Pizza with Profs Explores the Nature of Nature

On March 5, a group of 20 Honors students explored some of the highest mountain peaks, gazed upon beautiful sunsets, and grappled with conflicting ideas about the wilderness, all within an hour. Did I mention they were eating pizza, too?

Jeff McCarthy, the Chair of the English Department, was the solo headliner at this semester’s Pizza with Profs. He shared with students the history of American thought concerning the wilderness and added some modern ideas to the subject by sharing his love of mountain climbing, along with many slides documenting his escapades.

McCarthy started out by defining the word “wilderness,” which originally meant “place of wild beasts.” McCarthy continued, explaining how people throughout history have viewed wilderness differently. Many expectations of the wilderness are culturally packaged, he said. In other words, how we are raised shapes our ideas of the wilderness. Additionally, when we are raised effects how we see the wilderness. Prior to the 19th century, the wilderness was considered, among other things, uncontrollable, wild, evil and crazy. This was, in part, due to the colonization process of the Americas. At that point in history, the environment was something that needed to be controlled rather than simply enjoyed.

Around the mid-19th century, wilderness was somewhat redefined as a place where people could connect with God or the highest good. This corresponds to the closing of the frontier in the Americas. Examples of this idea were depicted in paintings of the time, which showed nature as the main focus and man as an innocent bystander to the awesome power of the Earth’s natural beauty.

There was also a difference in the way Europeans saw the wilderness and how those settling the Americas at the time defined it. Europeans were established in their country, and the land was more developed and industrialized. The Americans, on the other hand, were more rugged and had to deal with the wilderness first hand. Their environments influenced how they viewed the outdoors.

Today, the wilderness is seen more as an escape. McCarthy discussed the sublime feeling he and others share when in the outdoors. “Being immersed in this grand physical setting is uplifting,” he said, while sharing stories and slides from his climbing trips in Alaska. The feeling people sometimes experience while in the outdoors can be attributed to our lack of daily exposure to the wilderness, he explained. Additionally, McCarthy said many climbers experience the “trampoline” effect. The climbers use the mountains to get themselves somewhere else, mentally or spiritually. While climbing, they are able to achieve a higher sense of self. Contrary to previous views of the wilderness as being scary, sinful, or terrible, the outdoors are now perceived as helping us reconnect with ourselves, McCarthy said.

The session concluded with a brief question and answer period along with more slides from McCarthy’s own adventures in the outdoors. Students were left to make their own personal conclusions about the nature of the wilderness. In the end, McCarthy’s discussion helped support the idea that the environment is an individual experience that should best be explored personally.

-Teresa Elias
Theoretical Neurobiologist William H. Calvin came to campus on March 25th to teach Honors students from the Perspectives in Social Sciences II class about evolutionary anthropology. Dr. Calvin is from the University of Washington and is considered an expert in his field, so it was a great experience for Honors students to learn directly from him.

He spoke of his theories on brain evolution and how higher level brain functioning (i.e. intelligence) developed. One idea that Dr. Calvin presented was that of climate changes having affected the evolutionary emergence of creative intelligence because only the most versatile species could have survived abrupt changes in the environment over history. Also, he believes that behaviorally modern creative intelligence can be seen through the emergence of human use of beads, images, and incised decorative patterns on tools rather than just plain tools. After about an hour of presenting his interesting ideas, Dr. Calvin spent another hour answering numerous questions from the ever-inquisitive Honors students and staff.

Honors student Verity Erickson enjoyed the lecture because it felt very interdisciplinary and therefore fit the mission of the Honors program. She particularly liked how Dr. Calvin brought different academic areas into the lecture by discussing syntax, language, and even macroeconomics. Another Honors student from the Perspectives II Class, Cassie Nielsen, also benefited from the lecture and thinks that “it’s an awesome opportunity that we have as Honors students to hear from professionals in the field instead of just reading about them in class.”

