



# The Honorific

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## From the Desk of the Director

I think it sank in when I saw the cake.

The day of Honors Orientation for the incoming students, I made a Wegmans run to pick up supplies. The pizza had been ordered, and my cart overflowed with cups, plates, salads, and bottled water. I had just enough room on the bottom rack for the last item, the big sheet cake we would cut and share among the students.

A Wegman's bakery employee carefully carried a long box out of the walk-in refrigerator and showed me the decorations. Festive balloons bobbed in the corners, and purple and gold icing spelled, WELCOME HONORS CLASS OF 2022. And that's when it hit me.

When I first arrived at Alfred University in 2006, my English division colleague Dr. Paul Strong was the long-standing Honors Director. The students loved Paul, his easygoing manner and his corny jokes. When he retired, Psychology professor Gordon Atlas stepped into his shoes. If anything, Gordon's jokes were even cornier than Paul's, but the students seemed just as fond of him. Both men had led the programs seemingly effortlessly, always seeking new ways to improve the Honors Program, and to help students explore academic challenges and build a sense of community.

And now it was my turn. And it would all begin with cutting that cake.

Reader, we ate that cake in August, and I haven't looked back. My first semester as Honors Director was at times both frustrating and rewarding, but I wouldn't trade it for a sack of doubloons. It's been my privilege to follow in the footsteps of Paul Strong and Gordon Atlas, and to build on the fantastic program they (and Dr. Larry Greil before them) established. I'm extremely grateful to Gordon for his mentorship, and to Crystal Henshaw for her continued assistance. As our spring semester begins, I'm excited about the events and opportunities that lie ahead, and I look forward to finding ways to continue to improve our program.

But whatever changes lie ahead, rest assured, there will always be cake.

# Death By Chocolate

By Kayleah Aldrich

Nothing says “new semester” for the Honors program better than the annual “Death by Chocolate” event hosted at the end of orientation weekend at the Honors House. The students came in waves throughout the night until all were reunited before the semester began. As the students walked up to the house, they were greeted by professors and returning students with excited smiles. The house was filled with exchanges of summer stories, introductions to new faces, and anticipation. Going further into the house, the students finally reached the dining area which included a huge table covered in desserts, surrounded by a wrap-around line of students and faculty conversing as they choose from the plethora of treats displayed in front of them. The sweets included a variety of chocolate cakes, fruit cheesecakes, carrot cakes, mousse pies, and whatever other kinds of treats you can imagine. As the night went on and the desserts continued to emerge from the kitchen, students and faculty discussed the upcoming year and of course, what the upcoming honors trip would be. Each year, the honors program takes a trip to a theatre for a night and the name of the show is traditionally revealed during the Death by Chocolate event. After everyone was filled up on chocolate and caught up with each other, Dr. Gray finally revealed the show would be *Hair*. The night ended with the third round of treats being taken home for later and students excitedly signing up for the trip.



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# Honors Orientation

By Eric Hettel

We all know that the first week of college is stressful. You are finally leaving home and trying to fit yourself into a new lifestyle; you may even be hundreds of miles away from home! However, if you are enrolled in the Alfred University Honors Program you don't have to worry about the first week of college giving you stress. During the Honors program orientation, each student who is enrolled is given the opportunity to meet new people and possibly have the chance to make a couple of new friends. Food and beverages are also included in order to make the newcomers feel more at home. The new students are also paired up with an older student who is referred to as their “Big Brother or Sister.” The big brother and/or sister gives insights as to how the Honors Program works as well as hints of what kinds of exciting activities the new student is able to participate in.

During the orientation, students were also separated into groups in order to find out what tasks they would be given during the course of the semester. Some activities include service activities, representing Honors at admissions events, planning various fun and games for new students to partake in, and writing articles in the newsletter to update alumni and attract future students.



# Fall 2018 Seminars

## **Bodies: Trained, Perceived, Experienced** by MacKenzie Witherell

Professor Colleen Wahl's course on the human body was very engaging and changed a lot of the perceptions commonly held towards our bodies. Whether the students were in the classroom or in the studio space, they were always asked to participate in a new activity. While some were originally skeptical about whether they would be able to do the activity, they were surprised about what their bodies could do. For example, the students were asked to learn how to box, buying gloves and coming to class with little to no experience. Many students were terrified. However, as they began to learn the motions, the smiles on their faces and their confidence in themselves grew.

