



The Honorific

From the Desk of the Director

by Dr. Juliana Gray

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At first, it felt like Spring Break never ended; the students went home and didn't return. The campus seemed to be waiting for them. Then Spring 2020 courses resumed online. On our empty campus, the hills softened and greened, then bloomed with no one to appreciate their colors. Deer munched the landscaping, and feral cats lounged comfortably outside Ade and the residence halls. On one of my solitary walks, I saw a single boot, lying on a lawn as if lost by Cinderella in her haste. No prince had come to claim it, and the leather had grown a fuzz of moss.

The calendar became a book of cancellations, first the Honors Banquet, then Honors Convocation, Family Weekend, and finally graduation. The students completing thesis projects struggled to meet with faculty and do their work from a distance. We mailed walrus medallions to our graduating AU Scholars who would not get the chance to wear them as they crossed the stage to receive their diplomas. I felt tremendous sadness for those seniors who had been denied their celebrations and traditional rites of passage.

And yet, when the Fall 2020 semester began, Honors welcomed one of its largest classes of first-year students. We gathered (outdoors, masked) to eat cake and meet each other, and the students quickly began making friends in their groups and seminars. While we weren't able to hold our Death by Chocolate party, Crystal and I put together tiny gift bags to be delivered to the campus mailboxes, so our students could begin the year with a little sweetness.

Now it's spring again, almost a year since COVID-19 forced us to shut down. Our Honors seminars have met both in person and online, and our students continue to do incredible work, including this newsletter. I'm saddened that our first-year students haven't been able to enjoy some of our traditional activities, but I'm so proud of how they've rallied, determined to make the best of their college experience despite being unable to enjoy some of our favorite traditions.

We'll keep going, and we'll do our best. Our thesis students will create amazing art and conduct important research. Our first-year students will meet exciting professors and make new friends. We still have medallions and chocolate, and more importantly, we'll help each other stay safe and succeed.

Camaraderie & Cooperation: Honors Orientation 2020

by Sam Sage

On the 15th of August 2020, the Honors Program of Alfred University hosted their official orientation. While not the same as previous years, it was held as usual at the small white house with an emblem of Siggie the Walrus greeting newcomers and returning members alike.

Program members were immediately welcomed by Dr. Juliana Gray, the young-at-heart English professor, and felt like a part of the family through her Southern charm and laidback jokes. While everyone started filtering in, battling the normal awkwardness of Zoom meetings, Dr. Gray found a way to interact with as many students as she could. The group leaders also tried their hand at greeting, although it felt a bit strange as they were not able to see everyone that would eventually become their protégés and partners. But besides the uncanny valley of seeing someone on a monitor and not in-person, it was as if nothing had changed.

After the welcome and introductions, the program members were split up into break-out groups. First, there are Ambassadors who are the representatives and the ones you would talk with to get further information on what it is we do in the Honors Program. Action Figures are responsible for planning events and activities for the program. Servitors lead several events that the program put on for the campus and surrounding community. And finally, the Reporters are responsible for the newsletter you're reading.

Within the breakout groups, it was an undoubtedly hesitant start to the semester. Both newcomers and group leaders were unsure how to proceed as, in normal circumstances, these assignments would be given out over pizza and laughter. During the time of Covid-19, it was clear that the enthusiasm seemed to fade. However, this was quickly remedied as, once everyone introduced themselves, advice was given for to make the college experience enjoyable despite clear setbacks. It broke the ice, and everyone was able to share a chuckle while getting their choice of articles and ideas of what to do next. Promises of camaraderie and cooperation were made throughout that meeting, and it instilled the call of action in the new arrivals.

The ending of the orientation came too soon, when Dr. Gray and the group leaders said their good-byes and good lucks to the rest of the members. Everyone left with their new roles that they would assume once the school year officially started, ready to make the best Fall semester yet!



A Reimagined Orientation

by Monica Nowik

“Cancelled” has become a familiar term this past year, and sadly, due to COVID, most Honors events had to be entirely cancelled, or go virtual. Luckily, in early September, we were able to come together for a short time to attend a social distancing mini-party. Taking place on a blustery Saturday, the Honors students had been separated into two groups that would be staggered over an hour, so that we wouldn’t overcrowd the front lawn of the Honors House. Though it was a shame that we couldn’t have everyone all together, it felt great to see other students outside of Zoom.

