Honors College Students Take Leadership Positions with Westminster Publications

BY GWENDELYN SALAZAR

The Forum and Ellipsis are both longstanding publications run by Westminster students. While Ellipsis is published annually, The Forum consists of both print and online content published much more regularly. Its current managing editor, Marina McTee, and editor-in-chief, Cami Mondeaux, are both members of the Honors College.

McTee is responsible for managing and editing content produced by The Forum. She also helps develop story ideas and maintain brand consistency and publication standards.

“We cover anything and everything happening at Westminster. We produce content that we think is important and relevant,” McTee said.

Mondeaux has control over The Forum and must give permission before anything is published. She also helps give the staff members guidance every step of the way.

“Everything that comes from The Forum has been looked at by me so many times. I oversee the students in the class and lead the team of editors,” Mondeaux said.

McTee, the managing editor, wants to pursue a career in journalism that involves critiquing media. The Forum and Honors College have made her a better journalist, she said.

“The Forum has taught me how to exist in the media world. The Honors College has helped me be able to look at an issue from different perspectives,” McTee said.

Mondeaux, the Editor-in-Chief, intends to be a reporter who covers politics. She says she will bring the skills she acquired from the Honors College and The Forum with her.

“The Honors College transformed the way I interact with people,” Mondeaux said. It made me more confident to ask questions, which is very important in journalism. Every day I...

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Professors outside of the classroom: Books written by Honors faculty

BY CAMI MONDEAUX

Mutuality, Mystery and Mentorship in Higher Education (Sense Publishers) – Mary Jo Hinsdale

This book is geared toward college faculty and staff who want to do more than just teach – they want to mentor and foster a relationship with their students. Hinsdale discusses race, gender, and class relations that continue to exclude marginalized students from higher education and meaningful connections with faculty. Hinsdale proposes a new form of mentorship that focuses on reciprocity and decolonizing the mentor-protégé relationship in the hopes that such guidance will improve outcomes for marginalized students.

The Mirror Test (Knopf) – J. Kael Weston

Before writing this book, Weston spent seven years in Iraq and Afghanistan as a member of the U.S. State Department. When he returned home, amidst the heartbreak of paying respect to the dead and wounded, he began to ponder the lessons that could be learned from these experiences. He reflected on the wars he endured and began to ask questions about warfare – wondering when they will end and at what cost.

The Spiral Jetty Encyclo (University of Utah Press) – Hikmet Sidney Loe

In this book, Loe provides a source of information and insight for anyone interested in the construction and significance of Spiral Jetty, an earthwork that Robert Smithson contributed to the Land Art movement in 1970.

Nietzsche’s Last Laugh (Cambridge University Press) – Nick More

More provides one of the first full-length treatments of Nietzsche’s frequently criticized posthumous text, Ecce Homo, reorienting our understanding of the work as satiric treatise that critiques poor philosophy through comic means.


Badenhausen explores Eliot’s collaboration with a wide range of other writers in his poetry, prose, and drama. The book demonstrates how Eliot’s focus on collaboration is tied to social, cultural, and political concerns.

Public Policy and Land Exchange (Routledge) – Giancarlo Panagia

According to the publisher, Panagia’s book is “the first to bring economic sociology theory to the study of federal land exchanges.” The author uses case studies to explore strategies used by land developers in federal-private land swaps, some of which constitute corruption.

The Predicteds (Sourcebooks Fire) – Christy Seifert

The author of numerous books, Seifert has written a compelling young adult novel that explores dystopian themes like computers predicting future behavior. This suspense-filled teenage drama has been translated into three languages.
It’s 2:00 pm on Thursday and your paper is due tomorrow at midnight. You wrote the paper in a caffeinated haze the night before, so you decide to schedule a quick appointment with the Writing Center to look it over before submitting.

This is a situation Honors students know all too well. In fact, it’s so common that Honors students make up 13-14% of consultations at the Westminster Writing Center—usually during their first semester of Welcome to Thinking, according to Writing Center director and Honors professor Chris LeCluyse.

