



The Honorific

Spring 2014

From the Desk of the Director...

We welcomed the largest incoming class of Honors students in quite some time this year—48 new first-year Honors students! The Theme for this year is BIG! Honors Orientation began with a BIG pizza dinner, a BIG t-shirt give-away and breaking in the new BIG Honors groups. Despite the numbers of new students, though, we definitely did not sacrifice quality. The new students are full of life and energy and have very efficient central nervous systems (in other words, they're smart!) as well.

The new groups included: (1) The Action Figures, whose responsibility is planning activities and events, (2) The Reporters, who have been responsible for creating this newsletter, (3) The Ambassadors, who are meeting with prospective students and have created a beautiful new poster to represent the Honors Program, and (4) The Servitors, whose task is to create service learning events for the Honors students. The groups appeared to get off to a flying start and each one has been quite active this fall.

I can safely report that there were no casualties at Death by Chocolate this year. In fact, the event was well attended and well received. The new provost, Rick Stephens and his wife, Debbie, were in attendance and got initiated into the DBC experience. Big Brothers/Sisters met their Littles and the semester was launched.

We have renamed the Education for Education's Sake series, now to be called the Big Questions Series. Our first event—planned by the Action Figures Group—featured Dr. Reginio raising the question of the status of 'pop literary writers' relative to established literary figures. Is Bob Dylan worthy of the Nobel Prize in Literature, for example? We had an active discussion,

with most of us leaning to the more lenient point of view, while acknowledging that it is hard to compare Like a Rolling Stone to Dante's Inferno. Now that I mention that, though, some similarities immediately appear. In November, Kerry Kautzman talked with us about the Spanish Terrorist group, ETA; they seem to be disbanding but there is some fear that they may reemerge after several key members are released from prison. We learned a great deal about Spain, the

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Editors-in-Chief: Jennifer Futterman, Kylee Gaier, and Elaine Temple

Contributors: Cassie Klipera, Ashlee Wilmier, Daniel Canfield, Catherine Groh, Emma Percy, Robin Schnepf, Cassidy Weese, Gavin Mackie, Anjalyn Fahy, Elizabeth Hochman, Cheyenne Rainford, Mikaela Suders, Howard Levi, and Samuel Lofquist

Photographer: Emily Eisenberg

Basque region, and how the Spaniards have dealt with terrorism from within. Several more Big Questions Discussions are planned for the spring.

Two nights have been devoted to games of “Manhunt” where Honors students play a massive game of hide-and-go-seek on campus. This has been a great social event—and it’s also allowed some of the new students to find out about some nooks and crannies on the campus that they had no idea existed. Some reported sore muscles after all the running around. There’s something funny about Honors students having to recover from events like this!

Our annual ‘field trip’ offered a chance to see a reading of David Sedaris—writer, comedian, social commentator. We stopped at a really good NY style Deli in Amherst, where we had monster sandwiches and cannolis—which were excellent. Sedaris did not disappoint, focusing on everything from ‘gym class’ to ‘having a guest bedroom’ to offer visitors at his house. I couldn’t stop laughing and, given the ‘loge seating’ we were assigned, was a little afraid I’d laugh so hard that I’d fall out of the balcony! A good time was had by all. My favorite part of the trip, this year, was that we had a bus and a professional bus driver to chauffeur us around—very cool!

In the spring, we will be offering six seminars; only two of these have been previously offered. This means that 8 of the 14 Honors Seminars offered were totally new!

If you have any thoughts, ideas, or questions about the Honors Program, please feel free to contact me at: Atlas@Alfred.Edu

Dr. Gordon Atlas, Honors Program Director

FALL ‘13 COURSE REPORTS FROM STUDENTS:

Monsters from Folklore to Reality - Andrew Eklund

Kylee Gaier

In the honors seminar “Monsters: from Folklore to Reality,” truly terrifying beasts and ghouls come to life. Class discussions and lectures revolve around the history of monstrous legends, what makes something a monster, and how we perceive them in today’s society. Fun field trips to haunted houses, hayrides, and movie nights bring the experience to life. You even get to build your own hideous monster! From the monsters you imagine under your bed, to very real humans as monsters, this class covers it all.