Dr. Gray had our Honors T-shirts ready for pickup, and a slice of cake for everyone. The wind joined us as well, apparently not wanting to miss out. The T-shirts stayed better put than the paper plates, which made a daring escape from the table onto the grass. It was much colder than anticipated, and I remember one Honors student bemoaning, “Well, I wouldn’t have worn *shorts* if I’d *known*!”

Everyone was masked, so it took a few minutes for me to recognize people who were in my classes, but once we all put on our nametags and bumbled around for a while, trying to socialize while social distancing, we were able to connect with one another and meet new people. Even though the event had to be scaled down, everyone had a lot of fun, a lot of cake, and departed considerably more windswept than they had been.



Honors students gathering for the drop-by
cake and T-shirts event

Fall 2020 Seminars

The Science and History of Alcohol

by Evan Kent

The Science and History of Alcohol, taught by Professor Chris Romanchock and Professor Garrett McGowan, explores the science of making beer, wine, and distillates like vodka and gin, as well as the history of these drinks from ancient civilization to the modern day. We learned how yeast breaks down sugar to make alcohol, the different steps in the process of making beer and wine, and how the technology and techniques used to make alcohol changed over time. We also learned about the ways that different civilizations made and enjoyed alcohol. For instance, in ancient Greece, wine was preferable to beer and was drunk with every meal. However, drunkenness was frowned upon and parties were managed by a party master who distributed the wine, but made sure no one got overly intoxicated. At its peak, ancient Greece was making 2.5 million gallons of wine every year.

One of the projects in this class is to create a coaster with information on a specific type of beer, wine, or liquor of your choice, and then present the information to the rest of the class. The class also had a presentation from a guest speaker, Brucie Donahue, who owns a brewery in Vermont. We also spent some time in the Powell Campus Center Community Kitchen where we brewed India pale ale and made hard cider as well as other fermented drinks like kvass and kombucha. This class was a fun and hands-on exploration of the fascinating history and science of alcohol.

The Science and Psychology of Harry Potter

by Kayleah Aldrich

While many eleven-year-old kids are disappointed when they don't receive a Hogwarts acceptance letter, the college students in this Honors course finally had their childhood wish come to fruition this summer as their acceptance letters arrived in these students' email inboxes. While this course at first glance may resemble a fan club of the series, functioning to solely celebrate everything in the wizarding world, there is much more that the students and professors discussed and explored.

The discussions in class dove into a complex look into the magical world, exploring themes paralleled in our society as well as the science behind magic. From learning about the unrealistic anatomy of mythical beasts, how invisibility can be possible, and to the physics behind time travel, Dr. David DeGraff explained the evidence, theories, and experiments that answer these scientific questions. When it comes to the psychology portions of the class, Dr. Danielle Gagne led discussions of societal human behavior, reviewing essays from psychologists and connecting them to both Harry Potter and to the real world. We discussed topics such as: What would you do if you were invisible? Why? Then, based on those answers: What makes someone invisible in real life? What are examples of "indivisible" individuals? Students played card games to replicate The Prisoner's Dilemma and other small-scale social experiments. The Alfred wizarding students also had conversations about the flaws in the series, the harm caused by the author's statements on gender issues, and how as a community we go on. Overall this course contained much more than dressing in our house colors and making allusions to the series. Combining science and psychology brought a new perspective to a series that has been loved throughout our lifetimes.

Fall 2020 Seminars, continued

What is Camp?

by Kirsten Gollhofer

This past semester, I chose to take the Honors seminar called CAMP! You may ask, “what is camp?” “Wait, you learn about camping like, in the woods?” I’ve gotten both of these questions every time I talk about this seminar.

Susan Sontag wrote an essay about the concept of camp. She described it as a sensibility that revels in artifice, stylization, theatricalization, irony, playfulness, and exaggeration rather than content. Since this is a complicated definition to explain to people, I basically say that in my camp class, we point out outlandish things in society, such as film, fashion and music.

For some of the classes, taught by Dr. Kerry Kautzman, we talked about drag queens. Learning about the drag queen Divine was very interesting. Divine was known in the mid 1960s to early 1980s for doing the craziest things possible for pure reaction, things that would make people cringe or feel uncomfortable or give a rush of being on the edge of your seat. John Waters made a film called *Pink Flamingos* in which Divine is known to be the filthiest person in the world. The couple Raymond and Connie try to become even more filthy than Divine. I watched this film outside of class and I was so surprised and felt gross about how graphic some scenes were. When we watched a part of the movie in class, it was interesting seeing everyone’s first reactions because I already knew what was going to happen.

