled, we had four CLAS-Honors preceptors to be hired in 2010–11 for the following year. They would teach a 3-3 load, distributed equally between the honors college and their department in CLAS, and they would “develop and maintain a program of scholarship that engages undergraduate students.” Both the CLAS dean and I felt strongly that the CLAS-Honors preceptors should be hired at salaries equivalent to assistant professors in their departments and that there should be national searches for these new colleagues. Our goal was to create a new model, not a lesser model.

The question of tenure has been the most challenging issue we have confronted in this initiative. Those of us responsible for developing the model engaged in numerous discussions among ourselves and with others as we tried to come to a workable position. The first and perhaps overriding element concerned the tenure status of the new positions. The expectations and thus the evaluation criteria for these preceptors would not be the same as for tenure-stream members in their departments. Additionally, we had no promotion/tenure criteria for faculty in the honors college, where half of their efforts would be directed. Having given the issue serious consideration, and admitting that the question was worthy of future reflection, we decided, in the present climate and given the time-frame in which we were working, to support the establishment of the CLAS-Honors preceptors as non-tenure-stream faculty members.

Throughout the hiring process, including discussions about evaluation, rank, workload, startups, and space, the CLAS dean and I had a mutual understanding about the fundamental nature of these new positions, and we had the support of the provost. This constellation of administrative collaborations was crucial for the success of our endeavor. In order to determine the CLAS “homes” for the four preceptors, the CLAS dean constructed a request for proposals (RFP) to go out to all the departments and programs in his college. The criteria for selection were (1) potential for undergraduate-involved research or creative activity and how the unit would support the new faculty member’s scholarly program; (2) history of and potential for collaboration with the honors college; (3) demand for undergraduate instruction in the unit and current ability to meet the demand; and (4) integration of a preceptor into the mission of the unit. Before the proposals were due, the CLAS dean and I held two open forums for faculty members in CLAS to discuss the positions and the RFP. People were obviously interested, and we received at least one proposal from nearly every CLAS unit. The CLAS dean, the associate provost/dean of undergraduate education, and I read and ranked the proposals. We met, chose our top four (English, journalism, political science, and psychology), and then sent them to the provost, who confirmed our recommendations. By the summer of 2012, we were ready to begin the hiring process for four new CLAS-Honors preceptors.

At the start of the fall 2010 semester, individual search committees were formed for the positions; each included two members of the CLAS department,
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two honors faculty members (including one of the two current honors preceptors, Mimi Killinger and Mark Haggerty), and one faculty member from the UMaine College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture (NSFA). The NSFA faculty members were invited because of their commitment to undergraduate research and their familiarity with the honors college. The next step was finding candidates.

COLLIDING COLLEGIAL WORLDS
(MIMI KILLINGER, REZENDES PRECEPTOR FOR THE ARTS)

As the UMaine Honors College underwent a collegial sea change in the spring of 2011, my position as one of the two veteran honors preceptors simultaneously transformed—or more accurately “formed”—as did my professional identity as an honors faculty mentor.

The other veteran honors faculty member, Mark Haggerty, and I were each assigned to two search committees in areas bearing some resemblance to our research disciplines. I hold a PhD in twentieth-century U.S. history, but at one time I was an English major, and I enthusiastically accepted my appointment to the Honors-English search, looking forward to a sentimental journey through English department halls.

Though a committee member from the department was to chair each search committee, with administrative support likewise coming from the department, my contrite dean surprised me with an email plea that I chair the Honors-English committee as their faculty had—for a variety of valid reasons—demurred. Thus began a six-month process of awakening for all of us, during which I would fume intermittently about misperceptions regarding honors and honors teaching on the part of my English colleagues while harboring my own lingering insecurities about the academic validity of my interdisciplinary work.

Unlike the new CLAS-Honors preceptorships, my position was created specifically for me, and in many ways by me, as a partner accommodation after several years of adjunct teaching. Charlie sat down with me and my other full-time colleague, Mark, who was likewise a partner accommodation, and designed our positions with our particular strengths in mind. We did not have to formally interview, nor apply through an external search, nor articulate our qualifications, all of which might actually have been a healthy exercise for me as I would have been compelled to verbalize and then internalize why I chose honors rather than a disciplinary career path.

As chair of the Honors-English search committee, I found myself awkwardly the only untenured faculty member at the table; the other faculty member representing honors on the committee was a full professor in sociology who teaches part-time in the honors college. One of the English faculty members was a long-time union man irked by the lecturer rank of these prospective CLAS-Honors positions; the other was a disciplinary purist who was wholly skeptical about the potential success of our search, suggesting that the quirky
nature of the position (half-time and honors-ish) meant we would have few competitive applicants and no takers.

Drafting the job description was a painstaking group process of condensing the verbose CLAS-Honors advertisement into three lines to make it MLA-compatible. Each iteration became more awkward than the next as we tried in three lines to describe a position like no other. Despite my ability to turn a phrase, I assumed an obsequious posture, scribing various suggestions and compiling numerous obscure and awkward versions. Finally, I chimed in, as did our outside member, a marine scientist, proving that we were all, in fact, language people able to write and agree on three coherent sentences. With lingering doubts, we placed our ad in sync with the real-seeming MLA job listings and waited . . . about forty-eight hours, at which time applications began pouring in at an unmanageable rate. The English department administrative support—again, for a variety of valid reasons—then bowed out, which meant that our honors college, embroiled in three other simultaneous searches, would have to stretch its resources even further. However, at this point I began to believe in the authenticity of a CLAS-Honors joint position in English and in my rightful place at the table.

In honors fashion, administrative support duties within our college were quickly spread around based on skill sets. Our dean proved the most adept at speedily creating electronic application folders, 150 in all; two honors associates, recent honors graduates, demonstrated a savoir-faire for managing Excel files; and our multi-talented administrative assistant calmly fielded all other requests. English faculty colleagues came to appreciate our unorthodox yet efficient honors ways as the process moved rapidly along. Moreover, important inter-collegial and interdisciplinary bridges began to form as the position increasingly proved intellectually viable and the applicants exceptional and exciting. Our seemingly odd application criteria—that applicants demonstrate disciplinary excellence, be inclined towards honors teaching, and be committed to undergraduate research—attracted innovative, creative scholars and proved highly useful measures for paring down our robust applicant pool to nine telephone interviewees and then three campus visitors.

