



The Honoric

Fall 2011

From the Desk of the Director...

We greeted a class of 33 new Honors first-years in late August. In the last two years, we have enrolled classes of 73 new students—whereas the previous two years total was 45—so we're, indeed, up about 62% in the last two years! This has been accomplished without a significant drop in overall quality, using standardized tests and general criterion.

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We are continuing the theme of building community within the Honors Program into this new year. The first-year-experience/Leadership program is now focused almost exclusively to classroom teaching. To facilitate more Honors Program involvement, new students were assigned to one of four groups: (1) The Action Figures, whose responsibility is planning activities and events, (2) The Journalists, who have been responsible for creating this newsletter, (3) The Ambassadors, who are redesigning our Honors webpages and meeting with prospective students at open houses, and (4) The Advisors, who make suggestions about changes to the program. Two advanced students serve as leaders for each group—and the Advisors (leaders) also sit on the Honors Advisory Board. After a pizza dinner, the groups met during our Honors Orientation and began laying the groundwork for their plans for this year. Each group came back with a definitive plan—and the groups have been active in implementing those plans thus far this fall.

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Photographer: Hannah Dunscombe

Death by Chocolate was—well, as fabulous as ever! I even heard one new student utter the sentence, “This is why I joined the Honors Program” when she saw the ‘spread’. Big Brothers/Big Sisters met with their new mentees and it was quite an event. Since then, we have already had two discussions in our EFES series (Education for Education’s Sake). Dr. David DeGraff and Dr. Danielle Gagne spent an evening discussing the Harry Potter phenomenon, with a group of about 20 students, in the living room of the Honors House. Two weeks later, Dr. Rob Reginio presented his views on ‘protest music’ to a group of diehards, given the sudden and unexpected October snowstorm. Well, should we ever say snow is unexpected in Alfred? The Servitors have completed a ‘clean up Foster Lake’ project and are now planning some raking leaves outings for the Montessori School in town. The

Ambassadors are creating a new Honors Collage Poster, which will highlight some of the key aspects of our program and be a useful tool at the Open House events in the fall and spring. This November, we had

our annual ‘field trip’ to see Bela Fleck and the Flecktones at the University at Buffalo campus. We were all dazzled by the wizardry of some of the best musicians on the planet—and enjoyed some great food at the Cheesecake Factory as well. Board Games nights have been well-attended and movie nights are also in the works.

Fall seminars were nearly completely full, given the larger enrollment in the program. We offered: Sports as a Microcosm of the World (Andy Eklund and John DeAngelo), Drinking Up: The History and Science of Alcohol (Chris Romanchock and Garrett McGowan), Text and Image (Elizabeth Blomster), Tightwaddery (Emrys Westacott), Wiseguys, Whackos, and Whiners (Jeff Sluyter-Beltrão), and T'ai Chi (Steve Crosby). The first three were totally new offerings and the last three, old favorites. In the spring, we will be offering seven Honors Seminars: The Practice of Yoga (Celicia Beach), Culture, Cuisine, and Film (Becky Prophet), The Science and Psychology of Harry Potter (David DeGraff and Danielle Gagne), Films of David Lynch (Rob Reginio), Get Crafty (Elizabeth Blomster), Maple Syrup (Laurie McFadden), and Anatomy of a Murderer (Michele Lowry). These selections, too, represent a nice mix of new offerings with some old favorites. In order to ensure their enrollment in the Harry Potter Seminar, in fact, students began lining up in front of Deb Ohara's office as early as 5:45 AM! See our webpage, www.alfred.edu/honors, for a picture of students waiting in the hallway of Seidlin Hall.

If you have any thoughts, ideas, or questions about the Honors Program, please feel free to contact me at: Atlas@Alfred.Edu. I'm open to any suggestions, comments, questions, and even (especially) donations for the program. This is my fourth year as director and I feel that I am still ‘learning on the job’ and thoroughly enjoying the process.

-Honors Program Director Gordon Atlas

Siggy or Siggie?

Did you know that the AU Honors Program has a seal? Well, our seal is, in fact, a walrus. One of the hallmarks of the Alfred University Honors Program is the opportunity to take seemingly typical everyday discussions and turn them into intellectual quests. And since we don't conform to standards of typical Honors programs, neither should we conform to archetypal mascots. And so “Siggy” (or Siggie) became the nickname of our walrus. Here are some fun facts about walruses just in case this sparked your curiosity!