These students may often come in with a bias and assume that assignments in the Honors College can’t be understood by peer tutors who are not in that program. However, all the student consultants who work there can provide help.

“There are lots of incredibly effective, intelligent students at Westminster who just don’t happen to be in the Honors College and they can benefit by getting feedback on their writing regardless of if they are in…honors,” said LeCluyse.

While many students come to the center for quick fixes or last looks, the true potential of utilizing this resource is much bigger.

“There is so much more we can do than just look at commas,” LeCluyse said. “Let’s talk about the ideas that you’re kicking around, let’s talk about the goals of the assignment. There’s so much.”

In fact, more substantive consultations often result in better end products.

“My favorite consultation is a brainstorming session,” said consultant Jen Hylwa, who is also in Honors. “I’ve learned a lot from asking questions and I think that coming up with a strong thesis before you write your paper can be so influential on your final product.”

Jennifer Hylwa (’20)

One of the focuses of the center is to shift the idea that writing, especially ‘good’
“Don’t be a duck.”
This unofficial motto of the Honors College describes a simplified view of how to survive as a first-year student in college: don’t force yourself to appear calm and serene on the surface while kicking frantically to keep afloat underneath.

The stress of trying to stay afloat affects college students across the country, but only recently have campuses begun to bring the conversation about wellness out of the shadows.

Beginning this year, Richard Badenhausen, dean of the Honors College, and the Honors staff incorporated the topic of wellness into the first-year courses Welcome to Thinking and Tuesday Conversation.

“We have to go at it very deliberately,” said Badenhausen. “[Because] there is no magic bullet in addressing wellness issues.”

Inspired by the Engelhard Project at Georgetown University in Washington D.C., the incorporation of wellness programming is occurring on various fronts in the Honors College. One pilot program involves the adoption of texts that explicitly talk about mental health, which in the section of Welcome to Thinking taught by Badenhausen and Nick More is Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar*.

Tied into the reading of Plath’s challenging novel are conversations with expert counselors from the campus Counseling Center during class. Finally, students compose a written reflection on this discussion, so they can process the difficult material.

Badenhausen calls his Welcome to Thinking class “an appropriate setting because of [the] grand transition” from high school to college that is unique to first-year college students.

The stressors of that first-year experience—living away from home, having complete control over one’s life, and the big question of the future looming in front of students—offer some of the biggest challenges that young adults will face in their life. Trying to navigate those trials are nearly as stressful as the stressors themselves.

Outside of the Welcome to Thinking classes, staff like Stephanie Santarosa, assistant director of honors and fellowship advising, are also working with students directly to improve their wellness practices. “Wellness in students means a lot to me,” said Santarosa, who emphasizes the effort by herself and other staff to help students find balance in their lives.

After three student suicides during her first two years on campus, Santarosa pushed harder for conversations on student wellness. She talks one-on-one with students, asking “How are you taking care of yourself?” and offering support in the form of statements like “I believe you can do this hard thing and I will support you through this.” She said this is a mindset she encourages other faculty to adopt and use as well.

Her conversations with faculty have focused on topics such as flawed student success narratives that emphasize perfection and disallow mistakes. She urges faculty to help students change these disastrous narratives to framing statements like “I will be exceptional in some areas, and have room to grow in others.”

Wellness is a growing national conversation that the Honors College has joined wholeheartedly, destigmatizing mental health and teaching students how important it is to take care of themselves. *HM.*

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*Nick More and Richard Badenhausen’s Welcome to Thinking class. Photo courtesy of Ceci Rigby*
Welcome to Thinking (WTT) often sets off a succession of memories in Honors students: long nights reading, visits to the Writing Center, feelings of confusion, incredible moments of insight, and fruitful class discussions. WTT is the first seminar honors students take – lateral and traditional entry – and it’s arguably the most important for the development of students’ critical thinking, reading, and writing skills.

