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Recent Developments in the Honors Program

- Service Learning Project
- Honors students abroad
- Spring semester honors courses in the spotlight

From the Honors Program Director

Welcome to the Spring 2015 edition of The Sage Page. Inside this newsletter you will see that our Honors Program students have been actively involved in their honors courses, service learning activities and social events. As with previous editions, the students have provided you with interesting articles on their activities including Relay for Life service activities and what the Honors Program has done for them. Marissa Grant prepared an article on her very exciting experience during her study abroad to Spain. I want to thank Honors Program alumnus Alex Muller for his article on how the Honors Program continues to influence his thinking as a graduate student. I particularly want to thank Dr. Amanda Hiner for her essay about her experience teaching honors students.

I want to also thank each student, especially Jessica Doscher, The Sage Page editor, who contributed to this edition and honors alumni for keeping us informed on your interests. Please contact us about any updates. Enjoy!

Kathy Lyon, Ph.D.
Honors Program Director

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Service Learning Update

Christine Davenport & Emily Rounds

During the spring semester, WUHA! focused on fundraising for Relay for Life, which is sponsored by the American Cancer Society. The American Cancer Society’s goal is to raise money to support cancer research. WUHA! started the semester with $800 from the Bluegrass Benefit Concert held in the fall. Team members then participated in many other fundraisers to try to reach the team goal of $1,500. The first fundraiser on the agenda was selling Krispy Kreme doughnuts. Students asked friends and family members to preorder doughnuts to support the cause. The team raised over $100 from this fundraiser.

The main fundraiser WUHA! hosted this semester, however, was the annual Trivia Night. The theme of Trivia Night was “Television.” Winthrop students were encouraged to participate in Trivia Night to support the American Cancer Society and Relay for Life. Team members were asked to reach out to the community and collect gift cards and gift baskets from local businesses. Gift card prizes were given to the top three teams with the most points. A silent auction was set up using the gift baskets so that participants could bid on the items. Refreshments and luminaries were set out for students to purchase. The luminaries were used to honor those diagnosed with cancer and were lit up around the track on Relay night. The last funds collected came from some spirit nights and refreshments sold at Relay. During the event, we sold items as people walked around the track. We stayed up from 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. with the intention of not sleeping since cancer never sleeps.
It is difficult to put into words, but I can honestly say that studying abroad was one of the best decisions I have ever made. It gave me the chance to find independence and a confidence in myself that I never knew I could have. For the first time, I felt myself forced to practice “mindfulness” because I was thrown into a completely new environment with a new host family. I no longer had time to worry about my past or my future; rather, I only had time to focus on my present. My present was my time in Spain. I knew that I had to take in every moment and enjoy all that this experience had to offer. I found that the world I once knew was so much bigger than I originally thought. I found such an appreciation for a culture outside of my own. I soon realized that culture highly influences the individual, and it was amazing to be able to embrace a new way of life without judgment. It truly challenged my way of thinking, caused me to question my beliefs and forced me to enjoy every moment. Overall, some highlight experiences included having the chance to meet some really great friends from all over the world, travel to Rome, kayak and snorkel in the ocean, ride a camel in Morocco, learn how to belly dance, improve my Spanish, sit at “the end of the world” in Sagres, Portugal, adventure through the underground caves of Aracena, eat gelato on a regular basis, learn how to surf, ride the metro to school every day and so much more. This experience is something I will forever hold onto, and I truly recommend it to anyone who is considering doing it!

*Top left: Marissa riding a camel in Morocco; bottom left: Marissa touring the Colosseum in Rome; top right: Marissa in the “Blue City” of Morocco; bottom right: Marissa at the “End of the World” in Sagres, Portugal.*
**Semester in Pictures**

*Top left and bottom right: Early Freshman Move-In and Pizza Party; bottom left: First Night at Winthrop with freshman honors students; top right: Dr. Lyon’s ACAD101H class at Richmond Drive Elementary School doing service with the students.*

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**Spring 2015 Honors Courses**

**Connor Renfroe**

HONR 204H — Using Devised Theatre for Social Change: Hunger, is a symposium specifically made for the ongoing Hunger Series. This series is sponsored by Winthrop’s Peace, Justice, and Conflict Resolution Studies Program, the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, the Department of Human Nutrition, the Office of Career and Civic Engagement, the Global Learning Initiative and the Winthrop Common Book. The aim of the Hunger Series is to raise awareness in the community regarding hunger at home and abroad.

Devised Theatre is a theatrical form in which the actors take their topic and build their own show around it. In a way, it is a blending of improvisation and play writing. There is no book; actors know their lines based on repeated scenario practices.