Not only were the students asked to train their bodies in a new way, but they were also asked to think about the things they do with their bodies every day and the effects on their lives. How does one eat? How does one move? How does one experience the world? Each of these questions and their answers have the potential to answer something about the human body. Bodies was an extremely interesting and, surprisingly, stress-relieving class. Through the use of these activities, and an occasional reading, the students learned about core values and beliefs surrounding the body in our culture and others.

## **Cult(ure)** by Chanse McAllister

Professors Katarina Riesing and Lydia McCarthy designed an Honors seminar all about the ethos of cults. The class began by establishing the defining features of a cult: the hierarchical structure of power, coercion of individual identity, isolation, and the manipulative persuasion used by leaders. We then devoted the rest of the semester to learning about recognizable cults in American history, including the Source Family, People's Temple, the Branch Davidians, Rajneeshpuram, Heaven's Gate, and the Manson Family.

Guest speaker Sarah Byrd, professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology, visited to talk about cult fashion and how clothing creates a sense of unity and gives cults a communal identity. An example is the Rajneeshpuram; their signature red garments distinguish them as a recognized unit within rural Antelope, Oregon. Their collective style strips also individuals of their personal identities. At the end of our discussion, we looked in broader terms of fashion to reveal the our own identities as individuals and as members of different groups at Alfred.

For the final project, students designed a cult. Students were encouraged to create an experimental community using the information learned from all previous cults: the fashion conformity used in the Source Family, the manipulative power hierarchy in People's Temple, and the usage of music in the Manson Family. Each student also created a pamphlet or zine to exhibit and share the wacky and zany ideas everyone came up with. One cult with Honors students Katie Alley, Gillian D'Ambrosia, and Morgan Paul consisted of a pledge to individually eat 10,000,000 bananas in seven years. The end goal would result in radiation poisoning!

The Cult(ure) Honors course was a fascinating look into the darker side of humanity. The susceptibility of humans to fall into a cult is much easier than you would think, so be careful!

## **Cut-Bend-Fold-Bind** by Jocelyn Quintas

In the bookbinding class Cut-Bend-Fold-Bind, taught by Professor Myles Calvert, creativity and imagination are not requirements, but putting them to a test results in exciting outcomes. A bookbinding toolkit is required, but fear not, the prices for these are inexpensive and the kits are used throughout the course. Our first official assignment was the One-a-Day Notebook, in which we were asked to jot down a quick thing every single day. Assignments ranging from hand-stitching a book to rubbing an image onto paper take people into the journey of bookbinding!

As a first-year student, I had the opportunity to gather materials during the summer before officially starting at Alfred University. A suggestion to the future enrollees is to scour thrift stores for unique fabrics and accessories. The ones I bought mostly consisted of scarves and table placemats to be used for an original design.

# Fall 2018 Seminars, continued

## Data Structures and Algorithms Using Python

by Sebastian Peterson and Madeline Mahoney

People often underestimate the role of technology in the modern job market. Even if not all jobs involve computers in a direct fashion, many industries still heavily rely on them in order to get certain work done. Python is a popular program that can be used to solve various problems and create different algorithms.

Python can be difficult to explain, since there is no specific job the program was intended to do. Rather, it is up to the user to do what they see fit, whether simply experimenting with various algorithms, or solving specific problems and equations. For example, Python can help us understand machine language. By learning the patterns associated with coding, we can further understand the fundamentals of various forms of mathematics.

First, the problem must be identified. A clearly stated problem allows the solution to come easier. Then, an algorithm follows. A step-by-step process must be developed in order to keep your ideas organized. Next, we program. Human processes must be broken down to simple machine language. Instruction Set Architecture is the interface between software and hardware. The ISA of a computer determines how the given processes will play out. The micro-architecture is chosen structures that implements the ISA. Next are the circuits, which send electric signals denoting the machine language, and it is translated to a device that humans understand.

The class took place in the computer lab of Olin Hall, and was taught by Dr. Zong Dai and Dr. Amit Maha. Although there are lectures involved in the class, students are also given many opportunities to put what they learned to use with hands-on tasks involving creating sequences of code. Even during difficult parts, directions are always displayed on the board, giving students a chance to do well even if they are having trouble understanding the material. Students are rewarded for both asking and answering questions, thus creating an incentive for more interaction among the class. There's a lot to learn about the world of computing and taking a course in Python is a great way to start.