A non-committee English colleague who periodically teaches in honors accepted my invitation to meet the visiting candidates. He wrote a poem in response to one candidate’s presentation on the seventh-century, Old English “Caedmon’s Hymn.” Caedmon was said to have been an illiterate cowherd, suddenly compelled to compose a song of praise. My colleague described Caedmon’s listeners’ surprise:

And the monks, hearing his song next morning,
dumbstruck at the wonder of such words, made
flesh, on the tongue of this herdsman in their midst.

—Jim Bishop, 2011
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We honors folks—perhaps me, in particular—in some ways had our Caedmon’s moment through this process, gaining a sense of professional authenticity, assuming our well-deserved place at the interdisciplinary table. When our Honors-English search committee unanimously decided on our top candidate for the position, who accepted it as did each of the first-choice candidates in the other three searches, the union fellow asked if he could walk with me to take our recommendation to Charlie. So we made the now-familiar trek across campus together, colleagues in the truest sense, pleased with our collective work well done and deeply reflective upon the mutual benefits embedded in these CLAS-Honors positions.

OBSTACLES AND CONSENSUS
(MARK HAGGERTY, REZENDES PRECEPTOR FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT)

Defining and generating internal and external legitimacy for the positions shared between departments in CLAS and the honors college required patience and work. Internally, many of the faculty members in the departments that received these positions had limited knowledge of what occurs in the honors college and what impact our honors duties would have on the search for a colleague. Those of us in honors mistakenly assumed that our colleagues at the university understood our interdisciplinary curriculum and realized that we valued and celebrated students and faculty members willing to take intellectual risks by frequently working outside their disciplines.

Externally, many of the candidates for these positions did not understand the interdisciplinary nature of the position and its unique research component. Since honors faculty members are immersed in this model, we believed that phrases in the position announcement like “undergraduate teaching . . . in interdisciplinary Honors core courses” and “responsibilities [that] include preceptorials in the first- and second-year core Honors sequence” made it clear that our style of honors education was not a disciplinary one and that CLAS-Honors preceptors were not going to be teaching honors versions of disciplinary courses.

The search committee members appointed by the departments frequently viewed the joint nature of these positions as a negative, something to be overcome by a candidate who viewed academia from a discipline-specific perspective. As these positions were conceived, successful candidates would have strong credentials within their field of expertise and the ability and/or experience to engage with ideas and content areas that are unfamiliar. The extensive nature of the honors college curriculum requires its faculty members to engage with material external to their expertise.

As might be expected, the candidates’ standing in their own discipline was discernable through the documentation they provided. More difficult to assess was their eagerness and ability to conduct interdisciplinary teaching in honors as well as undergraduate-engaged research and scholarship. Thus, some of the search committees used an additional instrument to identify those candidates...
who understood and would embrace the joint nature of these appointments. A writing prompt was designed to elicit the candidate’s interest in our specific version of an honors curriculum: multi-faculty member, interdisciplinary, temporally expansive, lecture/discussion courses populated with students from across the university. A second prompt asked the candidates to discuss their specific prior experience in undergraduate-engaged research or their interest in pursuing it.

The applicants sorted themselves by their ability and the attention they paid to the unique nature of these positions. Some candidates who would have been excellent candidates for positions solely within the discipline did not exhibit the requisite range and interest in an interdisciplinary liberal curriculum. The initial misperceptions on the part of the departments regarding the honors mission and the departments’ fear of an inferior candidate pool vanished as we negotiated the short list of candidates. Our discussions allowed the members of the search committees to prioritize their own interests while developing an appreciation of the priorities of their partners in these joint positions. This process generated genuine buy-in by both groups. Most importantly, the honors college and department representatives were able to generate a cohesive understanding of and belief in the position.

The candidates’ campus visits were conducted in a somewhat bifurcated manner. Although search committee members attended all candidate presentations, the candidates typically spent one day with the CLAS department and the other with the honors college. The candidates endured a somewhat stressful and exhausting schedule of giving scholarly presentations and teaching classes. The honors college included students, adjunct faculty, regular faculty teaching part-time in honors, and full-time honors faculty in the process; all were able to attend meals and an open forum with the candidate. Perhaps most in keeping with the special nature of these positions, each candidate was asked to choose a text from the forty or so in the honors Civilizations curriculum and lead a “mock preceptorial,” populated by current honors students and open to observation by anyone interested in the search. While the mock preceptorial setting was a bit awkward (the typical relationship between students and preceptor had not been formed, and the students had not read the texts within the past week), the candidates’ ability to focus on the students and to generate dialogue provided relevant insights into their teaching philosophy and style. Both students and faculty members provided feedback about these interactions to the committee.

Somewhat surprisingly, the members of each search committee came to a consensus about top candidates, who had demonstrated the ability to perform successfully in both their CLAS department and in the honors college. The committees formed an understanding of the positions and together searched for those candidates who would be successful in the joint and complex nature of these positions as teachers and scholars. The committees were ultimately able to create a unified view of the positions.
After the four hires were made, joint “conference committees” were formed, composed of two members representing the honors college and two from the CLAS department. The task of these committees, which in all cases differed in membership from the corresponding search committees, was to construct evaluation criteria for the CLAS-Honors preceptors, resulting in a new round of negotiations and sense-making. These conversations frequently focused on the research component as stated in the job description. CLAS department committee members were cautious about the focus on undergraduate-engaged research and the negative impact they thought that it could have on the disciplinary success of newly appointed faculty members. Compromise was reached by acknowledging that “evidence of scholarship produced independent of students will also be considered” in the annual review and reappointment evaluation criteria approved for each of the positions.

A remaining challenge is how the honors college will integrate such a large new faculty cohort. The existing institutional arrangements in honors are not representative of a typical department with long-standing committee structures that support evaluation, renewal, and leave. Until recently, faculty members with departmental appointments, mostly in CLAS, and adjunct faculty did all the teaching in the honors college. The community of faculty within honors is relatively loosely tied, having no shared office spaces or department meetings, so it is difficult to determine common visions. Any shared decision-making between faculty members with honors appointments and those who teach in honors does not have a defined structure. While incorporating a bright and energetic new group of faculty members is an exciting prospect, the size of this group and its recent introduction to the interdisciplinary nature of the honors college clearly indicates a need to mature thoughtfully as a college.