The HONR 204H class of Spring 2015 devised a production that was performed April 14. To prepare, students researched a wide range of hunger topics including relations to poverty, the psychological/developmental effects of hunger and causes of food insecurity. Then they constructed scenarios around this information to explore characters and gain inspiration.

**Jessica Doscher**

HONR 234H — Special Topics in Social Science: Shakespeare the Psychologist, provides an intriguing twist on Shakespearean studies by offering students a chance to analyze four of Shakespeare’s tragedies—*Othello, King Lear, Hamlet* and *Macbeth*—not only as pieces of literature, but from a psychological standpoint. Taught by Dr. Darren Ritzer of the psychology department, Shakespeare the Psychologist encourages the students to see simply beyond the stage and understand the science of the mind as it plays into each production. Further, the class analyzes filmed versions of each play. In doing this, the class is able to discuss the mentality of the directors in how they decided to portray certain scenes, such as Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking in *Macbeth* or her questionable death. In these films, the students are able to see examples of the importance of Shakespearean psychological analysis. After all, how can we claim to understand the motives of characters like Ophelia from *Hamlet* or Edmund from *King Lear* if we do not consider their psychological state?
Senior Perspectives

“The Honors Program allowed me to register for classes with a small amount of students, which allowed for greater interactions with the professor. Plus, I got to take cool honors mini-courses, like The Beatles. The Honors Program really pushed me to be all I could be academically.”

-Trey Stokes

“Participating in the Honors Program at Winthrop has been so rewarding. I will truly miss Kathy Lyon and all her helpfulness, my big and little who make up my beautiful honors family, and hosting honors Zumba nights because they were such a great way to get people together. The honors community is one that I will cherish.”

-Anna Brenner

“As a graduating senior, it is both an exciting yet overwhelming feeling to move on and leave what I have known for the past four years. One of the things that I will truly miss about Winthrop is the Honors Program and WUHA!, our student association. My learning experiences have been greatly enhanced, especially from taking classes with passionate professors who are dedicated to the professional and educational development of the student. I will miss the program, the fun WUHA! events, as well as the overall honors community that I have thankfully been a part of! The Honors Program at Winthrop has meant, and still means, a lot to me!”

-Julia Greiner

What Honors Continues to Do for Me

Alex Muller

Sometimes when you’re in the middle of a busy semester, the requirements for an honors degree simply feel like empty boxes that need to be checked off. I remember feeling this way during my senior year as I balanced the last-minute degree requirements with applying to graduate school.

But now that it’s over, I realize how well prepared I was for the transition, and I can attribute this preparation to two aspects of the Honors Program: taking honors classes each semester and attending the SRHC conference each year.

First, you have to take a certain number of honors courses both inside and outside of your major, right? Whether you take one of the courses offered or “contract” a class for your major or minor, you’re sure to enjoy the experience. Often, the courses in the Honors Program will be really interesting and specific, and this is usually what grad school courses are like! These courses are great because they challenge you to connect these specific topics to bigger, multi-disciplinary contexts.

(I’m still making connections to an honors symposium on comic books that I took during my sophomore year!)

Contracting courses is a great experience as well because it gives you a chance to work closely with a professor to enhance an existing syllabus. Usually this entails writing more in-depth papers or giving an extra presentation, but what it really gives you is a chance to take responsibility for a course. If you have to do a presentation, think of it as a mini teaching assistantship, even if it’s just for a single class—think of your project as a lesson plan instead of a presentation.

Next, the SRHC conference. Although you’re really only expected to participate while you’re working on your thesis, it’s a wonderful experience any time you’re able to go. I would try to develop a project each year that could make a worthwhile presentation, and this challenged me to write stronger papers at the end of each semester.

Besides, it’s great to get this experience as early (and as often) as you can, and presenting at conferences looks great when applying to grad school, too!

While my own path has led me to graduate school at Wake Forest University, I’m confident that I could have applied these same experiences anywhere. Ultimately, the requirements for an Honors Program Degree do not end once you’ve completed them—they continue to challenge and continue to teach, sometimes in ways that will surprise you.

Pictured above: Alex Muller
Why I Teach Honors

Amanda Hiner, Ph.D.

Dr. Richard Paul and Dr. Linda Elder, internationally-acclaimed scholars in the field of critical thinking, explain that “The best thinkers are those who systematically and carefully reason their way through problems. They ask questions when they don’t understand. They don’t allow other people to define their level of intelligence, [and] they realize that . . . the real work of learning requires perseverance and commitment” (xxix). Real learning encompasses much more than the ability to recall facts or pass tests with relative ease. Real learning rests on a set of carefully cultivated intellectual traits that enable people from all backgrounds to embrace knowledge and see life as an endless opportunity for intellectual and personal growth. These traits include insatiable intellectual curiosity; eagerness to explore underlying implications and assumptions; perseverance in reasoning; intellectual humility; and focused intellectual engagement with one’s discipline. The relentless drive to understand information, to push intellectual boundaries, and to assimilate knowledge into meaningful contexts characterizes Honors Program students at Winthrop University and makes honors classes a joy to teach.