After the lecture, three lucky students had the chance to join Dr. William Calvin and Westminster’s own Dr. Lesa Ellis for lunch. The students were chosen to attend the lunch based on an essay conveying their interests in Dr. Calvin’s work. The students were chosen to attend the lunch based on an essay conveying their interests in Dr. Calvin’s work. Later that evening, the whole Westminster community was invited to join Dr. Calvin for another lecture in the Gore auditorium on the effects of climate change.

-Lauren Stephan

Parents Honor Roll
2003-2004

A special thanks to these supporters of the Honors program at Westminster College. Without their generosity our unique learning community would be incomplete!

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Gary & Joan Glenn
Kristine C. Harper
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Honors Seminar Explained! The 2004 Presidential Election

These days, the Fall 2004 semester is looking a little brighter for those interested in politics and the presidential election. A new Honors course, titled “2004 Presidential Election: Strategy and Substance,” has been added to the Fall line-up, and it promises to be an interesting and engaging look at the presidential race in real time.

Two well-qualified, politically minded individuals will teach the class, offering opposing political views to be analyzed, discussed, and ultimately decided on by students. The Democrat of the team-taught class is Bob Seltzer, whose experience includes successfully managing a senate campaign and working as a political consultant and senior staffer for U.S. Senate Democrats. Seltzer’s colleague for the class, Roger Livingston, will be offering the Republican point of view to the class. Livingston, an attorney, is the Deputy State Director for Senator Orrin Hatch as well as a former judge. He has worked in Republican Utah State politics for twenty years.

The class has a direct application to the cross-disciplinary atmosphere of Westminster College and the Honors program, specifically. Seltzer explains that the class will be about politics, which involves discussions about almost every discipline. Foreign policy, education, and health care are just a few different topics of importance. All of the specific issues discussed by politicians are wrapped up in campaigns, which are business enterprises involved in the communication process, Seltzer said.

Additionally, Seltzer explains that the class is a way to illustrate the experiential nature of knowledge. The politics the class will be analyzing will not be a theory. “We will be looking at what people are really doing,” Seltzer said.

It’s important to note that the class will be non-partisan, owing to the radically differing points of view offered by Seltzer and Livingston. We will be offering “perspective, not propaganda,” Seltzer said. “We are going to argue for given points, and let the students make up their own minds,” he said.

The mutual respect Seltzer and Livingston have for each other and the political field in general ensures there will be fair discussion of the issues and the politicians themselves. “The people running for office are decent people,” Seltzer said. “They are not trying to destroy the country.” In this respect, part of the reason for the course is to restore faith in politics and to help foster the idea that politics is a noble profession, he said.

While there is no assigned text book, the class readings will be drawn from newspapers and articles about the election, dating back to before the primaries and leading up to the actual election. Additionally, Seltzer hopes to augment the class with people involved in politics on a regular basis.

The enrollment in “2004 Presidential Election: Strategy and Substance” is capped at 15, and is only available to Honors students and to non-Honors students with a 3.5 or better cumulative grade point average.

-Teresa Elias

Honors Has a Strong Presence at the Undergraduate Research Fair

Honors students were very well represented at this year’s Undergraduate Research Fair. On Friday April 9, fourteen Honors students presented their research at the annual Undergraduate Research Fair.

Ray Bradford, “Happiness and Social Acceptance in Aristotle and Shakespeare.”

Heather Brown, “Gender and Identity in Shakespeare’s Hamlet: A Modern Interpretation of Ophelia.” (Read it for yourself on page 7.)

Allison Owens, “Nietzsche’s Aphorism.”


Adam Haverkost, “Privatization of Air Traffic Control.”


Marie Tueller, “The Social Implications of Borderline Personality Disorder in Women.”


Ashley Jorgensen Gurling, “An Ethnographic Study of Paganism.”

Eric Glissmeyer, “Genetic and Clinical Characteristics of 127 Patients with Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension.”


Ashley Phillips, “Distribution of CD8 Molecules on Porcine Spleen Cells.”