In 2016, WTT came to fruition, with a lateral-entry option that began in fall 2017. The course originally involved ten “short-form prompts” and two “long-form prompts.” These prompts challenge students to analyze and synthesize texts, develop interesting arguments, and strengthen one’s voice.

Dr. Julie Stewart, Associate Professor in the Honors College, said the goal of WTT is to help students “write clearly and persuasively in an authentic voice.” But what does it mean to write clearly, persuasively, and in an authentic voice? To answer this question, many students point to a transition in the way they conceptualize writing during their time in WTT.

“It’s difficult changing something that’s been ingrained in you for so long,” said Maya Thayne, a first-year prospective nursing...
Fatima Santos, Welcome to Thinking III student, catches up on some reading for class. Photo courtesy of Ceci Rigby

student currently in WTT I. “Writing in high school, for me, was a lot of pulling out different sources...and talking about it as if the teacher had never heard about it, and here it’s assumed that whoever is reading has read the readings, which changes the basis of your paper from that summary to that analysis.”

For William Harvey ('22), an economics and philosophy double major, WTT I and II were humbling experiences. “My experience going in was that I thought I was a pretty good writer already, and I learned that I really wasn’t.” He said some of the feedback he got from his professors included: “You don’t have a voice, you’re talking in the passive constantly, let’s hear your actual voice and opinion.”

Terry Li ('21), an international student and physics major, said, “I feel like not speaking English as my first language gives me more challenges reading and writing,” but that WTT III has improved his ability to communicate.

“The first year when I just came to the United States, I took writing for international students. You basically work on how to write a summary and how to do a close reading. WTT III is generally helping us to improve all kinds of abilities, like close reading and having conversations,” Li said.

Communicating effectively through writing is an essential skill in college, any and all career paths, and interpersonal relationships. Writing allows us to connect to others; it provides a space to succinctly express our ideas to the world.

“Being able to have your own singular way of expressing yourself is pretty much what makes you, you,” Stewart said. “From a sociological perspective, people without the ability to communicate are not people, so it is by virtue of us being with each other in groups of various sizes and being able to communicate—that's kind of a sui generis exposition of what it means to be human.”

For Sanskriti Tismeena ('21), a computer science major, writing can be a form of social justice activism. “I think that most of my activism is in writing,” Tismeena said. “I don't usually take
up positions that involve activism, which I want to, but because of school I can’t do volunteering and stuff. So I do it through writing.”

WTT also enables students from less writing-intensive academic backgrounds to not just practice their skills but to also practice expressing their unique perspective both in class and on paper. Thayne (’23), for example, hopes to bring her writing capabilities into the field of medicine.

“Having my interest in the medical field, there’s a lot of writing that goes on there,” Thayne said. “I don’t know if you’ve ever read medical papers but they’re long and boring. I want to be able to bring in good writing to the medical field,” as a way to communicate medical terminology with “somebody who knows nothing about medicine.”

Beyond communication, writing in WTT also aids interdisciplinary thinking. “That helps us to move away from the belief that there is an answer to a question, and closer to the idea that there are multiple answers to a question,” Stewart said.

The time that WTT course work requires is significant, so Honors faculty decided that this fall students would write eight short-form prompts instead of ten. Stewart spearheaded a climate survey in 2018 that exposed high levels of stress and anxiety in students. In response, the Honors faculty decided to reduce the number of prompts in all WTT courses.

“We’ve also looked at national data on student anxiety and stress, and we realized we would like to try to do something to lessen the burden for the students’ first experience in the Honors College” Stewart said. The reduction also allows students more time to improve the prompts they still have to write.

Faculty will continue to utilize student feedback in structuring WTT. “The syllabus is always a living document,” according to Stewart. “We always think about each semester and we try to get together as a faculty and kind of just talk about what went well, what didn’t, what we can do to improve–everything about the seminar–and what kind of feedback have we received from students that we might try to incorporate.”