For some of the other classes, we watched music videos that classmates suggested, and everyone had to bring in a campy object and dress in a campy outfit. My object was my Dwight Schrute poster. It’s campy because it took a tv show icon and put it onto a religious figure. It’s literally Dwight Schrute’s head on top of Mother Mary. My outfit was an emo cowgirl. I own a red, bejeweled tiara cowgirl hat, and I wore it with an edgy black top, black shorts, fishnet tights and vans. This was campy because of the contrast in style, the girly hat with an edgy outfit.

To answer the question earlier, the CAMP! seminar is not about camping in the woods.

The Aliens Did It?

by Audrey Buddendeck

In Professor John D’Angelo’s quirky Honors course, we explore if extraterrestrials are actually responsible for events like The Black Plague, connections to our founding fathers, alien technology influencing the Nazi Party, and much more. Each class, we watch an episode of History Channel’s *Ancient Aliens* that explores a particular topic in history and the alien conspiracies behind it, while students think of a question related to said topic to research to research throughout the week and present their findings during the following class.

Simultaneously, students must work on a term paper exploring an in-depth topic related to aliens. Each video is connected with the same conspiracy theorists or alien researchers speaking on the subject matter. We analyzed how alien conspiracies can be found regarding almost any historical event, and whether there is sufficient evidence to disregard the currently accepted story in history. Though we may never know the answers to these questions, it is interesting for students to get engaged in other students’ research and to notice how some people are quick to dispute scientific evidence and think outside the box while others turn to concrete evidence.

Fall 2020 Seminars, continued

Laughter Crafters: Political Cartoons and Memes

by Paul J. Boldin, Jr.

In this Honors course, entertainment was definitely not in short supply! Headed by Professors Eklund and Sluyter-Beltrao, the main goal of the class was pretty obvious: we all analyzed political cartoons and memes! In this laid-back environment, both instructors selected discussion topics: politics here in the United States, cultural issues of all kinds, international stories, election years, you name it. The fact that we were able to find and analyze memes on pretty much any of the topics listed above was not only impressive but led to interesting debates within the class!

Each student was assigned to compile a list of internet memes and/or political cartoons (whether satirical or not) from any reputable news site, and to present their findings to the class. Not only that, but we even had group quizzes where the questions themselves were (you guessed it) **MEMES!** I think this is the first time that I've actually had great fun while taking a test in a class! Other assignments included face-offs, which were basically mini-debates between class members on a particular topic, and finding our favorite SNL skits that had a relevant topic to the course (some of the ones we watched this year were hilarious, by the way...)

So, if having belly laughs on a Wednesday night while discussing political memes with your classmates sounds like fun, then sign up for this wonderful seminar! Oh, by the way, Professor Eklund brings his dog to the meetings...Sabi is adorable!!!

Bad Words

by Katt Villanueva

When signing up for a class titled "Bad Words," you expect to learn one thing and one thing only, if it isn't too obvious. Professor Robert Myers's class, however, is much more than surface level swears and curses. The first two weeks were chock-full of information about the importance of a liberal education, with lots and lots of readings. This set the tone for the remainder of the course, for Dr. Myers does not cut anyone short of readings that pertain to the new weekly topic.

The Zoom lectures in this online seminar were very fluid and were mostly led by the students, with Dr. Myers giving the class conversation points and insight onto what students are saying. Typical class discussions, especially over Zoom, are a headache, but in this class, many felt that they were learning from the experiences and feelings of others.

Dr. Myers was always very excited about the topic of discussion and thoroughly encouraged his students to learn more and keep the conversation going even if class was over. He was always willing to provide more information on the topics discussed in class in order for one to get the full experience of learning in his truly unique class.

College in Unprecedented Times

College Through the Eyes of a First-Year Student During COVID

By Bianca Durso

As a first-year student during a global pandemic, my first semester in college has been experienced quite differently than by all the students before me. Prior to coming to Alfred University, many people had expressed pity for me because I would not have the “normal college experience.” Although I knew this was true, I was still excited. Even though it would not be a normal experience, I had never been to college before, so everything was still new and exciting. To me, this was normal.

That said, being a first-year student during COVID has presented some unique challenges. Not being allowed in other dorms and minimal common spaces to spend time with people has made it a bit more difficult to make new friends. In addition, the lack of in-person classes and the lack of sports has made it difficult to adjust to a new lifestyle due to not having a set schedule. Although there are many times that I find myself wishing I could’ve had a normal orientation, football games to attend, in-person classes, and much more, I am still loving college.