Michael Goble, “In Vitro Culture of Lymphocytes.”

- Eric Glissmeyer explains his research on hypertension to Honors professor Dr. Barry Quinn.
Eight Honors students were elected as ASWC officers for the 2004-05 academic year, which means Honors makes up 25% of the student government at Westminster. Congratulations to Vice President Alisha Panunzio, Director of Clubs and Organizations Anita Lui, Director of Finance Ray Bradford, Arts and Humanities Senators Heather Brown and Pepper Hayes, Pure and Applied Science Senators Michael Acord and Tim Roberts and Undeclared Senator Rebecca Givens.

Daniel Perez is involved in bacterial research with Dr. Larry Anderson, and was recently selected as a McNair scholar.

Honors Freshman Trisina Dickerson won the Academy of American Poets Student Poetry Contest at Westminster for her poem “the morning after.”

Eric Glissmeyer’s Pulmonary Hypertension (PH) research is producing some exciting results, including the use of a new molecular biology technique. His research group has found novel mutations in the BMPR2 gene, which are known to be a factor in causing PH. The findings will be presented at the American Thoracic Society conference, and Pulmonary Hypertensions Association conference. Next fall Eric will be attending medical school at the U.

This spring Pepper Hayes won the Best Undergraduate Paper award at the Phi Alpha Theta regional conference for her paper, “Greek Women and the Origin of the Domestic Sphere.”

Jessie Lynn Gravatt is going to Europe in May Term to study folk music in the popular culture through Honors Directed Studies. She has been working hard as the Editor in Chief of the 2004 issue of Ellipses.

The poetry and artwork of Trisina Dickerson and Meghan Hamilton have been selected for publication in the journal Sribendi, which is published by the Western Regional Honors Council at the University of New Mexico. Trisina and Meghan are the first Westminster College Honors students to appear in this publication.

Larson, Watts, Bradford

This year 36 new freshmen entered into the Honors Program at Westminster College. Now as their first year is winding down, I interviewed three of these freshmen to see what their thoughts are on the program so far, and the overall response was one of enjoyment and satisfaction.

“The Honors classes are unlike any I have ever taken before,” said freshman Lela Larson. “They truly have taught me to perceive things in a different manner. Although difficult, I think they will be one of the most influential and memorable parts of my college experience.” Larson is seeking an Honors Degree in a Political Science major and minoring in Spanish and Psychology. When asked if the Honors program was worth all of the hard work, Larson said definitely.

Freshman Shaunel Watts said, “I am a lazy bum unless I force myself to be pushed. Applying to the Honors program was a way to make sure I pushed myself.” Watts plans to go into elementary education with a music minor. She enjoys the heavy emphasis on class discussions and how the classes are fast paced. Her favorite part of the program is “Talking to the professors, and letting my mind expand in new ways.”

As for Ray Bradford, he has enjoyed the way the professors bring in a wide range of literary and philosophical works from a variety of time periods in an interesting way. “They focus on recurring themes and point out connections between different materials I would have missed on my own.” When asked if he would add anything to the program, Bradford replied that he would like to see more out of class activities and interactions between students, as well as a pool tournament with a $1000 cash prize available only to players whose names rhyme with Bay Bradford. Bradford believes that being in the program is worth all of the hard work. “The benefits (improved thinking and writing skills, feeling like I’m receiving a broad-based education) outweigh the inconveniences of the workload.”

Facult Profile

Bonnie Baxter and Bridget Newell are teaching the Science, Power, and Diversity class for the first time this year. This new class stemmed from the need for a science class that taught updated 21st century material. The class is the second course in the science series after History & Philosophy of Science. Before this class there was not a chance for Honors students to really get hands on experience. According to Baxter, “Students were learning, but not doing.” Baxter, the science representative on the Honors Council, saw this as an opportunity to revamp the program. Baxter began working with Newell to put together an agenda for the new class. They wanted it to combine many of the modern theories in science that also incorporated gender studies and re-examining the brain. “This makes it more interesting for the students, and they get a bigger picture,” said Newell. The class has added a refreshing new feel to the Honors science sequence, and both professors definitely add their own feelings of excitement to the class.