The objective of our class was to be able to solve problems using Python data structures and algorithms. With our base knowledge of human and computer processes, we were able to compute financial calculations as well as develop methods to answer mathematical equations.

## Monsters, from Folklore to Reality by Kyle Jenkins

Dr. Andy Eklund's Monsters, from Folklore to Reality seminar dives into the deep topics of discrimination, religion, and the psychology of fear. Each week the class writes in a journal about the previous week's topic. Furthermore, most classes are taught by the students through presentations which cover the history of America and how monsters have been related to the different time periods of America. Students have free rein as to what they present each week within their specific topic. They also make up a post-presentation activity the rest of the class must complete. Usually it is a crossword or a small game of Jeopardy which help to better prepare for the final, which is a big game of Jeopardy that goes over everything they have learned in the class throughout the semester.

As another part of the class the students create their own monsters and present them to the class in the end of the semester. They can be as scary as the students choose to make them. The class also has a Halloween party which is a pot-luck and includes things like pumpkin carving. Dr. Eklund also has students participate in many trips to haunted houses in the local area and movie nights at his house throughout the semester. The biggest trip is to the Rolling Hills Asylum where the class tours the haunted asylum and tends to feel paranormal activity. Overall, this Honors seminar is a very fun class that students enjoy going to every week.



# Fall 2018 Seminars, continued

## The Science and History of Alcohol by Natalie Waddell

As an Honors student at Alfred University, you get the opportunity to take some unique classes with a variety of amazing professors. One of the most popular classes offered almost every fall is The Science and History of Alcohol with Dr. Garrett McGowan, a chemistry professor here on campus. It consists of lectures on the history and science behind wine, beer, and spirits, a tour of both a brewery and a winery, and you even get to try the process yourself! The class provides a variety of educational experiences while Dr. McGowan maintains a light atmosphere and answers any questions you may have about alcohol, though his favorites tend to be those pertaining to chemistry.

The class provides students with a little relief in their busy schedules and lets them see both the modern and historical world of brewing, distilling, and wine making. This year, the class took their trips to the Brewery of Broken Dreams in Hammondsport, New York and Savor Vineyards and Winery in Arkport, New York. Both are smaller, local businesses whose welcoming and generous owners enlightened the class on their products, the processes they use, and even let the students get involved and try things themselves. If you're looking for an interesting and informative class to take here at Alfred University, The Science and History of Alcohol is one you should be sure to check out.

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## Honors Annual Trip to the Theatre

by Morgan Drohan

The show that the Honors Program went to see this school year was *Hair*. This musical was shown at the Geva Theatre Center in Rochester, New York. *Hair* is about a group of hippies during the Vietnam war that included musical variety and it featured many songs such as "Aquarius," "Let the Sunshine In," and "Manchester, England" just to name a few. The musical contained nudity, and references to drugs. There were sign language interpreters who I found particularly interesting, because when the cast was singing a very quick and animated song about drugs, they seemed to just have been pretending to smoke in a very slow, dance-like way instead of translating.

Before the musical started, cast members came up to the people in the audience and passed flowers down the rows for people to smell. At the end of the show, the performers encouraged the playgoers to vote at the upcoming election, and they helped people register to vote after the performance. Before the show, the students who participated in this excursion went to a Thai restaurant called The King and I. Overall, it was a great night.



# Interview with Dr. Gabrielle Gaustad

Dr. Gabrielle Gaustad is a 2004 graduate of Alfred University's ceramic engineering program. After graduating from Alfred magna cum laude and as part of the Honors Program, she earned her M.S. and Ph.D. in Material Science and Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In January of 2019, she returns to Alfred as the new Dean of the Inamori School of Engineering. She previously worked at Rochester Institute of Technology as an associate professor and Master of Science coordinator for the Gosilano Institute for Sustainability, which she helped pioneer. She has been responsible for the organization of several conferences, has published over sixty articles in highly-respected peer-reviewed publications, and has edited numerous journals in the field of engineering.

## Questions by Haley Ruffner

### 1. What about Alfred's Honors Program made it memorable for you?

I really enjoyed the out-of-the-ordinary classes and, of course, the people are usually what makes things special. Majors and disciplines often get deservedly maligned because of being so siloed. Dr. Paul Strong was an awesome guy and I would not have crossed paths with him or many of the other amazing students unless it was through Honors because they were outside my major.

