In an effort to reach out to students from Rowland Hall Middle School, the Honors program collaborated with the Gore School of Business to design and host a unique service project. On November 30th of 2008, a class of 28 seventh graders arrived at Westminster’s Center for Financial Analysis for the initial session of a two-month stock competition.

They excitedly viewed the boards flashing real-time stock information and the news cameras recording the event. Professor Ryan Hessenthaler, Director of the Financial Analysis Center, gave a brief tutorial on stock picking, the basics of market analysis tools, and the Investopedia website where the students would track the competition. Answering questions about stock tycoons and investing strategies, the young students impressed Hessenthaler with their financial knowledge. Both the professors and Honors students enjoyed watching the seventh graders’ faces light up as Hessenthaler explained they would have 1 million virtual dollars to invest; most importantly, the team with the lowest returns would treat the winning team to pizza at the end of the competition.

Finally, the Rowland Hall students were introduced to their competition: Westminster Honors students John Cook, Paula Porter, Brody Leven, Brian Craven, David Mursener-Gonzales, Robin Hill, and Kenny Bonar. The Rowland Hall students seemed excited to begin the challenge, unfazed by the daunting competition.

Channel 5 News, Deseret News, and the Salt Lake Tribune covered the event, interviewing the Honors students and seventh graders about their investing strategies and hopes for the competition. Stories featuring the competition appeared in printed and broadcast news the next day.

Two months later, the Rowland Hall students returned to the center for the closing session. After much dramatic fanfare, the seventh graders learned they had narrowly beaten the Honors students! As Director of the Honors program, Professor Badenhausen presented the seventh graders and their teacher with an overblown check for “Pizza” from the Westminster Honors program. The elated victors and defeated Honors students then headed to the Gore student lounge to enjoy the spoils of victory, share about school experiences and build friendships with each other.

This unique service project brought unprecedented media attention to the Honors program. While simultaneously building a relationship with a prestigious local private school, the stock-picking challenge gave Honors students an opportunity to think creatively about service. Hopefully, some of those Rowland Hall students will consider Westminster College for their collegial endeavors. Most importantly, however, this unique event broadened the typical idea of a “service project” and unlocked the doors of competitive creativity.

- John Cook
Honors Program and Office of Spiritual Life Collaborate to “Honor Spirituality”

In an effort to collaborate with other campus groups, the Honors program joined with the Office of Spiritual Life to host a monthly dialogue concerning the intersections between civic and spiritual issues—the series is entitled “Honoring Spirituality.” On the evening of the first Thursday in February, March, and April, students met in Nunemaker Place to discuss “Service for the Common Good,” “Environmental Responsibility,” and “Globalization and Spiritual Life,” respectively.

The director of Spiritual Life, Jan Saeed, provided questions related to the topic and mediated the conversation. For example, on March 7th students from various ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds discussed spiritual beliefs and passages from religious texts in an attempt to answer the question, “What is my spiritual responsibility to the environment?” Discussion ranged from viewing the environment as a divine creation and accepting the ensuing responsibility to debating the hypocrisy in some religions and actively working against such hypocrisy that destroys the environment. Honors freshman Scott Terry observed, “It was interesting to see the commonality between everyone on certain issues. Everyone acknowledged the importance of taking care of the environment. Everyone expressed a spiritual connection to the environment (though some of us had different specific spiritual connections). It was interesting to see this, but I guess what I really mean is that it was refreshing.” Circling around several themes, the conversation often touched on the ideas of living in moderation and recognizing the “interconnectedness” of the world.

Ultimately, Saeed organized this discussion series to engage Westminster students in understanding the role of spirituality in academic and civic life. Cultivating such an understanding fulfills the Honors program goal to develop knowledge and appreciation for diverse perspectives and to learn the rich results that can come from intelligent collaboration. -Sharayah Coleman