Julie Stewart

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Julie Stewart
Student Profile: Kenzie Campbell, Westminster’s First Truman Scholar

BY NICOLE KلونIZOS

Senior Honors student Kenzie Campbell is Westminster College’s very first applicant and recipient of the Truman Scholarship, “the premier graduate fellowship in the United States for those pursuing careers as public service leaders,” according to the Truman website. Campbell is pursuing a custom major that combines psychology and justice studies, and has been in the Honors College since her first year. She is also vice president for ASW this year.

The Truman application requires concise writing that captures an applicant’s passions. Campbell spent weeks writing, rewriting, and working one-on-one with Dr. Alicia Cunningham-Bryant, the director of fellowship advising. She sent in her application and, after a series of interviews, she won.

Upon arriving at Westminster, Campbell took Welcome to Thinking I and II. This course focuses on writing, writing, and even more writing. Each week students compose a short paper analyzing a text they have read. This process contributed to Campbell’s growth as an effective writer. She learned to create specific arguments, clearly communicate her ideas, and demonstrate her critical thinking skills.

“My writing skills have improved so much, and I think that without Honors or at least freshman year I could not have represented myself in this effective, concise way that was required by this application,” Campbell said.

Cunningham-Bryant advises Westminster students on their fellowship applications, and she supported Kenzie throughout the Truman process. Cunningham-Bryant encouraged Campbell to apply for Truman because of her dedication to public service.

Campbell is especially passionate about helping survivors of gender-based violence. “Her commitment to the survivors of gender-based violence, to changing the perception and community understanding of what gender-based violence is, and coming up with ways to address it is amazing,” Cunningham-Bryant said. “All of her outreach work, all of her work with Dumke, and all of her ASW work speaks to how committed she is to making change.”

After graduation, Campbell is interested in taking a gap year or two before pursuing graduate education. She is planning on either going to Summer Institute in Washington D.C. or working for Best Friends Animal Society in her gap year. And then it’s off to graduate school in public service with the $30,000 support of the Truman Foundation. 

Professor Profile: Kael Weston

BY REBECCA BLANTON

Kael Weston has served as writer-in-residence at the Honors College since 2017. Prior to his time at Westminster College, he worked as a political advisor in the U.S. State Department for twelve years and spent seven of those years in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Weston said there were two functions of serving as writer-in-residence: teaching and writing.

Kael taught a number of classes during his time at Westminster including Going to War: Costs and Consequences, The Global Voices of War, and War Movies: Post 9/11.

“One of the goals I had was to look at not just how the United States is involved in the world but how others see us,” Kael said. “I wanted to help get a true international perspective.”

“What I loved seeing [in the classroom] was how students teach each other. When you have good discussions that Honors promotes, I think the expectations are high,” Kael said. “Personally, it’s made me a better writer.”

He said he wanted to help students become better writers during his time at Westminster. “While it’s a world of tweets, and Instagram, and Facebook, good writing still counts for a lot,” Kael said.

Kael is an avid writer himself and has written a book called The Mirror Test and ten articles for The New York Times. He recently started writing monthly for The Salt Lake Tribune and said he hopes to start writing beyond war and write on various political issues in the American west.

He said he believes good writing is more than just writing. “What a good education means is that Westminster students and citizens overall are engaged in issues that matter,” Kael said. “It’s getting involved in your communities, speaking up, not taking for granted the opportunities you all had to work for.”

After this fall semester, Weston will leave Westminster and his role as writer-in-residence, and focus on writing a second book about the importance of moral courage.

“After my time here, I am hopeful about your generation,” Kael said. “I leave Westminster optimistic. I see in all of you [Westminster students] what we need more of in our country.”
I have never stepped foot inside a prison. On occasion, I find myself in the passenger seat of a car, sailing along the highway, heading west. As the Utah State Prison begins to materialize, looming through the raindrop stained glass of the car windows, I can’t help but gawk. Transfixed as I am by this mass of stone and fence, I think, ‘What’s inside?’ I see that the sun-yellowed yard is always empty; no one is ever outside. I wonder: what would it be like to go without the sky? But I’ve never stepped foot inside a prison, so to me, I suppose it doesn’t matter. Our car speeds past. I am not the only one. You too, I’m sure, are guilty of this. Bryan Stevenson’s Just Mercy is a microscope. In his memoir, Stevenson knowingly guides the reader through the most intimate and horrifying corners of the United States’ prison system. While reading the work, I came face-to-face with several people who spent most of their lives locked in a jail cell on death row. These prisoners are largely low-income people of color, and in many specific cases, are wrongly condemned or completely innocent.