THE APPLICANT:
NAVIGATING AN UNTRODDEN PATH
(ROBERT W. GLOVER, CLAS-HONORS PRECEPTOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE)

In the 2010–2011 academic year, I was working as a visiting assistant professor at James Madison University in an interdisciplinary justice studies program. I had completed my PhD in political science just prior to arriving there. While it was gratifying to have gotten a job in such a difficult market, the one-year appointment also meant that I was immediately on the job market again. Two consecutive years of job-hunting left me perpetually busy and anxiety-ridden, but they gave me a rich pool of job market experiences upon which to draw and a baseline with which to compare the application, interview, and hiring processes for my unique joint position in the honors college and the political science department.

I initially encountered the position posting through the American Political Science Association (APSA) job posting website, E-Jobs. A number of assets
stood out about this position and impelled me to apply: the combination of honors and teaching within one’s home department; the focus on collaborative research with undergraduates; research and teaching opportunities that emphasized personal growth and intellectual risks; and the highly interdisciplinary nature of the honors college. I remember thinking that this demanding set of expectations would require someone with a fairly eclectic set of skills in research, teaching, and negotiating the multiple layers of a large university—expectations that struck me as fascinating and potentially rewarding challenges (see Appendix for full job ads).

I also had some concerns on my end regarding this position. First was the “second-class citizen” status implied by the joint nature of the appointment. In discussing the position with colleagues and my former graduate advisors, I wondered how a faculty member with split responsibilities and a split salary line would be received in the two units, political science and honors. Others within my discipline shared such concerns and looked askance at this unconventional posting. The job market in the information age provides numerous outlets for candidates to share information, gossip, and abuse, i.e., superfluous attacks on fellow applicants. My graduate school friends and I lovingly dubbed the most prominent of these forums “The Cesspool.” On one such blog, conversation turned to the joint position at UMaine. I produce, for posterity, a post made on the blog Political Theory Rumor Mill in reference to the very position that I now hold:

Has anyone else actually read the maine ad? i’m surprised they don’t ask you to scrape the ice off the department chair’s windshield twice daily, too. all this, PLUS living in an ice cave? sweet

Clearly, this person saw in the ad an unrealistic set of expectations, exploitation in its purest form, an unsurprising response given that we have a tendency to react with skepticism and fear to the unfamiliar. Furthermore, in an era of shrinking state higher education budgets and the mantra of “do more with less,” a skeptical disposition might be healthy. Thus far, however, my experience has not been one of marginalization or exploitation, perhaps because the political science department had already developed objectives that went beyond teaching assignments; they articulated ways I could become a valuable member of the department by undertaking innovations in the existing curriculum.

My second concern was the “two masters problem.” In researching the position, I worried that I might not be received as a full colleague in political science with an equal voice in departmental governance. Another worry was how the dual nature of my appointment would affect reappointment and evaluation decisions. Promotion, tenure, and reappointment decisions can be tricky in joint appointments, which often entail a joint committee to evaluate the performance of the candidate. Members of two different institutional units can differ wildly about what constitutes high-quality research, teaching evaluations, and appropriate service contributions. In an extensive recent study of joint
appointments, Wallace notes a number of concerns: evaluation criteria, voting rights, dilution of autonomy within one’s host department, and an increased workload (2). Many universities have established best practices as well as cautionary guidelines relating to the problematic dimensions of such appointments (University of Missouri System).

Clear, jointly-devised performance criteria for joint appointments need to be articulated prior to the hire; vague guidelines about an “active research agenda” or “quality teaching” might suffice for other positions but not for these. It is too early to know whether I will encounter any communication-related “bumps” further down the road of reappointment, but the hiring committee’s thoughtful articulation of such expectations prior to my on-campus interview makes it less likely that internal disputes will arise.

Concerns nevertheless remain with regard to physical space and a presence in both honors and political science. At present, I have an office within my home department but a limited physical presence in the honors college, an arrangement that at times makes me feel more integrated into the former than the latter. However, initial plans have been made to construct an interactive, open-format space to be shared by the existing and incoming honors faculty members. We are unanimously excited at the prospect of such a space and see it as an integral dimension of our acclimation to the culture of honors and movement, in the words of my colleague, from an incoming “cohort” toward a cohesive and unified “faculty.”

My third concern related to rank. In political science, we have a more or less standardized system of rank: adjunct, lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor. As a CLAS-Honors preceptor, I am classified as a lecturer, but I lacked any previous frame of reference for such a position and worried about having a yearly reappointment not on a tenure track. I was not sure what level of job security the position would provide, how it would be understood by members of my discipline, whether it would include union protections, and whether it would be comparable in pay and benefits to an incoming tenure-stream assistant professor. Academic appointments absent traditional tenure protections are increasingly the norm in higher education. A recent Department of Education report suggested that, while 57% of instructors were tenured or tenure-track in 1975, today that number has fallen below 30% (Wilson A1). In such an environment, applicants understandably remain uncertain whether non-tenured options can provide the benefits of economic well-being and autonomy as an educator and researcher.

One final concern that remains is whether the position of preceptor/lecturer will affect my success in seeking extramural funding and grants. My other concerns, however, have diminished since I arrived on campus. As new hires, we are part of the same collective bargaining agreement that protects all other faculty members. Our positions, after a certain period, will be secured by a component of the collective bargaining agreement called “just cause protection,” which grants us nearly all of the same protections as tenure. In addition,
our positions are a source of pride for the honors college, our host departments, and the University of Maine as a whole. In the end, even though tenure-track offers remained a possibility for me, I committed to Maine because I was satisfied that this position was a better option for me professionally and personally.

Though the application and interview process was a bit daunting at first, it turned out to be relatively pain-free. In general, my strategy was to focus on the broad themes of my expertise, research, and teaching interests, whether interacting within my discipline or not. Having been in the honors college for a number of months now, I recognize that scholars frequently step outside of their disciplinary comfort zones to engage texts and subject matter unfamiliar to them. Engaging with job candidates outside of their areas of expertise is not a chore for departmental faculty members, and interdisciplinary socialization and engagement have been major benefits of my joint appointment.