V-Day Bake Sale

During the first week of February, several dedicated Westminster students brought “V-Day,” a global movement to stop violence against women, to Westminster by hosting events such as The Clothesline Project, a “Night Out” Auction, a screening of V10th, a women’s self-defense class, and the The Vagina Monologues by Eve Ensler. The Student Honors Council collaborated with other Honors students and Psi Chi (the Psychology Honors Society) to contribute to the “V-Day” efforts. They hosted a bake sale with goodies like chocolate kahlua cheesecake, peanut butter balls, wheat bread, “blueberry surprise,” and of course, four flavors of chocolate vagina pops. Honors students volunteered their time to sell the baked goods at a table in the Shaw center, the student building at Westminster College. In all, the SHC successfully added $560 to V-Day’s estimated $13,000 donation to the Salt Lake City Rape Recovery Center through their work with the bake sale. SHC Treasurer Lindsey Roper observed that “the Honors Council has been discussing integrating more community service type projects into the Honors program. This was a small step in that direction.” -Stacy Blaylock

Honors Student Writing Awards (2007-08)

Humanities
Paula Porter, “Devil’s Advocate: Milton’s Failure in Paradise Lost according to Hume’s Philosophy” (Goldman and More)
Jesse Resnick, “Buried under the Rubble: Rationalism in Milton’s Eden” (Badenhausen and More)

Science
Amanda Anais Ruiz, “Generation Lobotomy: How Erasing Our Memories through Kinase Inhibition Can Erase Our Identities” (Goldsmith and Popich)

Social Science
Anna Hansen, “The Weak Idealist: Why Nietzsche Wouldn’t Side with Ariadne” (Bond and More)

Special Topics & Cross-Listed
McKay Holland, “Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying & Laugh at Myself—The Role of Humor in the Recovery of Trauma Victims” (Badenhausen)

2008 Honors Program
Independent Summer Research Grants

Chert Griffith, “Phage/Host Identification in Salt Lake Halophilic Bacteria”

McKay Holland, “Spinoza in America: Explaining the Philosophical Assumptions for Religious Tolerance in the First Amendment”

I'm afraid the “hard truths” about the Baby Boom generation presented by Professor Jeff McCarthy (Honorable Mention, Fall, 2007, p. 9) are based more on emotion than reason. If you read Mr. McCarthy's Faculty “Perspectives” statement, you might remember he basically portrayed the Baby Boom generation in the following terms: selfish, full of misplaced social and economic priorities, an old-age pension burden for younger Americans and environmental destroyers. All of these factors, in his view, constitute the biggest threat to the future of today's college students.

I have to say that all of Professor McCarthy's arguments can be challenged. My own pre-Baby Boom generation, for example, had views of their parents, the World War II generation, similar to Jeff's. We saw them as the richest, most selfish and greedy beings who ever lived. We were wrong, of course, but we saw that way because they controlled most of society's economic resources and still commanded a sizable portion of America's wealth even in their, well, very old age.

Many of the WWII folks made good money for sure, mainly due to the relatively uninterrupted economic growth, real wage increases and proportionately small federal government budget deficits between 1946 and 1967. They also held onto their money since they, as every other generation in American society, figured out only they are responsible for themselves as they get older. It's possible as well that they richly deserved their prosperity. After all, they lived through the privations of the Great Depression as well as the war.

Now, since generally the Baby Boom generation is described as Americans born between 1946-1964 (why only during those 18 years, I'm not sure), I must assume that Mr. McCarthy is too young to be classified as a BB and wrote what he did as a way of relating to today's traditional college-age population with whom he feels some kind of generational kinship. Well, guess what? Although I'm not a Boomer, I believe their generation is no worse than any other throughout American history according to the dimensions Jeff outlined. They are just protecting themselves as they get older the same as all other generations have done or at least have tried to do. I dare say today's generation of college students will duplicate their behavior exactly 40-50 years hence.

Further, I ask you, given Jeff McCarthy's claims, isn't he really promoting the self-interest of his own generation? Wouldn't it have been better if he'd stimulated others to think more about the issues and questions surrounding intergenerational conflict rather than asked college students to “act up, and soon” (Mr. McCarthy's closing words) to unload their boomer burdens? Or did Jeff's tongue simply get stuck to his cheek?

In closing, I think my experience has taught me that issues such as those addressed here have a lot to do with which generation controls the most money; and if money is Professor McCarthy's main concern, then he can stop by my office, during office hours of course, and I'll give him some.