Aliens – John D’Angelo

Mikaela Suders

Have you ever thought about life outside our planet, or the possibility that we are not alone in the universe? Have you ever wondered about the great mysteries of our past and how humankind might have been shaped by otherworldly beings? This seminar discusses the possibility of life on other worlds and the roles their inhabitants might have played in our own histories. And of course, it seeks to answer the greatest question of all- did the aliens do it?

Mysteries of the Brain – Lou Lichtman

Ajalyn Fahy

What would it be like to not be able to recognize anyone because you can't see their face? What is it like to live with amnesia so horrible that you cannot remember something that happened only a few moments before? These questions and more are answered in the "Mysteries of the Brain" Honors seminar! In this seminar, you learn about intriguing cases of brain disease through reading books such as *the Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat* and having intellectual discussions regarding the interesting cases you read about.

Drinking Up: The Science & History of Alcohol – Garret McGowan & Chris Romanchock

Ashlee Wilimier

The honors "Drinking It Up" class is a very informative and fun class. In class, we learned about the history of alcohol and who first invented it. We also examined the chemistry of alcohol which is simply water, sugar, and yeast. Students also we were able to partake in the making of beer and wine in class labs. To further their knowledge of wine, the students visited Hunt Country Vineyards at the end of October. At the winery we even got a personal tour of the facilities as well as a tasting of various wines.

T'ai Chi: A Way of Life – Steve Crosby

Emma Percy

You don't need any experience with t'ai chi to take this seminar! Steve Crosby's T'ai Chi seminar focuses on a slow, flowing, meditative style of t'ai chi chuan that is meant to promote holistic health. We've been learning the physical sequence of movements in class, supplemented by short readings and optional practice sessions outside of class. Weekly discussions on Blackboard spark conversations in class and help students track their progress and understanding of this ancient practice. The class promotes practicing t'ai chi every day for its physical and mental benefits. Of course, even if you decide it's not for you, the seminar is a great way to learn about one part of the spirituality and history of a culture different than our own. It's a great way to relax at the end of the day, too!

Critical Thinking – Zong Dai

Robin Schenepf

"Critical Thinking" is a course taught by Zong Dai, a business professor. The class focuses on creating a worthwhile hypothesis, conducting relevant research, and finding valid source material. It also touches on influential people in history who have used critical thinking to further scientific, social, political, and other types of research. The class is given a research project that helps the students apply what they've learned during the seminar. If you are interested in analyzing the way humans confront problems, form theories and research, this is the class for you.

Spring 2014 Seminars

Culture, Cuisine, Film & Food - Becky Prophet

\This seminar provides a gastronomic tour de force of recipes and experiences with food through various regions of the U.S. and some of the most honored traditions of historic and modern cultures. We discover methods to make several signature national dishes and beverages, from mead to melba, from haggis to hollandaise sauce and from lobster bisque to lemon curd.

The Janus Substance aka “Good Stuff” or “Bad Stuff”? - Steve Pilgrim

Dihydrogen Momoxide (DHMO aka water) is a unique chemical. Its excess or lack causes billions of dollars in economic loss and hundreds of thousands of deaths annually. DHMO's unique properties enable life on Earth, generate the beauty of rainbows and snowflakes, determine the awesome power of glaciers and iceberg, and provide the ubiquitous flush.

A Beginner’s Guide to World Domination - David DeGraff & Danielle Gagne

The comics and movies are full of evil villains who want to take over the world. How realistic are these schemes? How realistic is the psychological portrait of these people? In this seminar we will discuss graphic novels and movies that portray super-villains and the science and psychology behind them.

Eco-Art - Katie Hargrave

This process-oriented course is designed to be cross-disciplinary, combining art making with environmental ethics and ecology. Beginning with the seed that is a love of nature, students will develop a critical understanding of the influence the natural world has on art making practices. From sublime vistas and natural dyes to ecological theory and environmental activists, this honors course explores artistic responses to the environment and related social issues.