THE TEACHER/SCHOLAR: UNDERGRADUATE-DIRECTED RESEARCH (JORDAN LABOUFF, CLAS-HONORS PRECEPTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY)

Examining the job market as I approached the end of my graduate career was disheartening. Advertisements for positions almost all encouraged scholars to select one of two paths—either research or teaching—a situation at odds with the best of my graduate school experiences. In the 2007–2010 academic years I completed my graduate training in experimental social psychology while simultaneously serving as a faculty member in the Baylor Interdisciplinary Core, an honors program devoted to undergraduate liberal arts education and undergraduate-focused interdisciplinary research. Although balancing the demands of disciplinary research and interdisciplinary undergraduate instruction was frequently problematic, I witnessed the synergy between honors teaching and undergraduate-focused research.

Conversation about balancing the demands of research and teaching has increasingly supported the premise that tradeoffs between the two are zero-sum (Fox). Deep involvement in the classroom is often seen as a direct threat to research success, particularly when defined by publications (Trice). Scholars are sometimes encouraged, explicitly or implicitly, to limit classroom involvement in order to free up the considerable time that successful research requires. In the context of this conversation, the advertisement for the University of Maine preceptorship in psychology was unexpected, challenging the notion that excellence in research and teaching are incompatible. Given the core criterion of engaging undergraduates in collaborative research, this teacher/scholar position clearly focused on undergraduate scholarship in both the classroom and the laboratory.

This model was attractive for several reasons. Disciplinary research can be insular in its methods and scope while these joint appointments encouraged scholars to encounter fresh problems and adapt methods and lines of inquiry to
student initiatives. Further, this moved in the promising direction of research opportunities that arise along disciplinary boundaries (Sung et al.). Relationships that cross the classroom and laboratory can help prepare both established scholars and students to capitalize on serendipitous findings in research. Student-driven projects can also be less dictated by rigid programmatic methods and thus more likely to uncover new and productive avenues of advanced research. Finally, this type of research, which promotes collaborative relationships within and across colleges, helps to establish a sense of community among faculty members.

The primary challenge of such relationships and projects, however, is that undergraduate projects are a flash in the pan compared to the relatively slow burn of a faculty member’s or graduate student’s line of research. Even if undergraduates are connected with a faculty research mentor early in their academic careers, by the time they are acclimated to research methods in their discipline and advanced enough to develop an independent project, they frequently have only three semesters in which to take that project from start to finish. In order for the training of undergraduates to be maximally effective and productive on that timescale, honors and disciplinary faculty members must communicate and cooperate with one another. The interdisciplinary and cross-college conversations and collaborations that are required to create joint appointments may generate adaptability and relationships between faculty members that encourage sharing resources in a way that ultimately benefits the students. Since the application and interview process for the CLAS-Honors preceptorships brought together faculty members from several departments, these types of collaborative conversations took place before the interview process even began.

As my discussions with the University of Maine proceeded, it was clear that this position offered more than nominal support of integrating teaching and scholarship through undergraduate-focused research programs. In contrast to several teaching-focused, non-tenure-track positions advertised elsewhere, the preceptor position provided start-up funds for undergraduate-focused research programs, institutional support for faculty and student travel to present their research, and access to competitive faculty fellowships and sabbatical programs.

A teacher/scholar position like mine seems uniquely poised to support the type of flexibility necessary for successful undergraduate-focused research programs. Although my time with Plato’s Republic and honors freshmen may reduce the amount of time I can spend on research projects in social psychology, it generates relationships with undergraduates and faculty members who will go on to work with me as research collaborators. It also generates new ideas and conversations that can improve both the quality of my research and the quality of my discourse about that research. This type of joint position might be a way for universities to bridge the perceived gap between successful research and teaching.
INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND THE WRITER’S LIFE
(JUSTIN D. MARTIN, CLAS-HONORS PRECEPTOR OF JOURNALISM)

The best journalists and writers I know have encyclopedic understandings of history, and they constantly devour quality writing from diverse fields. Wordsmiths as well as news writers need expansive intellectual engagement. Before coming to the University of Maine, I taught at the American University in Cairo, a diverse campus in a global city, but location alone does not create interdisciplinary thinking or quality writing.

Diverse readings in, for instance, The New Yorker, Reader’s Digest, the classics, and contemporary best-sellers are advisable not only for Jeopardy! aspirants, as honors program administrators should keep in mind when they promote their positions to writers from all fields. The prospect of improving the octane of my own writing by being reintroduced to Rousseau, Locke, Shakespeare, and entirely new texts is one of the primary reasons I accepted my current position, where I am reading texts that are at once wholly unrelated, yet entirely related, to journalism. A colleague of award-winning news reporter Todd C. Frankel described him as an outstanding writer because he “had an appreciation of good writers and he studied good writing. He often parked himself at one of the computers in the library and printed out stories from Nexis. He may have printed out every Rick Bragg story he could find” (3). In a matter of days after my first honors semester commenced, I was referencing in my own writing some of the classical political treatises I was covering with my students.

One of the reasons I took this joint CLAS-Honors position was the flexibility it allowed me in choosing my research and writing topics. Many tenure-line positions in journalism require professors to focus mainly on peer-reviewed scholarship in juried journals to the exclusion of actual journalism. In journalism in particular—a field that is changing faster than we can chronicle it—professors should not distance themselves from the actual practice of writing and reporting news, whether in mainstream news organizations or trade publications. When I interviewed for the preceptorship, one of the first questions I asked was whether the media criticism I write for Columbia Journalism Review would be appreciated and encouraged. Not only would it be appreciated, I was told, but it would also score marks in a retention and promotion calculus. Part of the writer’s life is having substantial license to choose one’s own research topics, and I wanted to retain this autonomy. Too many journalism professors in research-intensive programs are discouraged from doing the kind of writing with which our students identify the most.