Our social science course has also received a refresher this year with the addition of two new professors, Mark Rubinfeld and Lesa Ellis. Both professors just recently joined the faculty at Westminster. Ellis is a graduate of Westminster and has returned to teach. She says that her favorite part about the Honors program is the students. “They are engaged, responsive, and do a great job!”

Rubinfeld also recently joined Westminster in 2003 and has been quite impressed by the students as well. “What a wonderful opportunity Westminster students have to take advantage of the program! They’re being exposed to so many different disciplines and perspectives that can only help them later in life, whether it be in graduate school, their future careers, or their interpersonal relationships.”

Ellis and Rubinfeld teach Perspectives of Social Sciences II every other year. The class looks at literature from both sociology and psychology. “We have been focusing our class on issues of nature and nurture, particularly with regard to gender and sex,” said Ellis. By combining the forces of Ellis’ knowledge of psychology and Rubinfeld’s knowledge of sociology, Honors students get a great “perspective” from this course!  

-Jessica Shurtleff
Hello Honors Students!

This is a very exciting time in Honors. The Student Honors Council is bringing two new programs on deck, Honors Freshman Orientation and the Peer Mentoring Program. These programs are designed to help the incoming freshman class explore their new world in college, and more specifically, their new world in Honors.

During the two days that students stay on campus for Freshman Orientation, there will be two sessions held specifically for Honors students. During these sessions, the new freshmen will get to know each other, current students, and faculty.

While the orientation will unite the incoming class, the Peer Mentoring Program will unite current students with the freshmen. We have brought nine mentors on board and each will have about four students to guide and direct in a friendly fashion throughout the year.

One of the greatest aspects of Westminster College is its sense of community. Within Honors we have a unique opportunity to create a community within a community. Honors students share so much more than just a few classes each semester. They share similar interests and ambitions and, as a council, we are hoping that these new programs will offer a better opportunity for increased friendship and fun.

Yours Respectfully,

The SHC

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Profs Pick the Flick Series a Hit!

Our Honors community spends plenty of time in class, studying, and in professors’ offices together, but there is very little time spent just kicking back and relaxing together. To incorporate this often over-looked realm, the Student Honors Council began a new series this semester to unite professors and students in a casual setting to enjoy something that everyone likes—movies! Each Profs Pick the Flick features one professor and one of his or her favorite films, and we all get to grab popcorn, animal crackers, licorice, and a spot on the comfy couches of Tingey Lounge to watch the magic of the movies.

In January Mark Rubinfeld challenged our views with Bowling for Columbine. Dean Mary Jane Chase brought French cultural enlightenment with The Return of Martin Guerre in February. In March we laughed at Shakespeare’s wit with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead brought to us by Bonnie Baxter. April is gearing up to be exciting as John Watkins is going to share Chinatown, and, with May being a laid back month anyway, we figured it was the perfect month to have one final Profs Pick the Flick for this year’s series.

We’d like to thank all of the faculty and students who have supported Profs Pick the Flick, and we’ll see you at the movies.

-Mary Dirks

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2004-2005

Student Honors Council Officers

President: Nicki Blair

“I will do my best to represent the student voice to the Honors Council, making sure that your concerns and interests will be heard and dealt with.”

Vice-President: Ray Bradford

“I want students to perceive the program not as proof of intellectual superiority, but as an alternative learning method that allows positive interaction to occur in a unique way.”

Treasurer: Mary Dirks

“Being treasurer is perfect for me in that it combines advertising, leadership, and a focus on in-depth learning. I feel my educational goals provide me with a different view point, which will add a balance to the council.”