Walrus Facts

- 1.) The Walrus' scientific name, 'Odobenus rosmarus', is Latin for 'tooth-walking sea-horse.'
- 2.) The walrus' whiskers are not hairs, but actually extremely sensitive, tactile organs, much like a cat's whiskers.
- 3.) The tusks of a full-grown walrus can weigh over 3 pounds each.
- 4.) Walruses' only natural enemies are the killer whale and polar bear.
- 5.) Walrus calves can swim at birth and usually stay with its mother for two to three years until it takes off on its own.
- 6.) The adult male walrus can weigh from 900kg to 1400kg (2000 to 3000lbs) and can grow to 12ft in length.
- 7.) A walrus can remain under water for up to 30 minutes before coming up for air.

Fall 2011 Seminars

Drinking Up: The History and Science of Alcohol

“The History and Science of Alcohol has been an interesting insight into the processes of beer and wine-making. During the first half of the semester, we learned about the history and chemical makeup of beer, made our own beer from a kit and visited a brewery. In the second half of the semester, we learned the history and chemistry of wine and began the process of making wine, and we are set to tour a vineyard at the end of the semester.” -Matt Bushong

Sports as a Microcosm of the World

“As a reluctant sports fan, I was apprehensive entering Sports as a Microcosm of the World. Luckily, the course required no prior knowledge or inclination for sports. Taught by avid sports fans Dr. Andy Ecklund and John D’Angelo, the class focuses on the impact of sports beyond the field, including economics, politics, culture, psychology, discrimination and corruption. Imperative to these discussions are the “Events that Transcended Sports,” including Jackie Robinson re-integrating baseball in 1947, the massacre of 11 Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics by Palestinian terrorists and Tommie Smith & John Carlos raising the Black Power salute at the 1968 Olympics. The class has been a complete success, with a recent potluck and team trivia day, and no one in the class (not even me) can claim to find sports boring anymore.” -Olivia Barber

Two men meet on the street.

One asks the other: *"Hi, how are you?"*

The other one replies: *"I'm fine, thanks."*

"And how's your son? Is he still unemployed?"

"Yes, he is. But he is meditating now."

"Meditating? What's that?"

"I don't know. But it's better than sitting around and doing nothing!"

A sad-looking man sat at the bar in a crowded tavern. A drink sat on the bar in front of him, but he did not take a sip.

Instead, he merely sat, staring at the drink. He stayed like that for half an hour.

A beefy truck driver walked in, stepped up to the bar next to him, and waited impatiently to be served. When the bartender didn't appear, the truck driver looked over at the sad man's drink for a minute or two. Then he reached over, picked up the drink, and downed it in one gulp. The man sad looked up at him in shock and began to cry.

The truck driver, taken aback, felt contrite. Apparently this man had had a very bad day. He said, "Come on man, I was just joking. I'll buy you another drink. Just stop whining. I can't stand to see a grown man cry."

"It's not that," the sad man replied. "This day is the worst day of my life. First, I overslept and got to my office late. My boss, outraged, fired me. When I left the building to go to my car, I found out it had been stolen. The police said that they could do little or nothing. I got a cab to return home and when it drove away, I realized that I had left my wallet and credit cards on the back seat. I went inside and find my wife in bed with my brother, so I left home and came to this bar. I was just thinking about putting an end to my life - when you showed up and drank my poison..."

Tai Chi

This course intends to have dual emphases. Academically, students are introduced to T'ai Chi's early history and its evolution into the contemporary era. It explores T'ai Chi's philosophical background in relation to Chinese culture, comparing and contrasting with Western thought. Readings provide additional sources for class discussions, which include what is meant by the energy "Chi" and the internal power of "Jing". Students also learn approximately half of the 64 movements of the form and the physical/mental/meditative preparation required for proper learning. Proper practice provides students with a balanced mind, spirit, and body!

Wiseguys, Whackos and Whiners

“Wiseguys, Whackos, and Whiners has been an interesting and intellectually stimulating course. We read one or two "manifestos" throughout the week on radical topics such as extreme Islam or Anti-Technology and discuss the main points. Two to three students are assigned as the "defenders." These individuals, for better or for worse, must defend the author's point, no matter how extremist it seems. The others in the class write a position paper on their views of the radical thinking and come prepared to debate. It can get a little heated and a little personal at times, but this seminar was a great choice! It encourages us to embrace viewpoints that oppose our own and view the world in a different way.” - Casey Duncan, Patrick Cigno, Elizabeth Clark

Socialism: You have two cows. The government takes one and gives it to your neighbor.