Honors administrators who adopt and promote joint positions should openly emphasize how their curricula enrich the writer’s life, and not just journalists and English professors are interested in cultivating more marketable writing; even mathematics professors must write well in order to publish in juried journals. Consuming knowledge from diverse fields leads academics not only to better writing but to more diverse and better grant applications, better
recommendation letters, and increased potential to produce pioneering work in their fields.

Innovation is almost always combinatorial in nature. Gutenberg invented a printing device that changed the world because he had worked as a wine vintner and knew the mechanics of grape presses. Benjamin Franklin was a renaissance man with deep knowledge in diverse disciplines. Historical precedents for interdisciplinarity in generating new knowledge should be well understood, but the modern intelligentsia is only starting to grasp its value, as argued in Steven Johnson’s book Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation.

Clear writing stems from two activities: frequently practicing (and revising) compositions and reading the best compositions of others. Academics are brilliant at being insular; plenty of chemistry, French, and physics professors spend little time reading high-quality English composition even if they would like to. The benefits of expansive and varied reading lists should and do make positions in interdisciplinary honors programs attractive to academics.

A new honors colleague of mine recently told me that the “honors life is great for those of us academics with ADD.” Her point was that honors professors, at least in the University of Maine’s program, read Silent Spring one day and What is the What? the next. This intellectual variety leads to deeper and better writing, combinatorial knowledge that produces greater innovation, and potentially more marketable grant proposals. Foundations, government agencies, and university administrations are all throwing money at grant applications that promote and demonstrate interdisciplinarity for these very reasons, but interdisciplinary work is difficult in academics’ frenetic lives, and the phenomenon is not nurtured as a matter of course in primordial academic departments. Interdisciplinarity is a deliberate act that academic programs like the UMaine Honors College need to instigate.

FROM COHORT TO FACULTY
(SARAH HARLAN-HAUGHEY, CLAS-HONORS PRECEPTOR OF ENGLISH)

Coming out of a decidedly interdisciplinary graduate program in medieval studies at Cornell, I have seen a diverse faculty come together under a common pedagogical and programmatic banner, so I know it can be done gracefully and collegially. I know that if professors of linguistics, anthropology, musicology, art history, English, classics, foreign languages and literatures, and political science can put aside their departmental affiliations and come together to create a well-respected interdisciplinary medieval studies degree for undergraduate and graduate students, we can figure out how to work together in our shared commitment to the honors college.

At some point in this process, we all stopped being merely successful applicants and started to envision our futures here at the university, both
collectively and as individuals. Thus, as I begin my new job here at the University of Maine, I find myself wondering what it means for us to be a cohort. As we went through a unique hiring process, we were all reassured that starting together as a group of four, a cohort, would be invaluable for us as we navigated a sea of newness. Implicit in this comforting thought was the uncomfortable reality that we will fall if we do not stand united. The problem then is how we move from the nebulous and at times juvenilizing status of “cohort” to “honors faculty”; how we make a faculty out of people who by definition are wearing many different hats; and, in the process of strengthening our own positions, how we create an innovative and dynamic learning environment for undergraduates.

All of us are trained in specific disciplines and lodged in different departments. We may appreciate and admire one another, but we may also have little in common intellectually. One could argue that we will come together as colleagues under the common banner of the honors college curriculum, but the historical structure of the honors college echoes that of many other institutions; the combination of full-time faculty members, who teach honors on-load because they want to, with part-time, overload, and adjunct instructors as well as administrators does not necessarily lend itself to the creation of a cohesive set of colleagues with a shared sense of mission and purpose.

The answer may be hidden in our job descriptions. We are charged with fostering interdisciplinary undergraduate research, and, if we think through what this means, perhaps we can come up with a unique solution that not only meets our evaluation criteria but also makes us into a faculty who interact with one another in useful, productive ways while strengthening the honors college. As I think through this question, several prerequisites for success come to mind. First is space; we need to have a shared place where we see each other daily, thus coming to see each other as colleagues. We might also establish a weekly or bi-monthly gathering, perhaps in the form of a lecture series or a forum for discussion of issues and questions related to teaching honors. Above all, we need to develop a system that generates, sustains, and rewards interdisciplinary undergraduate research in order to bring the honors faculty together in a meaningful way. In short, our search for common ground must move beyond the procedural and pragmatic logistics of organizing space, constructing committees, and establishing best practices for internal governance; it must move beyond mere functionality to the systematic level at which common intellectual ground is both created and sustained.

One such system could be a thematically oriented interdisciplinary research group, conducting collaborative projects under the preceptors’ joint supervision. Given a biannual or annual theme—an intentionally general topic such as “water” or “sound”—students would be encouraged to submit project proposals. The broadness of the topic might elicit participation from students in all fields of study. Once interdisciplinary research groups had been formed and students with relatively similar interests grouped together, we would design
evaluative structures that encourage students to share ideas and, in an interdisciplinary context, take ownership of their own research. In a regularly scheduled time, these groups would come together to present ongoing research and thus gain insight from seemingly separate projects.

Playing a coherent role in our college’s mission involves more than our own research or even our individual agendas as teachers. A crucial part of what will make us a team is sharing thematic research in an open yet structured forum. By creating a rigorous interdisciplinary system that yields well-trained, ethically centered and intellectually nimble graduates, we can grow together as a cohesive faculty. Like the other members of my cohort, I have heard encouraging comments from friends and colleagues about our unique positions, and I have heard an equal number of negative predictions, one of which is meant to sound comforting: “Once the honeymoon is over and people have forgotten about this ‘new model,’ you will settle into your own departments and become absorbed into a normal tenure track.” Although I am interested in pushing this new teacher/scholar model toward tenure, I take this kind of comment as a challenge to do with our own academic lives exactly what we expect our students to do. We must take ownership of our own academic careers as well as that of our college and, in an imperfect world, strive for something better, more holistic, a different model of successful academic life. I refuse to look at a great opportunity to make a real difference in an institution and instead see a crushing handicap. We may not seem to have much in common at first glance, but all seven of us preceptors—as well as other honors faculty members and university administrators—share a passionate commitment to making this new model work. If we can create an interdisciplinary forum for undergraduate research, we can go from a being a cohort to being a faculty.