Secretary: Rebecca Givens

“I think that we have so many great activities that fellow Honors students just don’t realize. Next year I will work to publicize the activities even more.”

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Next Year’s Student Honors Council President Nicki Blair and Dean Mary Jane Chase enjoy The Return of Martin Guerre as part of the SHC Profs Pick the Flick series. Dean Chase is one of the top supporters of the Honors program at Westminster College.
along the way, I learned a few things. I learned that problems are more complex than we think and the world is less black and white than we want. I learned that in order to master politics, you had to have at least a working knowledge of a vast array of academic disciplines: history, mathematics, sociology, biology, philosophy, economics, psychology, and a host of other fields that all contribute to the decision-making process. And perhaps most importantly, I learned to be less confident: less certain I knew how things should or would work, less convinced that I understood someone else’s motives, and less clear about what was best for myself, much less our country or the rest of the world. Learning to be humble was hard. But learning to be humble — while still advocating certain policies and opposing others — is necessary.

These experiences make me want to use this course to explore the election in a context of uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity.

In an ideal world, we would get to go inside the campaigns and watch these issues being debated and decided. In a non-ideal world, we’ll try to replicate that process. The people who run campaigns are, shockingly enough, really just like us. They may be more experienced, but they aren’t any brighter. And, after all, campaigns are, shockingly enough, really just like us. They may be.

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My colleague — Roger Livingston, a Republican operative who locked up the nomination for him.

Gore’s endorsement, but at the time most pundits thought it

locked up the nomination for him.

Years ago, our humanities class came to the end of the year and studied the following claim: education is an inherent good. The issue was carefully debated. The distressing possibility (for me, anyway) that education might not be intrinsically good seemed to win favor among many in the class. The argument that education is merely the means to some other, more important pursuit makes sense. But I could never come to terms with the underlying assumption that education is a tool, not the end of human desire. If education and mental stimulation serve only to achieve some other end, then what is the ultimate purpose of those other pursuits? There are, of course, numerous other notable pursuits, and a host of scholars have given answers to this very question. But I still think that if education functions only as a means to something else, then we have taken away the real significance of being human: we have the ability to think independently and uniquely. This quality is enhanced by education. In fact, a proper education will have a direct influence on our independence of thought. And independence of thought, to me, reflects something in human nature, something that drives us to want to learn.

Now to the question posed. If I could study anything more closely, it would be the existence and proper cultivation of the human drive towards learning. I suppose this could be carried out in a number of ways, within most disciplines. But here’s how I would do it: I would open a school somewhere far away from human civilization. Men and women of all nationalities, backgrounds, and opinions would be invited to study at this institution. I would create an enormous library filled with every book ever written, and maybe even some that have not yet been written. All needs would be taken care of. In this school, only two rules will govern students’ actions: each student must respect all cultures and religions of other students, and each student will be free to do whatever he or she wants to in regards to learning. I don’t know what would happen. But I think that each and every student would begin learning something. They would not be idle. Humans have a propensity towards education. We incline towards acquiring new knowledge even when we are comfortable. At the end of each semester here, the students would be asked a simple question: why did you study whatever it is you did? I anticipate that the most common answer would be “because it was interesting.” But, if we press the student for elaboration, the answer will eventually boil down to a different response: “I don’t know.” I think that this school would be an excellent testing ground for my theory, and would promote the concept of a liberal education because of its insights into the nature of the human “learn” drive.
In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf addresses the topic “Women and Fiction,” offering a reading of history from a woman’s perspective by emphasizing women’s lack of tradition in a historically male-dominated society. Woolf’s essay sets up a juxtaposition between males and females which is particularly helpful in framing the reader’s understanding of relationships in literature prior to Woolf’s time. Woolf’s modern reading of history allows the reader to interpret Shakespeare’s Ophelia not as a source of admiration for her assertion of identity, as some critics hold, but, rather, as a source of sympathy for her loss of identity after the removal of male dominance.