In spite of everything, I have already met some of my best friends here and am looking forward to how much better it will get when COVID is no longer a worry. I have found that if I sit around wishing things were different, I just end up sad and overwhelmed. Like anything, it is all about making the best of the cards we have been dealt. As John Wooden said, “If we fail to adapt, we fail to move forward.” So, we make the best of it. I am a first-year student during COVID and that’s okay. I am still receiving an amazing education, I am still making friends, and I am still experiencing growth. For that, I am thankful, and I am happy.

My Experience Here So Far

By Casey McKenna

I have had a great time since I’ve been on campus and I look forward to future years. I came to campus expecting to be able to go around meeting people and having lacrosse practice pretty much every day. However, that didn’t happen. The first two weeks here I was able to meet all the guys on the team, spend some time with them, and get to know them. We had classes online so I was stuck in my room pretty much all day, which wasn’t fun. Once we started classes in person, I was able to experience what college life really was and we started working out for lacrosse. A couple weeks later we started practice and everything started to seem normal. After about two weeks of practice, however, we had to stop due to COVID cases and my friends and I were really upset.

Even with all the COVID stuff going on I am still able to hang out with a bunch of the first-year lacrosse players. We have a lot of fun. Sometimes we’ll drive down to Hornell to get something to eat and walk around Walmart, or go down to the turf and play lacrosse and football on our own. However, the weather is getting bad so we have been stuck inside doing school work and playing video games. It’s not too bad. I just wish the weather was nicer so we could spend time outside. We did start lacrosse back up again, but it’s not as fun when you are practicing in the cold rain. I’m just glad that we haven’t gotten sent home because of COVID. I love being on campus because Alfred University is a beautiful place.

The Alfred Farmers' Market

by Josie Fasolino

The Alfred Farmers' Market was held from mid-June to late October at the Alfred Village Bandstand on the corner of Main Street and Saxon Drive. Live music, rich conversations, and the scents of freshly baked bread, honey, and fruits permeated the air. The market is a growers-only space, meaning that the vendors grow and produce their own goods. Alfred's tight-knit community supports small businesses who strive to produce the best quality goods.

Whisper Hill Farms is run by Chuck Annis and Karen Weinbauer, who maintain eleven beehives using only organic and ethical methods. They make creamed honeys with dehydrated berries, blueberry and hickory syrup, and tinctures (herbal medicines) made from different flowers and bee propolis. The medicines can relieve a sore throat, help reduce anxiety and muscle pain, and boost circulation. For Mr. Annis and Ms. Weinbauer, the best part of the Alfred Farmers' market is the engagement with the students, who they said are both polite and respectful.

Dwn Marshall and Mary Perkins run Perky Ball Garlic, a family business that sells apples and garlic lollies, which are bunches of garlic that are easy to grab and cook in a meal.

Misty Long-Donoho, an alumna of Alfred University, creates functional glass sculptures and decor such as dinosaur glasses, glass magnets, and zombie pumpkins. She feels like the Alfred market is a "scheduled break." "It's a good excuse to sit outside and bring smiles to peoples' faces," she said.

Living Acres Farm sells fresh herbs, vegetables, berries, flowers, and eggs, while Mascho Homestead Farms sells pasture-raised beef and pork. Bread for All offers homemade bread and other baked goods.

Lukas Easton, a graduate student at Alfred University, sews his own cotton masks that come in a variety of unique patterns and styles, while Kellogg's Alpacas sells alpaca purses and garments.

Ellicottville Distillery sells a range of unique drinks, from honey spirits and apple pie moonshine to maple bourbon crème. Mathieu Figueredo explained the unique way that Ellicottville creates their vodka and gin. Rather than using wheat and potato, they use fresh apples as the base and age their spirits in barrels that create different flavors and sweetness levels.

There are a wide variety of sellers at the Alfred Farmers' Market, and it was a pleasure to visit every Sunday and bring home giant sunflowers and bunches of deliciously sweet concord grapes. The market not only supports local businesses, but allows people to talk directly with farmers and learn about the amazing products offered.

Interview with the Dean of The School of Art and Design

By Jenna Howland

Lauren Lake is the new Dean of The School of Art and Design and The Division of Performing Arts. I asked her a few questions related to the difficulties and optimism she faces in her new position during these unprecedented times.

Why did you want to come to Alfred?