CONCLUSION

The creation of our honors college faculty remains a work in progress. We cannot yet report success, nor would we necessarily advocate implementing the same model at every institution; different programs have different needs. However, we have found this process of change illuminating and learned some important lessons. We have seen first-hand that newness meets with institutional resistance, especially given the ways that honors differs from other departments. We have also found that the success or failure of this undertaking rests in whether we can put this tension to use, making it a crucible for identity formation, for deliberations about retention and interdisciplinarity, and for a deeper understanding of all that is surprisingly possible in the formation of an honors faculty. Our honors faculty and dean are deeply committed to developing and sustaining these appointments. In a few years, we hope to report that we have managed to develop CLAS-Honors preceptorships that are academically secure, professionally rewarding, and wholly viable in their interdisciplinarity, their freedom from censure and doubt, and their collective strength.
REFERENCES


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The authors may be contacted at

slavin@maine.edu.
THE GENESIS OF AN HONORS FACULTY

APPENDIX

JOB DESCRIPTIONS/ADVERTISEMENTS

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Honors College at the University of Maine are partnering to create a cohort of CLAS-Honors Preceptors who will hold joint faculty appointments in the Honors College and a CLAS department. The focus of these positions is undergraduate teaching, both in the specific discipline and in interdisciplinary Honors core courses. These Preceptors will also foster research opportunities and creative activities of upper-level undergraduates. The positions are non-tenure-track ongoing appointments at the rank of lecturer.

CLAS-Honors Preceptor of English

**Responsibilities:** Teaching responsibilities will be a 3-3 course load, evenly divided between the Honors College and the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Courses will include undergraduate core courses in English and upper-level literature courses related to the applicant’s area of expertise, along with an annual writing course. In Honors, teaching responsibilities will include preceptorials in the first- and second-year core Honors sequence and upper-level tutorials in the applicant’s area of expertise and interest. The faculty member will develop and maintain a program of scholarship that engages undergraduate students. Other duties include advising English and Honors students, supervising undergraduate student research and Honors theses, and providing appropriate service to the department, college and university. Salary competitive.

**Requirements:** Ph.D. in English by appointment date; expertise in either Medieval or Renaissance literature; commitment to undergraduate and interdisciplinary teaching; evidence of, or demonstrated potential for research and for involving undergraduates in scholarship. Successful candidates will provide evidence of wide-ranging intellectual interests. Preference will be given to applicants with experience in Honors education, in both literary areas and in writing instruction.

CLAS-Honors Preceptor of Journalism

**Responsibilities:** Teaching responsibilities will be evenly divided between the Honors College and the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Courses will include undergraduate journalism core courses and upper-level journalism courses related to the applicant’s area of expertise. In Honors, teaching responsibilities will include preceptorials in the first- and second-year core Honors sequence and upper-level tutorials in the applicant’s area of expertise and interest. The faculty member will develop and maintain a program of scholarship that engages undergraduate students. Other duties include advising of journalism and Honors students, supervision of undergraduate student research and Honors theses, and appropriate university service.
Requirements: Ph.D. in Mass Communication or related field by appointment date; demonstrated commitment to undergraduate and interdisciplinary teaching; evidence of, or demonstrated potential for, involving undergraduates in scholarship. Interdisciplinary teaching and research experience, experience with Honors education, and professional journalism experience are preferred. Successful candidates will provide evidence of wide-ranging intellectual interests.

CLAS-Honors Preceptor of Political Science
Responsibilities: Teaching responsibilities will be evenly divided between the Honors College and the Department of Political Science. In Political Science, teaching responsibilities will include courses on public policy and political theory. The public policy courses will include an element of engaged policy studies where the faculty member will take students into the community to conduct research about particular policy issues. The courses in political theory will focus in some way on the ideas of justice and democracy. The successful applicant will also be able to offer additional courses related to the applicant’s specific areas of expertise. The ideal candidate for this position will be able to integrate the theory and policy elements into a coherent whole. In Honors, teaching responsibilities will include preceptorials in the first- and second-year core interdisciplinary Honors sequence and upper-level tutorials in the applicant’s area of expertise and interest. The faculty member will develop and maintain a program of scholarship that engages undergraduate students. Other duties include advising of Political Science and Honors students, supervision of undergraduate student research and Honors theses, and appropriate university service.

Requirements: Ph.D. in Political Science by appointment date; demonstrated commitment to and success in undergraduate teaching; appropriate empirical analysis skills; record of or demonstrated potential for an active research program and evidence of or demonstrated potential for involving undergraduates in this scholarship. Interdisciplinary teaching and research experience, experience with Honors education, and real world involvement in the public policy process are preferred. Successful candidates will provide evidence of wide-ranging intellectual interests.

CLAS-Honors Preceptor of Psychology
Responsibilities: Teaching responsibilities will be evenly divided between the Honors College and the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Courses will include undergraduate psychology core courses and upper-level psychology courses related to the applicant’s area of expertise. In Honors, teaching responsibilities will include preceptorials in the first- and second-year core interdisciplinary Honors sequence and upper-level tutorials in the applicant’s area of expertise and interest. The faculty member will develop and maintain a program of
research that engages undergraduate students. Other duties include advising of psychology and Honors students, supervision of undergraduate student research and Honors theses, and appropriate university service.

Requirements: Ph.D. in Social Psychology or related field by appointment date; commitment to undergraduate and interdisciplinary teaching; evidence of involving undergraduates in research. Experience with Honors education is desirable. We are especially interested in individuals who will complement the growing focus on psychophysiology and health in the Department of Psychology, and/or who are interested in the application of basic social psychological research to social problems (e.g. prejudice and discrimination; environmental sustainability; obesity).
About the Authors

Julie M. Barst is Assistant Professor of English at South Dakota State University, where she specializes in nineteenth-century British literature, women’s studies, Australian literature, and composition. She has published articles in *Prose Studies* and *European Romantic Review*, and her co-written essay on peer review appeared in last year’s *Honors in Practice*.

Mark Boren is Associate Professor of English at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. He has an MFA from SUNY Buffalo and a PhD in literature from the University of Georgia.

Betty Carlson Bowles received her PhD in health studies and master’s in nursing from Texas Woman’s University and is Assistant Professor of Nursing at Midwestern State University, specializing in maternity nursing. She is a trainer for Education for Physicians in End of Life Care and for End-of-Life Education for Nurses.