The British Invasion - Alexis Clare

No! It isn’t a class about a British retaliation for the War of Independence but it is a pseudo-historical class about another type of more cultural British invasion. In the 1960’s—before the global world of the modern age, there was less access to media. Yet, seemingly out of nowhere, the Beatles and Rolling Stones emerged and led the revolution called The British Invasion.

Soundtrack to Rebellion: Metal, Punk, and Hardcore - Steve Byrne

Black Sabbath and The Sex Pistols made Elvis and the Beatles seem quaint; Marilyn Manson and Bad Religion could outsmart Miley and Bieber six ways from Sunday. To what cultural, social, and psychological events are the “heaviest” of the musical genres responding?

Honors Events

Orientation



Each first year student chose one of four Honors Groups to join. This year, the groups were: the Reporters, the Action Figures, the Ambassadors, and the Servitors. The Reporters write this annual honors newsletter. The Action Figures organize honors events. The Ambassadors represent the honors program at accepted student days. Servitors have been planning and implementing service-learning events. Upper classmen serve as leaders of these groups. This allows honors students to become acquainted with each other and a chance to engage with upper classmen in the program.

-Jennifer Futterman



Brennan Ferguson and Emily Stoddard, Group Leaders of the Action Figures



Reporters working hard together at orientation to begin to create a this newsletter

Death by Chocolate

-Elizabeth Hochman



What's better than chocolate? Lots of chocolate!!!!

The Sunday evening of Orientation and Move-in weekend, all honors students—freshman through senior—got together for the Honors Program's most famous annual event: Death By Chocolate. Upon entering the Honors House, students were greeted by a full spread of Wegman's most cocoa-centric desserts—from chocolate cake, to oreo pie, to cookies galore—plus a handful of fruit and vanilla based alternatives. After packing their plates with treats, students began socializing and getting to know one another. Most notably, each freshman “little” got the chance to meet their upperclassman “big,” and learn some Alfred tricks of the trade from his or her Honors mentor. In addition, all attendees, noticing hints on signs around the house, speculated the 2013 Honors Trip, which was later revealed to be a talk by David Sedaris. All students enjoyed the evening to the fullest, starting the new school year on a good—and, lest we forget, sugar filled!—note!



Even honors students need to relax. The Action Figures organize game nights for the honors students. Here is a picture before a game of manhunt.

Big Questions

Dr. Robert Reginio, associate professor of English, kicked off the first Big Questions Event discussing Bob Dylan’s music as literature. Dr. Reginio explained that he would like to teach an English course on Bob Dylan, but this idea was met with some resistance. His question for the Honors students who attended is: should Dylan be considered literature? Students engaged in a discussion of high versus popular culture and how Dylan’s music was similar and different than canonical literature.



Dr. Kerry Kautzman, Professor of Spanish, led the second Big Questions discussion on Basque Terrorism in Spain, introducing a new topic to a group of students with little knowledge on Spain. Students engaged in asking questions about the historical and political context of decades of terrorism in the Basque region. Students, then, were able to compare the terrorism of the ETA to other forms of terrorism.

-Jennifer Futterman

Honors Field Trip - “David Sedaris”

For this year’s Honors Trip we went to see David Sedaris read his work at the University of Buffalo. After reading his work in class I was excited to see him live and hear more of his work. There were about twenty people that went on the trip. We first stopped at a sandwich place for dinner, which seemed weird at first but turned out to be absolutely delicious. When we got to the theatre Sedaris was already signing books and there was a huge line of people almost going out the door of the massive performing arts center. For a big name writer such as Sedaris I expected a grand introduction and maybe an opening reader and was surprised by the modest introduction and that Sedaris quickly got on stage and went right into reading. He read excerpts from some of his books along with new stories he wrote on the road. He told a story about a relatable time for many, getting picked last for gym, along with a few others including one about having a guest room be the source of pride at middle age. Sedaris’s writing was very well crafted along with being quite funny.

Honors Comic



Alfred University Honors Program
Science Center
1 Saxon Drive
Alfred, NY 14802-1205