### 2. Did you have a favorite Honors class?

I took a Classic Movies class with Dr. Strong that was truly memorable (which really strikes me because I am not really a movie person but my boyfriend at the time (who is now my husband of 12 years) pushed me into it. For the final project we actually made our own movie where we reversed the gender roles of some classic films – *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Citizen Kane*, *On the Waterfront*. It was hilarious (and eye-opening). I've got to track down that video (and destroy it LOL).

### 3. What advice do you have for current AU Honors students?

I think there are a lot of pressures on today's students and it results in a lack of diversity in offerings (that siloing thing again) as well as lack of work-life balance. To me, Honors was a great way to deal with both of those things – you get exposed to teaching that you wouldn't normally do in your curriculum, and it also introduces some time into your schedule for exploration.

### 4. If you could create your own Honors class to teach, what would it be?

This is such a tough question! I think physical activity and mind-body type classes are fantastic because that is such important self-care and often the first thing that gets dropped when constraints come up. I took a Tai Chi class that was great so maybe a training program-type class with some sports psychology mixed in. Triathlon for Beginners or Run Your First Half. I could probably think of a lot of other interesting classes too – I need to give this some thought so I can maybe really offer one in the future.

### 5. The Honors Program and the School of Engineering have always had close ties. Is there anything you would like to do to strengthen that relationship in the future?

I think it's important for SoE to support Honors and make sure that students and faculty are incentivized to participate (mainly that they have enough time to put it into their schedules).

Dr. Gabrielle Gaustad, Associate Professor  
Golisano Institute for Sustainability, Rochester Institute of Technology

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# Spring 2019 Seminars

## Alfred E. Nigmas – Garrett McGowan and Andrew Eklund

Throughout history, societies have used puzzles for relaxation and encrypting information. More recently, it has been shown that puzzles are an excellent means to flex your brain, to build cognitive ability and maintain mental health as we age. In this course, we'll study, develop, and solve puzzles of many forms – numerical, alphabetical (words), and mechanical. In addition to focusing on the history and importance of cryptography & puzzles through group presentations, ciphers ranging from simple substitution to technologically advanced systems will be discussed. Students will also design their own puzzles or ciphers.

## American Gangster – Robert Reginio

In this course we will ask: is the gangster in pop culture only an "honest" portrayal of the capitalist values that drive our society? Does the gangster genre indulge our desire for a life lived by codes of honor and loyalty, or are these facades hiding darker truths? We will watch classics in the genre like *Little Caesar*, *Scarface*, and *Public Enemy* and then compare these films with more modern classics like *The Godfather*, *GoodFellas*, and *The Sopranos*. We will consider appropriations of pop culture imagery of "La Costa Nostra" in the rap albums "Only Built 4 Cuban Linx" by Raekwon and Ghostface of the Wu Tang Clan and "American Gangster" by Jay-Z. Projects will include a series of group presentations on the changes in the representation of the gangster in film and music over the years and what these changes have to tell us about American society.

## As Gaeilge: Irish and Irishness – Karen Donnellan

Forget your stereotypes. This course will delve into contemporary Irish culture *in* and *from* Ireland. Film, food, theater, art, dance, music, sport, perhaps some history and definitely an introduction to conversational Irish language (Gaeilge)– these are just a few of the topics we will cover over the course of the semester. Coursework will feature hands-on workshops, readings, films, class discussions, individual and group projects as well as a possible field trip.

## The Science of Baking – David Marsh

We will look at how bread, cake, and pastry are so different, despite being made of the same ingredients. In the same way that chemicals are made of different combinations of elements, we will learn how to create an endless number of delicious treats with just a few things in different ratios and mixed in different ways. Class time will be devoted to baking, so you can get hands-on experience. There will be short papers reflecting on each topic, and a final project where you invent a recipe and discuss it with the class.

## Too Gouda To Be True – Myles Calvert

Soft and drippy triple cream brie, or a hard and pungent gruyere? Sample a weekly cheese while learning about its origin, production, and suggested serving. Students will present their preferred cheese to the group, allowing for discussion, analysis, and investigation of taste, texture, and smell. The semester will culminate in the class's production of a digitally bound, laser-cut, Swiss cheese triangular book – graphing, scoring, and mapping the multitude of sampled cheeses. Purchase of ONE cheese required per student to share and a \$15 lab fee to cover accompanying snacks, beverages, and book production.

# Fall Honors Highlights



Honors students and faculty represent the program throughout the year.  
The Honors community is everywhere!