Communism: You have two cows. You give them to the government, and the government then gives you some milk.

Fascism: You have two cows. You give them to the government, and the government then sells you some milk.

Capitalism: You have two cows. You sell one and buy a bull.

Nazism: You have two cows. The government shoots you and takes the cows.

Bureaucracy: You have two cows. You give them to the government. they shoot one, milk the other and then pour the milk down the drain.

Text and Image

“I was a little apprehensive on my first day of Text and Image, and I wasn’t the only one. None of us had made books before, and for some, it was the first time we had even stepped foot in the art building. However, I quickly realized that this class would be a fun and creative experience. Our first assignment was to make an origami

book and fill it with words or images that we chose. When we were done, we had to make a copy for everyone in the class. I filled my book with motifs about women in mythology, and my classmates made books on topics including Doctor Who, happiness, how to make friends, an alligator bus that eats fish on their way to school, and manatees. It was great to see them all together because each one was so interesting and unique. Other assignments will include an accordion book of abstract and realistic images and rebinding an old hardcover book.” -Nicole Anderson

Tightwaddery, or the Good Life on a Dollar a Day

“Tightwaddery, or the Good Life on a Dollar a Day has been eye-opening, intriguing and thoroughly enjoyable. We analyze the philosophy of frugality, discussing the value of our daily purchases, the minimum requirements to attain happiness in our lives, and how consumer society has blocked our instinctive “tightwad” tendencies. By

Old Toby, who had lost all his teeth, had a visit from the minister, who noted that Toby had a bowl of almonds. "My brother gave me those, but I don't want them, you can have them," said Old Toby. The minister tucked into them and said, "That was a funny present to give a man with no teeth." To which Old Toby replied, "Not really. They had chocolate on them....."

studying classic philosophers and their views on frugality, we try to determine what we need in life as opposed to what we desire. Classes have included reading poetry at Foster Lake, discussing ancient theories of frugality, analyzing popular commercials and advertisements, and watching Michael Moore’s film, *Roger & Me.*” - Julieann Angie and Roxanne Baker

Spring 2012 Seminars

A Recipe for a Murderer

Blend together an unassuming appearance, a dash of charm, a pinch of narcissism, intelligence (optional) and make sure to leave out the remorse. Have you ever wondered what makes some people capable of murder and others not? Could your neighbor or your best friend have a dark and murderous side? In this course we delve into the minds of some of the world's most infamous serial and mass murderers and explore what makes otherwise seemingly normal people become ruthless killers. Using popular fiction and film, we examine the many theories of violence that have developed throughout the ages and some of the world's most heinous killers.

Culture, Cuisine, Film & Food

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. We discuss books and films that focus on food and provide us with respect for the taste and cultural expression that good, healthy food can be for body and soul.

Science and Psychology of Harry Potter

JK Rowling's world of witchcraft and wizardry provides a window into the human psyche and the mysteries of science. Required reading includes "The Science of

Harry Potter," "The Psychology of Harry Potter," and assorted scrolls available through your Blackboard portal. Students and their housemates will conduct two 15-minute presentations on topics related to: the magical appeal of magic; aerodynamics of Quidditch; time travel and time turners; traveling with Portkeys and Floo Powder; the unnatural biology of magical creatures; teenage angst, friendships, and romance; psychological defense mechanisms, death, and grief.

The Practice of Yoga

Have you ever wanted to be as tall as a mountain or as graceful as a peacock, to fly like a bird or leap like a monkey? All this is possible in the age-old tradition of yoga. This seminar introduces students to the ancient discipline of personal development that balances body, mind, and spirit. Students learn physical postures as well as methods for relaxation, yogic breathing, and meditation that promote health, reduce stress, improve alignment and balance, and increase strength and flexibility. The seminar also provides an introduction to the history and philosophy of yoga.

American Gothic: Films of David Lynch

The films of David Lynch give us a gorgeous and disturbing view of the shiny surfaces and tenebrous murk at the heart of American life. Stylish like Hitchcock, more daring than Tarratino, Lynch's movies are as unique and (wonderfully) perverse as your most stunning dreams. In this course we watch and discuss Lynch's movies with appropriate divergences into dream

interpretation theory, the world of sexual and social deviance, and Hollywood (the world of deviant dreams).

Get Crafty!