I chose Alfred because of its caring community of culture makers – its living-learning community dedicated to innovation and excellence in the arts and to its students through practice, creative activity, and research alongside the top faculty in the field and with an amazing support staff. There are also good opportunities to do things differently. How that unfolds over the next few years will be hard work but also rewarding.

Also, I find the space and beauty of the valley remarkable. My twin daughters are very excited for the snow!

What changes are you looking to bring to the School of Art and Design / Performing Arts?

Work to create a more safe, more inspirational and more sustainable learning and working community. This can be unpacked in many ways and I hope to unpack what the current practice is and repack it with the help of others to become the best we can be.

How have you been dealing with issues related to COVID?

Personally and professionally, I have been worried about the impact COVID has had on our communities and the lasting impact it will have. Personally, I try to be accommodating, understanding and flexible with people understanding the stress that COVID has created for communities, from mental health and the wellbeing of those who are at a greater risk of contraction. Of course I worry about our systems of education and the impact COVID has on them and how we navigate this time and take care of one another.



Ronan Adams, a student in the CAMP! seminar, created a final "Embody Your Camp" project that included photographs of him surrounded by thrift store items, toys, and other objects that he has collected over the years. Adams describes the images as "a performance of myself as simultaneously the most and the least me."

Spring 2021 Honors 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 of flexing your brain, building cognitive ability, and maintaining 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.

A Dark and Stormy Night

Allen Grove

Become a published writer! In this seminar, we'll survey 180 years of haunting tales. We'll read stories about haunted houses, haunted objects, and haunted minds. Each student will then write an original ghost story, and the seminar will culminate with the design, editing, and publication of an anthology of those stories.

Difficult Womxn

Rise Peacock

Difficult Womxn is a seminar that honors and explores the voices and written words of womxn who have been deemed “difficult” or disruptive during our contemporary times. BIPOC voices will be prioritized, and authors for the course will include Roxane Gay, Mikki Kendall, Audre Lorde, and bell hooks. This course will also include excerpts from the book *Nonbinary: Memoirs of Gender and Identity*. Students will engage in critically-led discussions based on the readings and will eventually lead their sessions. Assignments will include a weekly journal entry utilizing the creative style of the commonplace journal and a self-directed project or presentation.

DO NOT PASS GO AND DO NOT COLLECT \$200: What we can learn through board games

Likin Simon Romero

In this class, we will see how to use board games as a pedagogical tool. Each class will be centered around a subject (such as history, economics, natural sciences, social justice, morality and ethics). The students will play a game in class whose theme matches the corresponding subject. They will be asked to write a short reflection about the board game that they played and its theme. As a final project, students will choose a topic and a board game, then develop supporting materials (such as brochures, reference cards, images, audio, questionnaires, etc.) that could be used in a classroom setting to teach the chosen topic.

Spring 2021 Honors Seminars, continued

Quest for Knowledge: Dungeons & Dragons

Danielle Gagne

Seasoned players, Dungeon Masters, and newbies can join this honorific quest for knowledge. Adventurers in this course will read not-so-ancient scrolls on topics related to the literary roots of Dungeons & Dragons, the societal impact of the game, the “backlash” from parent and religious groups, racism, sexism, the role of magic in society, role-playing and identity, morality, and why no one really likes kobolds. Join weekly quiz-quests for experience points (i.e., grades), play a bit, and create a character sheet based on your analysis of a well-known persona for the final.

Smash Stuff: An Intro to Sustainable Materials Engineering

Gabrielle Gaustad

In this course we will be smashing diverse products with a focus on electronic waste (phones, tablets, a TV, VCRs, kitchen appliances, etc.). After some stress-relieving destruction, we will endeavor to identify all of the contained materials using basic characterization techniques (no prior experience required). Discussion on Design for X (X = Reuse, Remanufacturing, Recycling) and sustainability implications will be included. Each student will submit a bill of materials for their products which will be synthesized for the entire class. The final project will be a design change to reduce the environmental impact of one of these products (the deliverable can be a presentation, report, or prototype).

Training Methodology: Ancient Spartans to Spartan Racers

Tim Keenan

From soldiers of ancient Sparta and ninjas of Japan, to marathon runners and triathletes, to today's on-screen Batman and Superman, explore the evolution of training methodology among athletes throughout history, including both physical regimens and mental approaches, designed to achieve maximum success. Weekly readings and videos will stimulate in-class discussions, and students will be asked to prepare a final presentation summarizing which techniques they found most intriguing, and whether there are any methods they might adopt themselves.

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Honors students enjoyed a sunny walk around Alfred's "big block."