Through her essay, Woolf attempts to account for the effect of the past upon female writers as well as female fictional characters, concluding that the woman’s position in history—seen only in relation to men—is problematic because of the hierarchy implicit in the relationship. Woolf cites what will become a key distinction between the two sexes in her reading of history: the males are living in “safety and prosperity,” whereas the females are basically without a tradition to draw upon, leaving them unconfident and confused amongst a history pervaded by male figures. Having no heroic or artistic examples to emulate, women instead become submissive to males, who benefit from strong traditions of power and dominance. Ultimately, this power structure shapes the identities of females explicitly by their relationship with males.

Shakespeare’s characterization of Ophelia in *Hamlet* illustrates the consequences that a lack of female tradition has upon women. In “Reading Ophelia’s Madness,” Gabrielle Diane writes, “Motherless and completely circumscribed by the men around her, Ophelia has been shaped to conform to external demands, to reflect others’ desires” (406). In congruence with Woolf’s theory, Ophelia suffers from a lack of female tradition—not only from the absence of women in history but also from the absence of any reliable female influence in her life, that which would traditionally be fulfilled by her mother. The unexplained absence of Ophelia’s mother leaves her father, Polonius, in the most influential role.

According to Woolf, the relationship between Ophelia and her father creates problems on many levels, the first of which is Ophelia’s inability as a woman to directly relate to a male role model. Speaking of the literary tradition, Woolf says, “[M]ale writers never helped a woman yet, though she may have learned a few tricks of them and adapted them to her use. The weight, the pace, the stride of a man’s mind are too unlike her own for her to lift anything substantial from him successfully” (76). Woolf recognizes a critical difference between the sexes which, I believe, applies as well to parental influence as it does to literary influence. Woolf’s language suggests the pressing nature of a man’s hierarchal relationship over a woman: his “weight” is too unfamiliar for her to be able to “lift” a benefit from his example.

Ophelia possesses no identity of her own because Polonius attempts to fashion “the weight, the pace, the stride” of himself upon her. He believes his needs are her needs and, knowing no significant influence apart from Polonius and her brother, Laertes, Ophelia loses her identity as a woman by allowing herself to be molded by men.

Polonius attempts to fashion Ophelia’s relationship with Hamlet to his own liking, saying, “You do not understand yourself so clearly/ As it behooves my daughter and your honour” (1.3.105-6). Polonius assumes that Ophelia is unable to comprehend her own situation, but, more importantly, his diction reveals his sense of possession and his concern for social appearances to serve his own interests. Although he is speaking to Ophelia, he refers to her as “my daughter,” claiming ownership and patriarchal dominance over her. The words “behoove” and “honour” suggest that Polonius’ primary concern is that Ophelia act according to the proper societal standards, keeping up the appropriate appearance because her behavior reflects back on him as a public official and as her father.

Woolf describes a hierarchy between men and women in *A Room of One’s Own* that sheds light on Polonius’ relationship with Ophelia in *Hamlet* as a source of power for Polonius. He diminishes Ophelia’s position “By thinking that other people are inferior to oneself. By feeling that one has some innate superiority […] over other people” (Woolf 35). In Woolf’s view, members of the male sex generally feel that they have an “innate superiority” over women. This hierarchy, then, necessitates the presence of submissive female characters in order for males to sustain positions of power in any capacity. Ophelia, too, depends so entirely upon this relationship to male characters that beyond it she cannot think nor act for herself—in effect, she does not have an identity. “I do not know, my lord, what I should think,” Ophelia tells her father during their first conversation about Hamlet. Polonius responds from a position of authority over Ophelia, asserting his power as the decision-maker: “Marry, I’ll teach you: think yourself a baby” (1.3.114-18). The language later in the passage suggests Polonius’ possession of Ophelia, for he speaks of her in terms of monetary value.