Justice is a powerful word - one I’m not sure I’ll ever truly be able to define. However, after reading Just Mercy, there is something I now know. The worst crime committed in this book was not by any of the prisoners. The worst crime was committed by the justice system, by the general population, by me, and yes—even by you. It was committed in a perceived state of innocence, in a place of safety. This crime is apathy. In order to define justice, you must first ask yourself: Am I guilty? When I think of justice, I now think of the innocent people—my age or younger—who have been condemned to die by a system that has always disfavored them. I envision the opening chapter of Just Mercy where Stevenson writes: “We are all implicated when we allow other people to be mistreated.”

In 1944, George Stinney was falsely convicted of murdering two white girls. There was no evidence, but, being a black youth in South Carolina, Stinney was forced to confess and placed on death row. Our laws are meant to prevent people from hurting others or themselves; they should not be an excuse for discrimination. Justice is not only fair sentencing but also fair treatment of those serving time in prison.

Over 50 percent of U.S. inmates are diagnosed with mental illness, yet they are denied treatment. Justice would be providing the care that is necessary for mental and physical health. For some, this requires treatment through a mental health facility rather than a prison; facilitating such care is justice. Stevenson’s journey as a legal attorney is an indispensable reflection on the U.S. criminal justice system. It can and should be used to rethink how we define and implement justice. Fairness, reason, and compassion must be applied to all criminal trials while upholding the law; only then can justice be guaranteed for all people in the United States. HM.

“The Oxford Dictionary defines justice as “Just behavior or treatment,” “The quality of being fair and reasonable” and “The administration of the law or authority in maintaining this.” Just Mercy exposes how the criminal justice system operates more from prejudice than fairness and reason. After reading Just Mercy as the Honors summer common read, my definition of justice now includes upholding of the law with fairness, reason, and compassion for humanity. Justice is not incarceration because incarceration stores people in prisons. Justice is not killing, which is what the criminal justice system does by placing inmates on death row.

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Sophie Caligiuri
Peer mentor perspective

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I think of the empty fields off to the side of the freeway surrounded by barbed wire. I think, “let them see the sky.” HM.
Meghan Nestel (’10) has just published a lengthy scholarly article in the *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* entitled “A Space of Her Own: Genderfluidity and Negotiation in The Life of Christina of Markyate.” Nestel also just completed her Ph.D. in Medieval Literature at Arizona State University.

Caroline Hill (’11) is completing her final year of law school at University of California, Hastings and has been interning at the San Francisco Public Defender’s Office.

Zak Burkley (’13) defended his dissertation last spring and now has a PhD in Physics from Colorado State University. He recently moved to Zurich where he will build a special laser system which allows for the study of exotic atoms that are extremely amenable to theoretical calculations.

Melanie Long (’14) received her Ph.D. in Economics from Colorado State University and has just started as an Assistant Professor of Economics at the College of Wooster in Ohio.

Sara McCaskey (’14) and David Luhr (’12) have relocated to Bend, Oregon.

Willy Palomo (’15) has started a new position as Director for the Center for the Book at Utah Humanities.

Lexi Pasi (’15) is working on her PhD in Mathematics at Baylor University.

Sabina Schill (’15), who is working on her Ph.D. in Environmental Engineering at the University of Colorado, Boulder, has just been honored with the 2019 Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in STEM Education for her research correlating the relationship between university STEM outreach mentors with their science/engineering identity.

Mackenzie Crow (’16) just started the graduate program in international affairs at Columbia University and is rooming with Hannah Williams (’16), who is also at Columbia working on her Master’s in nonprofit management.