I began teaching honors sections of HMXP 102 and CRTW 201 several years ago, and I never cease to feel excited when I see an “H” after a section number in my list of assigned classes. I always find Winthrop students to be respectful and eager to learn, but an honors section of a course like HMXP or CRTW can provide a special context in which ideas can be pushed, challenged, and explored with greater intensity and depth. Honors students have learned and integrated intellectual habits and disciplines that enable them to contribute meaningfully to the “open table” liberal arts classroom. They typically come to class with their assignments carefully read and annotated, with questions in mind and with ready curiosity. They provide interesting and relevant examples in class discussions and are eager to connect the course material to their disciplines. They see the value in learning for learning’s sake and encourage each other’s intellectual curiosity.

When “let go” with a project or assignment, honors students never cease to surprise and delight me with their intensity, their passion and their creativity. A couple years ago, for instance, I assigned an end-of-semester creative project in HMXP that required students to create an artful, physical representation of their own identity in connection to the course themes and topics. Students always have a choice when presented with this assignment. They can do something “safe” that requires minimal effort but technically fulfills the criteria of the rubric, or they can view the assignment as an opportunity to explore their own identity in deeply meaningful ways. My HMXP honors students had been funny, engaging and charmingly idiosyncratic the whole semester that spring, sometimes offering provocative or profound comments and sometimes seeming overwhelmed by their coursework and responsibilities. Yet, in a typical “honors section” way, they astonished me with those final projects. From an original song performed in class, to a deeply thoughtful self-analysis, to a gorgeous glass mosaic representing one student’s physical and intellectual path through life, these students’ projects left me humbled and awed. With honors students, I learned yet again, you just need to let them go, and they will soar!

The opportunity to teach honors courses at Winthrop University
What Honors Has Done for Me

Jessica Doscher

What is an honors student? Most people, upon imagining an honors student, picture a frazzled, sleepless, and obsessive student who spends more time cooped up in the library than anywhere else and cringes at the sun because they’ve been hiding inside for so long. Well, I can’t deny the sleepless part of that image, but the effort it requires is richly rewarded each time I leave a classroom quietly singing with sheer joy at my students’ discoveries, insight and growth. Honors classes provide me with so many of these rewarding moments, and I hope I can continue to teach honors classes here at Winthrop for many years.

I have never considered myself to be especially proud of my work. I am a perfectionist through and through, and I could probably count on one hand the number of times I have been proud of something that I have done, be it a paper or any kind of presentation. At least, that’s what I believed before I came here. My first honors class was ENGL 307H, The Arthurian Tradition, with Dr. Jo Koster of the English department. Putting it bluntly, I was terrified. I was certain that I would never be able to live up to my honors classmates and that I was doomed to a miserable and ugly failure in the class. But that didn’t happen. Dr. Koster believed in me and supported me through every step of the research process and even encouraged me to submit to my first SRHC conference. She believed in me, even when I refused to believe in myself. And she was not the only one. Dr. Lyon always supported both my research and my desire to be involved in SRHC, from being a student representative at-large to becoming the current student vice president. My professors in my other honors classes always let me sit in their offices and worry over whatever I was working on and supported me through every step of it. And why? Because I am an honors student, and because they knew that being an honors student was truly something special. Without the Honors Program and the amazing people who are involved in it, I truly doubt that I would ever have made it to where I am today. Honors is something fantastic, and honors students are some of the most intelligent and dedicated people that you will ever meet. I have been lucky to be a part of such an inspiring community, and I hope that all of you, incoming, current, or graduating, are able to find that same passion that is fostered here.

(Work Cited)

Congratulations, December 2014 Graduates!

The following students graduated with an Honors Program Degree at the December 2014 Commencement. Also listed is her thesis title.

**Marissa Nichols**

Human Resource Management

*The Impact of Information Technology on the Talent Acquisition Process*

**Karly Long**

Integrated Marketing Communication

*Treating, Beating, and Moving On: An Examination of Breast Cancer Patients in an Online Community*
Welcome, Dr. Mahony!

The Winthrop University Honors Program would like to congratulate Dr. Daniel Mahony on being announced as Winthrop University’s 11th president. He will be an excellent fit for this university, and we are grateful to be able to work with him in the very near future. Dr. Mahony, we look forward to officially welcoming you to the family on July 1, 2015!

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