Polonius molds Ophelia’s identity to fit his own needs, taking advantage of her relationship with Hamlet to improve his own relationship with Claudius. While the males of *Hamlet* practice their authority by “teach[ing] Ophelia how to behave, Ophelia loses any identity she might have had as a woman and literally becomes a pawn to the men. She “do[es] not know” how to act autonomously and therefore depends upon her father to instruct her; she submits entirely to his will. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf famously employs a metaphor that likens women to “looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” (36), which provides a helpful context for understanding Ophelia’s character as a “mirror” that serves a critical importance by “reflecting” men.

She is defined through the reflection she casts onto male characters: she is Polonius’ pawn, Laertes’ chaste sister, and Hamlet’s lover. Once these male influences are removed and these descriptions no longer apply, she becomes mad. Laertes has gone to France, Polonius has been killed and Hamlet has rejected Ophelia. What can the mirror become when it has nothing to reflect? Perhaps the most tragic result of this circumstance, however, is the fact that even in madness, Ophelia remains fixated on the males who shaped her identity. “He is dead and gone, lady;/ He is dead and gone;/ At his head a grass-green turf,/ At his heels a stone,” sings Ophelia, lamenting her father’s death (4.5.34-7).

The final act of the play, presenting Ophelia’s funeral and the subsequent duel between Hamlet and Laertes, epitomizes Woolf’s claim that women “are essential to all violent and heroic action.” (36). The men do not use Ophelia’s funeral to honor her memory; rather, the funeral enlarges the competition between Hamlet and Laertes. “I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers/Could not, with all their quantity of love,/ Make up my sum,” claims Hamlet (5.1.285-7). Hamlet sets himself in opposition to Laertes, challenging him to compete on the basis of love for Ophelia. “What wilt thou do for her? […] I wooldrink up eiself eat a crocodile I’ll do’t. Dost thou come here to whine?/ To outface me with leaping in her grave?” (5.1.287-95). The remainder of the plot consists of Hamlet and Laertes attempting to “outface” each other. Ophelia becomes the medium that instigates these men to act, pushing the plot of *Hamlet* forward to its final, tragic “violent and heroic action.”
Ahhh, spring. A time for rest, relaxation, and enjoying the beautiful, sunny weather. A little late for an April Fool’s joke, right? For us, as college students, spring has the unique and often frustrating quality of being both the most pleasant and the most brutal time of year. Classes keep us inside, staring blankly at professors who may seem to drone on for an eternity. Papers keep us staring at blank computer screens, waiting for inspiration to come in order to successfully complete a deadline - or two. Windows become the only source of solace in classrooms that seem less and less inviting and more and more like colorless, drab, imposing structures made to keep us from enjoying the outside world.

We understand the dilemma all too well. However, as Honors students, we are known as being extremely resourceful, and therefore offer the following solutions. Explore. As your classes wind down, think about the various discussions you and your professors have had. Examine a topic that has interested or inspired you, and decide to learn more. Investigate. Make a focused attempt to understand a topic thoroughly. Own the knowledge.

This exploration does not have to end in the classroom. Expand. Spend time outdoors and notice something you didn't notice before. Like English professor Jeff McCarthy, learn about yourself by spending time with nature. This self-exploration is just as important, if not more so, than anything you may be taught within the confines of a four-walled classroom. Take the time to take in the world. Especially at this time of year, being outdoors can inspire creativity and a sense of well-being. This can help you get through this stressful time of year.

While you are enjoying nature, let your imagination wander and try to answer our question on page 7 for yourself. What would you study in a world where anything is possible? Maybe you want to shrink yourself down to microscopic proportions and explore the human brain with Dr. William Calvin (pg. 2). If you do that, be sure to enter your findings in the next undergraduate research fair! (pg. 3). Maybe your personal inspiration can inspire others in our learning community. If you are looking for someone to share your explorations with, try talking to some of our new faculty members and students, or the new Student Honors Council members featured on pages 4-5.

If you explore the world enough, you may come to the realization that everything is possible. That's certainly the attitude we have in the Honors program at Westminster College.