Stephen R. Campbell, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at Belmont University, still relishes the learning process and enjoys sharing it by tutoring students at all levels. He also continues to find rewarding teaching opportunities among the immigrant population of Nashville and at the Narrow Gate Foundation of Williamsport, Tennessee.

Leda Cempellin received her PhD at the University of Parma in Italy and is currently Assistant Professor of Art History at South Dakota State University. She has authored a book on American photorealism, monographs on Don Eddy and Leigh Behnke, and several articles and exhibition catalogues. Her recent scholarship focuses on contemporary art; gender and art; the scholarship of teaching and learning; and undergraduate research.

Aaron T. Coey is a PhD candidate in biophysics at Stanford University, where he researches the mechanisms by which viruses inhibit a host’s immune responses. He completed a BS in biochemistry and BA in microbiology at Miami University in 2011. Aaron is author of several papers, and his honors thesis, “A Complete Guide for Working with KCNE1 in Lipid Bilayers,” now serves as the handbook for his undergraduate laboratory.

Kevin W. Dean is Director of the Honors College, Professor of Communication, and advisor for the Honors Student Association at West Chester University. Active for fourteen years with the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education Honors Program Directors, he delivered two presentations at the
2011 NCHC conference. He holds a PhD from the University of Maryland, MA from Miami University (Ohio), and BA from Bowling Green University.

Joan Digby has been involved in honors education for the lifetime of a mule, and she has worked as hard as this animal as well as all the cats and horses she cares for as if they were her students. Her most recent teaching focuses on sustainable environment and literature related to the human connection to nature. She is a past president of NCHC, a tri-chair of the Publications Board, and the originator of Partners in the Parks, to which she is passionately committed.

Mark Farris is Professor of Mathematics at Midwestern State University. After serving as Director of the Honors Program for seven years, he now enjoys life as just a faculty member.

Juliana Felts is the coordinator and an alumna of the Midwestern State University Honors Program. She is currently pursuing her PhD in humanities with a concentration in literary studies focusing on translation at the University of Texas at Dallas. She enjoys the opportunity to work with MSU Honors Program students while continuing her own education.

Marty Gibson received her PhD in health studies from Texas Woman’s University and her master’s in nursing from University of South Alabama. She is Assistant Professor of Nursing at Midwestern State University, specializing in community nursing. She is a Certified Health Education Specialist and serves as a resource for community agencies.

Robert W. Glover is CLAS-Honors Preceptor of Political Science at the University of Maine. His teaching and research interests center on political theory, immigration, and protest. He is co-editing a book on the use of nontraditional “texts” in the classroom: *Teaching Politics Beyond the Book: Film, Texts and New Media in the Classroom*.

Ellen J. Goldberger is Director of the Honor Scholars Program at Mount Ida College and Professor in the School of Arts and Sciences, where she teaches courses in leadership, conflict resolution, and mediation. She earned her BA from Harvard University, her MA from Southern Connecticut State University, and her JD from the University of San Diego.

Robert T. Grammer is Professor of Biology at Belmont University. He received his BS degree in chemistry from the University of Georgia, where he was a student in the honors program, and his PhD in molecular biology from Vanderbilt University. He served as Director of the Belmont University Honors Program for five years.
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Mark Haggerty is the Rezendes Preceptor of Civic Engagement at the University of Maine. His research interests are in the boundary areas of environmental policy, FairTrade, and food systems.

Sarah Harlan-Haughey is CLAS-Honors Preceptor of English at the University of Maine. She holds master’s and doctoral degrees from Cornell in medieval studies and works to situate medieval literature in the context of concerns that are relevant today. She writes about Old English and Old Norse literature as nature writing.

Carolyn Haynes serves as Director of the University Honors Program and Professor of English at Miami University. She received her PhD from University of California, San Diego in comparative literature and has authored *Innovations in Interdisciplinary Teaching* (2002) and over twenty-five articles on student learning, pedagogy, assessment, and curricular issues.

William H. Hooper is Professor of Computer Science at Belmont University. He holds an AB in engineering science from Dartmouth College and a PhD in computer science from Vanderbilt University. His research interests include the hardware and software of distributed computation, and he frequently collaborates with artists, musicians, and other scientists to enhance their computational tools and practices.

Bonnie D. Irwin, formerly Dean of the Honors College, is Dean of Arts & Humanities at Eastern Illinois University, where she is also a professor of English. She currently serves as Immediate Past President of NCHC. Her research interests include the reception of the *1001 Nights* in American popular culture and the writings of Arab American women.

Michael B. Jendzurski is a third-year kinesiology/exercise science major with a minor in communication at West Chester University, where he is president of the Honors Student Association. Drawing from two research/service projects in South Africa, he co-presented a paper on international education at the 2011 NCHC conference in Phoenix. He plans to pursue a doctoral degree.
Mimi Killinger is the Rezendes Preceptor for the Arts in the University of Maine Honors College. She teaches honors preceptorials in the college’s Civilizations sequence and also coordinates a course entitled “A Cultural Odyssey,” which introduces honors students to local arts and culture.

Jordan P. LaBouff is CLAS-Honors Preceptor of Psychology at the University of Maine. He holds a master’s in neuroscience and a doctorate in experimental social psychology from Baylor University. His primary research interests involve the cultural evolution and expression of religiousness, humility, and implicit attitudes.

Julie D. Lane is Assistant Professor at South Dakota State University where she teaches courses in constitutional law, political theory, and women and politics. She earned her PhD from the University of Texas at Austin in 2009. She is currently continuing her scholarship on sexual violence and rape law.

Foster Levy is Professor of Biological Sciences and Director of Undergraduate Research & Creative Activities at the East Tennessee State University Honors College. His research interests include the population genetics of disease transmission in plants and in humans. He received his PhD from Duke University.

Justin D. Martin is CLAS-Honors Preceptor of Journalism at the University of Maine. Author of the “Borders & Bylines” column for Columbia Journalism Review, his research focuses largely on freedom of speech and of the press in developing countries, particularly Arab nations. His PhD is from the journalism school at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill.