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Response to “Counterpoint”

I am pleased that Chuck Tripp has taken the time to respond so vigorously to my short piece in the Honorable Mention. When I recommended that you students organize, I could easily have been applauding Chuck. After all, Chuck Tripp is our campus role model for activist citizenry scrutinizing its government and speaking truth to power. Given my admiration for Chuck and my affection for spirited exchange, I see no reason to rebut his “Counterpoint” in a line-by-line fashion. I’ll just make a couple of quick points.

Remember that the Honorable Mention asked my opinion about the biggest threat to graduating Honors students, and my response was that the Baby Boomers ahead of you have been very effective at making their burning issues the agenda items for the whole country.

The problem, therefore, for today's Honors students is that American priorities are directed by the appetites of 50 and 60-year olds, not 20-year olds. Thus, by 2010 California will spend more money on prisons than on higher education. Thus, the new $500 billion Medicare prescription benefit pays federal money for Viagra, at a time when there is less support for birth control and daycare and other young people's priorities. Thus, this nation has moved away from a progressive taxation system toward one in which earned income is taxed, and assets are not — meaning that cuts in government funding for programs like higher education are occasioned by the mandate of easing the tax burden on those with assets. (Those with assets are traditionally people who have been in the work force awhile, and are older than you).

Now don't get me wrong — the big issue here is not money, and it is not sidestepping your responsibilities to your elders. No, the big issue is who will set the priorities for your nation. My warning is that unless you are vocal now, the future will make you just a passenger on a long Baby Boomer cruise.
Student News & Notes

Greg Bowen and Anna Hansen will be getting married Wednesday, June 4 - just four days after they both graduate!

• Greg Bowen, Sharayah Coleman, John Cook, Anna Hansen, Natalia Noble, Paula Porter, and Brooke Turner will travel with the Westminster Chamber Singers to China to sing with a 300-voice choir as part of the cultural Olympics.

• Anna Hansen received a $1,000 stipend from the Michael Family Foundation for completing an internship with the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Utah.

• Robin Hill spent Spring semester 2008 studying in Costa Rica, focusing on Spanish, Latin American economics, and leadership.

• Brody Leven was awarded ASWC Senator of the month for February. He will also co-launch a bike rental program on campus, “Westminster Wheels,” with the Environmental Center, Hanna Thompson, and ASWC.

• Natalia Noble performed in Westminster’s “One-Acts.” This summer, she will perform in the Utah Renaissance Fair.

• Erika Rodriguez will have her piece entitled “MRS” published in Scribendi, the official Western Regional Honors journal for art and literature.

• Six Honors students were elected to ASWC positions: Brody Leven as President; Kaitlyn Thomas as a Arts and Humanities Senator; Bryan Craven, Robin Hill, David Mursener-Gonzales as Gore School of Business Senators; and Ben Rackham as a Social Sciences Senator.

• Environmental Studies major Ashley Pedersen was awarded a nationally prestigious Morris Udall Scholarship.

In Their Own Words: Why Do Professors Choose the Honors Program?

As Honors Students, we realize the amount of work it takes to participate in the Honors program; we can only imagine the amount of work it must take to teach Honors classes! So why do the professors do it? What do Honors professors love about working with Honors students and the Honors program in general? Here’s what they had to say:

“I like most that [Honors students] know each other. What I mean is each Honors year carries with it a shared experience of [the class’s] own strengths and interests, and I can draw upon that resource in the classroom. So, working with Honors students is joining a community of learners shaped into a team for inquiry.” –Jeff McCarthy, professor of English and Environmental Studies

“Honors students are consistently and endlessly interesting, and I mean that in all the positive ways.” –Karlyn Bond, professor of Music

“You know what I like about working with Honors students? They kept pestering me for a quotation about what I like about working with Honors students. Perseverance.” –Nick More, professor of Philosophy

“I love working with Honors students in the two-semester Humanities seminar because I get to see the students evolve during a full academic year as writers and thinkers. This is a luxury that most teachers of writing do not have. I also choose to teach in the Humanities sequence because I believe the first semester of college is the most crucial one in a student’s development and because it means that I will get to know all 120 Honors students in the program. Finally, I’m drawn to students who are genuinely excited about their learning and willing to take responsibility for their intellectual and personal development by cultivating a sense of independence as thinkers. That seems to me to be at the core of the Honors experience.” –Richard Badenhausen, Director of the Honors program