Maddie Klein (’17) is in her first year of law school at BYU, joining Honors alums Carissa Uresk (’18) and Peter Seppi (’17), who are already studying there.

Nicole McKenna (’18) recently started the doctoral program in Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati and had essays that were focused on trauma-informed applications in criminal justice settings published or accepted for publication in the *Sexual Assault Report* and the *Journal for Aggression, Maltreatment, and Trauma.*

Charlie Saad (’18) will be starting the MA program at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs next fall.

Elaine Sheehan (’18) has just started her Master’s in Education in the ELP program at the University of Utah and is also working as a Graduate Assistant at SLCC as a software implementer and coach for their early-alert computer program.

Taylor Stevens (’18) covers government and politics for *The Salt Lake Tribune* and was recently named the Utah Society of Professional Journalists’ 2019 Best Newspaper Reporter.

Jen Rowley (’19) recently joined the board of the Hartman Institute.

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Meet the SHC

What is your go to writing process?

“My go-to writing process is to start as early as I can. I always look at the prompt topic before we start a unit so I can find quotes that may support my argument during class discussions. I then begin to outline my paper and group my quotes into common themes, make a thesis based on them, and go from there. I always try to get my writing done a week before it is due so I can submit it to the writing center for last-minute help.” Asma Dahir, SHC President

How has honors impacted your writing?

“Honors has cultivated a personal desire to justify my claims; especially with writing in the fields of dance and education, Honors has taught me how to connect to broad philosophical ideas and social truths, whereas in the past my claims would have been isolated to my discipline or topic. Honors has taught me to always ask: what are the stakes?” Kate Blair, SHC Secretary

What is the weirdest prompt you’ve written?

“I think the weirdest prompt I’ve ever written was a prompt I wrote in Welcome to Thinking II. My entire prompt completely dissed every argument the author of the text made. While I don’t remember exactly what the reading was for that prompt, I remember this being one of my best prompts because Nick More put a smiley face on my paper for the first time.” Marley Dominguez, SHC Vice President

Continued from page 1

do things for The Forum that I want to do for the rest of my life.”

Both editors credit the Honors College for improving their writing skills, which they say is essential in their line of work.

“It has helped me with written and spoken language,” McTee said. “I have a stronger voice in my writing, and I am more comfortable speaking publicly.”

Mondeaux agreed, adding that writing is an important skill because you can explain ideas effectively and communicate to a large audience.

While The Forum is a news organization centered on Westminster students, Ellipsis is a literary magazine that publishes submissions from around the world.

Viviana Grigware is an Honors student and serving her second year on the Ellipsis board of editors as poetry editor. Her job is to evaluate the submissions and help decide which ones should be published.

“We decide what we think other people should read,” she said. Grigware says she utilizes lessons from the Honors College during this process.

“Honors has definitely given me a lot of critical thinking skills and taught me to evaluate literature both as a reader and a writer,” Grigware said.

Grigware is graduating in May with an English degree. She intends to teach English abroad before returning to school to pursue a career in publishing—a career she says her time with Ellipsis and the Honors College helped prepare her for.

“That’s what I want to do with my life. I want to find new pieces and expose those to the world.”

Grigware says her passion is in publishing, but even if she decides on another path her writing skills will be essential.

“No matter where you end up you need to know how to write well and communicate effectively. These skills translate to everything,” Grigware said. *HM.*
Note from the Editors

Writing is foundational to the Honors curriculum. Prompts give students opportunities to bring class conversations full circle. Though Honors students engage in rigorous discussions, writing is the only way to directly see into the minds of others, and for some, the only way to have their voices heard in a space where their spoken word would be silenced. The centrality of writing to the Honors experience is why we selected it for this edition’s theme. We wanted to showcase Honors students’ comprehensive engagement with both their own and others’ writing, whether that takes place in the classroom, the Writing Center, or a faculty member’s book. Honors students integrate writing into their lives not just as students but as learners. *HM.*