Timothy J. Nichols is Dean of the Honors College at South Dakota State University. He chairs the campus common read committee and teaches courses in leadership, agriculture, qualitative research, Honors Orientation, and Honors Colloquium. He is a proud and busy husband and father of two teenage daughters.

Kathleen Nolan is Professor and Chair of Biology at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York. She has her BS from Northeastern University and her PhD from CUNY Graduate Center. Her research and teaching focus on ecology, genetics, environmental biology, and aquatic ecosystems.

Rebecca Pyles is Dean of the Honors College and Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). Her research interests focus on development and evolution of vertebrates while also pro-
motivating undergraduate research, honors, and international education at ETSU. She received her PhD from the University of Kansas.

**Kim Robinson**, who has both a PhD and RN degree, is currently a psychologist at a private psychiatric hospital in Wichita Falls, TX. Previously, she was an assistant professor at Midwestern State University for eight years. She designed a hybrid course in public health that she has taught for several summers at Queen Mary University in London, England.

**Charlie Slavin** is Dean of the University of Maine Honors College. His degrees in mathematics were sprinkled with liberal doses of interdisciplinary study, so he is excited about having a diverse constellation of colleagues. He much prefers watching Sam play hockey and soccer to attending “blah, blah, blah” meetings.


**Celia Szarejko** is Professor and Systems Librarian in the Charles C. Sherrod Library at East Tennessee State University. Her interests are web development, digital collections, and library adaptation to life in the digital age. She holds an MLS from Syracuse University and an MBA from the University of Maryland.

**Julie Urda** is an assistant professor at Rhode Island College. She received her BA in psychology from Dartmouth College, MBA from Boston University, and PhD in management from INSEAD. She chairs the Rhode Island College Honors Program in Management and Marketing.

**Allison B. Wallace** is the author of *A Keeper of Bees: Notes on Hive and Home* (Random House, 2006) and numerous essays and articles on American writers. She is Associate Professor in the University of Central Arkansas Honors College.

**Bradley E. Wilson** is Associate Professor and Chair of the Philosophy Department as well as Director of the Honors Program at Slippery Rock University. He specializes in the history and philosophy of science, especially evolutionary biology, ecology, and medicine. He earned his BA from Purdue University and his MA and PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Linda Wyatt is Project Manager in the East Tennessee State University (ETSU) Honors College. She received her EdD in post-secondary and private sector leadership from ETSU and has published recently in *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*. Her research interests include adult learners, assessment strategies, and intercultural communication.

Lonnie Yandell is Professor of Psychological Science at Belmont University. His teaching interests include cognitive psychology, perception, and consciousness, and he is active in the scholarship of teaching. He enjoys helping undergraduates develop a passion for research as well as improving their research skills.
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MONOGRAPHS & JOURNALS

Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges: A Practical Handbook by Rosalie Otero and Robert Spurrier (2005, 98pp). This monograph includes an overview of assessment and evaluation practices and strategies. It explores the process for conducting self-studies and discusses the differences between using consultants and external reviewers. It provides a guide to conducting external reviews along with information about how to become an NCHC-Recommended Site Visitor. A dozen appendices provide examples of "best practices.


A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges by Theresa James (2006, 136pp). A useful handbook for two-year schools contemplating beginning or redesigning their honors program and for four-year schools doing likewise or wanting to increase awareness about two-year programs and articulation agreements. Contains extensive appendices about honors contracts and a comprehensive bibliography on honors education.

The Honors College Phenomenon edited by Peter C. Seelerberg (2008, 172pp). This monograph examines the growth of honors colleges since 1990: historical and descriptive characterizations of the trend, alternative models that include determining whether becoming a college is appropriate, and stories of creation and recreation. Leaders whose institutions are contemplating or taking this step as well as those directing established colleges should find these essays valuable.

Honors Composition: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Practices by Annmarie Guty (2003, 182pp). Parallel historical developments in honors and composition studies; contemporary honors writing projects ranging from admission essays to theses as reported by over 300 NCHC members.


Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students edited by Larry Clark and John Zubizarreta (2008, 216pp). This rich collection of essays offers valuable insights into innovative teaching and significant learning in the context of academically challenging classrooms and programs. The volume provides theoretical, descriptive, and practical resources, including models of effective instructional practices, examples of successful courses designed for enhanced learning, and a list of online links to teaching and learning centers and educational databases worldwide.

Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks by Joan Digby with reflective essays on theory and practice by student and faculty participants and National Park Service personnel (2010, 272pp). This monograph explores an experiential-learning program that fosters immersion in and stewardship of the national parks. The topics include program designs, group dynamics, philosophical and political issues, photography, wilderness exploration, and assessment.

Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (Second Edition, 2010, 128pp). Updated theory, information, and advice on experiential pedagogies developed within NCHC during the past 35 years, including Honors Semesters and City as Text™, along with suggested adaptations to multiple educational contexts.

Setting the Table for Diversity edited by Lisa L. Coleman and Jonathan B. Kotinek (2010, 288pp). This collection of essays provides definitions of diversity in honors, explores the challenges and opportunities diversity brings to honors education, and depicts the transformative nature of diversity when coupled with equity and inclusion. These essays discuss African American, Latina/o, international, and first-generation students as well as students with disabilities. Other issues include experiential and service learning, the politics of diversity, and the psychological resistance to it. Appendices relating to NCHC member institutions contain diversity statements and a structural diversity survey.

Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education edited by Peter A. Machonis (2008, 160pp). A companion piece to Place as Text, focusing on recent, innovative applications of City as Text™ teaching strategies. Chapters on campus as text, local neighborhoods, study abroad, science courses, writing exercises, and philosophical considerations, with practical materials for instituting this pedagogy.

Teaching and Learning in Honors edited by Cheryl L. Faiks and Larry Clark (2000, 128pp). Presents a variety of perspectives on teaching and learning useful to anyone developing new or renovating established honors curricula.

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC) is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education.

Honors in Practice (HIP) is an annual journal that accommodates the need and desire for articles about nuts-and-bolts practices by featuring practical and descriptive essays on topics such as successful honors courses, suggestions for out-of-class experiences, administrative issues, and other topics of interest to honors administrators, faculty, and students.
in this issue

Presidential Address
New Ideas for Honors Courses
New Ideas for Honors Administration

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