“Teaching in the Honors program allows me to step outside my departmental box and learn about important issues from other perspectives. The class discussion is always lively and passionate.” –Lesa Ellis, professor of Psychology

“The team teaching opportunities in the Honors program have really broadened my narrow academic scope. Developing these interdisciplinary connections with students and my team-teacher has been an amazing classroom experience.” –Bonnie Baxter, professor of Biology

-Meghan Hekker
An Invaluable Experience: Honors Student Spends Semester with Scottish Parliament

Junior Honors student Heather Hicks spent her fall 2007 semester in Scotland participating in a political internship program at the University of Edinburgh. Hicks, a Florida native, says she’s been interested in politics since the eighth grade when her home state played an epic part in the controversial 2000 presidential election. That spark of interest has taken this Political Science major across the Atlantic, and right up to the front doors of Scottish Parliament.

After taking a comparative political science course her sophomore year, Heather was motivated to study abroad, and began searching for programs online. Enthused by previous trips to the U.K. and by her Scottish family heritage, she independently applied for the program in Scotland in December 2006, and was one of twenty American students accepted the following spring.

The students in the program took courses in British politics, Scottish politics, and Scottish culture. Heather worked with the new Health Department spokesperson for the majority party (the Scottish Labor Party) of the Scottish Parliament. Besides shadowing her boss and observing the workings of a foreign government, Heather was responsible for doing research and compiling statistics for speeches and debates. “It was pretty cool to be watching my boss in a debate on T.V. and hear her use a number that I got for her,” reflects Hicks. Hicks also mentioned a memorable daytrip to London with her boss to visit the House of Lords and the House of Commons as another compelling experience. Not only did her position with the Scottish Labor Party fill her internship requirement for her major, but it will also serve as an awesome reference for future endeavors in politics that Heather will undoubtedly consider as she performs graduate work in policy and pursues a career in legislative politics.

In addition to her scholastic and vocational activities, Heather tasted European culture in every realm of her life in Scotland. Hicks lived with students from France and Germany in a flat designated for foreign students attending the university. She went on various excursions around the countryside and cities of Scotland with her American group. Heather even got involved with a Scottish folk dancing club, through which she met a lot of locals.

Heather credits her participation in the Honors program for helping her make the most of her study abroad experience. Academically, Heather believes that the nature of her Honors classes “helped [her] to have a voice of [her] own in class discussions with students from Smith, Vassar, and Brown.” She also recognized that her experiences with Honors curriculum helped her to relate American and Scottish politics and culture. In general, Hicks said, “being in the Honors program helped [her] to see that this kind of thing is possible” and motivated her to go searching for an opportunity to participate in what she stresses was “an invaluable experience.” -Cassidy Jones

Student News & Notes

Cooper Henderson and Blakely Nielsen competed with the Westminster College Ethics Bowl Team, and won 3rd place at Nationals.
•
Meghan Hekker started a student club for knitting called Knot It.
•
Marie Robinson developed an environmental education summer program for youth at local non-profit organizations. The program uses hands-on activities to educate and empower local youth to take an active role in improving the environment for their generation and future generations to come. She is currently seeking funding.
•
Tracy Hansford and Natalia Noble performed in Westminster’s production of “Dancing at Lughnasa.”
•
In December 2007, Robin Hill and Amanda Ruiz helped raise over $2,500 with the Swim for Sudan event to fund building a school in post-civil war Sudan.
•
Kaitlyn Thomas won second place in Westminster’s inaugural “Common Ground” writing contest for a paper entitled “Red Sands and Ancient Cliffs: Rediscovering the Surprises of the Southwest.”
•
Stacy Blaylock will present her paper, “Exposing Domestic Language Interactions to a Global Perspective: Imperial Linguistic Trends Acting Upon Spanish Speakers in the United States,” at the National Undergraduate Literature Conference at Weber State.
•
Blakely Neilson received the Overall Academic Excellence Award at the Engalitcheff Institute on Comparative Political and Religious Systems in Washington, D.C. in August. The award is presented to just three students out of a class of 124 at the institute.
Amanda Ruiz

Amanda Anais Ruiz is the true embodiment of the Honors program – Even her stress is interdisciplinary. When asked what she does in her spare time, Amanda laughs. “Spare time?” she says. Although she claims to be kidding, she is not. Amanda can be seen all over campus in a variety of clubs, jobs, and leadership positions. When she is not working as Concierge Coordinator in Shaw, acting as Secretary of the Student Honors Council, or tutoring other students in Spanish, Amanda spends her time coordinating fundraisers to raise money for various projects like building schools in Sudan and funding the Rape Recovery Center of Utah. Next year, Amanda will be riding in the driver’s seat as President of the Social Science Club and Head Coordinator of V-Day 2009. Amanda will be sure to bring her innovative style and creative leadership skills to the job.