Take crafting to the next level by mapping out a project that activates your hands and mind. Your project can be designed to deepen an existing skill or experiment with something new like knitting, felting, weaving, soft sculpture or rug hooking. We will visit a craft show, artisan's studios and talk with professionals about the business of selling crafts. The course culminates by elevating the status of craft arts by installing a show of our completed works.

Maple Syrup: The Real Thing

The method of producing maple syrup is one of the things in our society that has endured even in today's culture of constant change; fundamentally, it's the same process Native Americans used centuries ago. The study of maple syrup is a way to investigate a variety of disciplines. This class allows for an introduction and discussion of them as well as cooking with maple syrup. Additionally, field trips to local producers, restaurants and festivals helps the students explore the local community.

Events



Students lined up to sign up for spring Honors seminars

Orientation and Death by Chocolate



The Honors Program kicked off the new school year with a successful Honors Orientation for first-year students and a beautifully delicious Death by Chocolate reception! Honors students and faculty members got acquainted over a variety of wonderful chocolate desserts.



Foster Lake Clean-up



Honors students and Outdoor Club members made a trip up to Foster Lake this fall to clean up the hiking trails. Students and faculty braved the wet weather to remove logs and branches that had fallen onto the paths around the lake. After the work was finished, volunteers ended the day with a damp, but still enjoyable barbecue and walk around the lake.

Bela Fleck and the Flecktones

This fall, a group of Honors students took a trip to Buffalo to see noteworthy banjo band Bela Fleck and the Flecktones with Bela Fleck and Victor Wooten, arguably the best banjo and bassist in the country. A good time was had by all, including Dr. Atlas and Dr. Juliana Gray. For dinner before the show, we enjoyed a great meal and delicious cheesecake at the Cheesecake Factory. Everyone survived the long trip and made it home safely through the fog and rain. The windshield may have been dampened, but the mood sure wasn't!

Honors Night at the Observatory



Everyone loves to look up at the stars on those clear, crisp Alfred evenings, right? While that might not be the most popular thing to do on a Saturday night, it is what some students choose. With the help of Dr. DeGraff, Tony Gai, and Nick Jiminez, a group of Honors students were able to see some of those stars up close. The full moon was spectacular and so bright that it hurt our eyes! Dr. DeGraff showed us that the brightest objects in the sky at this time of year are not actually stars, but the moon and Jupiter, which we also observed. Using a computerized telescope, we got to see our neighbor, the Andromeda Galaxy, which is apparently going through a “mid-life crisis” just like the Milky Way.

Alumni Updates

Sara Kathleen

I'm living in South Lancaster, MA and teaching Integrated I and Geometry at Nashoba Regional High School. And, as an aside, at Parent-Teacher Conferences today, I met a man from Canisteo! We had a very nice talk about Alfred, and I found out that his sister is VP at SUNY Alfred.

Emily Lessig

I am living in Reading, PA, working at a company called Interflex where I work with food service directors across the country to put out their bids each year. Ned Lessig and I got married on the Fourth of July this year and are enjoying life as newlyweds! After my honors thesis in 2010 creating a quilt, I've since learned to crochet and am working on my first full afghan.

Jasmine Lellock

I graduated from AU in 2000. I lived in 8 Park back in the day. I'm a doctoral candidate in English literature at the University of Maryland. My dissertation is on magic in early English drama (fun, right?). I married Josh Hertz ('99), and we have a lovely daughter named Cora (and another on the way!). I hope all is well back at AU!

Arianna Carini

I've been in Wales for almost two months and everything is going swimmingly. I'm working on a MSc in Conservation Practice at Cardiff University and absolutely loving it. I've learned a lot, but there's so much I don't know yet. My crowning achievement thus far is that I've successfully removed an unknown adhesive and orange fuzz stuck to the back of a 18th century British coin! I know, it sounds thrilling, but it really is. I would highly suggest to any Honors student to apply to grad school abroad if feasible!

Catherine Kevett

I've been working at Johnson & Johnson now for 4.5 years, using my Alfred psychology and communication degree each and every day as a human resources business partner to various parts of the exciting pharmaceutical business. Personally, I am in the process of buying a house and selling a house with my significant other, James (who became a fan of Alfred--rightly so, of course--when I took him up to visit a couple of years ago). What a stressful venture! Hopefully we'll sell our current house and be settled in our new house before the end of the year. No kids yet--but I did adopt a horse three years ago, and he's teaching me so much that I'm convinced will help me in motherhood ... when that time comes! I miss my Alfred "family" and am looking forward to 2013 for our 10-year reunion!