Amanda is never a follower. Always walking an original path, Amanda has even developed her own major: Spanish-Latin American Studies to accompany her second major in Philosophy. The Spanish-Latin American Studies major emphasizes language, literature, culture and history of “America’s forgotten half.” Thanks to Ms. Ruiz, the college is now in the process of making it a catalog-offered major.

Living this high-paced, busy lifestyle requires Amanda to prioritize. When asked about her greatest challenge, Amanda said, “I can handle a million things at once if I really care about them. My greatest challenge last semester was not dropping the important pieces even if I felt lukewarm about them. I have since discovered that with all my jobs, classes, projects, I need to stick to those things I am passionate about.”

Despite all the chaos, Amanda remains level-headed. At the end of the day, all she really wants is to be happy and keep doing what she is doing forever. -Marie Robinson

Jeff Nichols

Born and raised in upstate New York, Jeff Nichols began his education at Genesco University in Western New York with the intention of earning a degree in psychology…until he did so badly in a couple of basic classes that he was advised to change majors. “I was not a very serious student,” he laughs. “I was too focused on having a good time.” Winding up with a degree in communications but no practical experience, Jeff joined the navy at the encouragement of his friends. There he gained maturity and a job at the University of Utah, where he taught R.O.T.C. and a class about the history of sea-power.

Before long, Jeff realized that historical information, rather than information pertaining to the military, was beginning to dominate the focus of his class. Recalling with surprise that history classes were his favorite in college, he decided to pursue a graduate degree in history. He was writing a paper about Buffalo Soldiers when he accidentally stumbled onto information about prostitutes in Salt Lake City during the 1800’s; this lead to his dissertation, Prostitution, Polygamy, and Power, which was eventually published by the University of Illinois Press as a well-regarded book.

Now, thirteen years later, Jeff loves his full-time job at Westminster, where he focuses on U.S. and Latin American history, specifically the history of the West, and occasionally teaches the second class in the Honors Humanities seminar sequence. He enjoys the freedom to create courses as he likes, the atmosphere of Westminster College, and the chance to work with students whom, he claims, seem to get better every year. Besides teaching, Jeff loves running around with his dog, Hogan, skiing, and snowshoeing. He is also working on a house that he and his wife are building near Moab on a beautiful bit of property they found one crystal clear fall weekend. As far as advice goes, Jeff says, “Read everything. Books, magazines, newspapers. Read it all. Even when I was goofing off in college, I was reading.” He also recommends trying as many things as possible. “Yes, there is a danger of over-extending yourself, and that’s a serious concern these days. But you can always cut back, and that’s better than trying nothing at all.” -Meghan Hekker
By midnight the place had pretty much cleared out. The losers had scrambled, towing their broken hearts behind them. The spectators had wandered off with a yawn, content to simply hear the outcome tomorrow. But me, I stayed around. It was the biggest tournament of the century, and now it was down to two men: Dr. David Goldsmith and Chert Griffith. David is a professor of geology—a rock man. Chert is an Honors student majoring in Biology. Neither man was a fish; the Rock Man is the Real McCoy of professors, Chert is the president of the Student Honors Council. They were the last men standing out of some twenty students, teachers, and just plain “low-lifes” who sat down hoping to get lucky at Casino Nunemaker.

It was Monte Carlo night in the Honors program, and the Texas Hold’em tournament boasted the biggest prize in Honors program history: a brand new mountain bike. Sure it was late, but I had waited too long to just leave now. The Rock Man was getting cocky. He told me that he walked to campus because he planned “to ride the bike home.” Chert was losing steam. By 11:30 he lamented that he’d rather be home playing Guitar Hero. But he didn’t give up. And as long as he was there and the cards were coming, I’d be there to cover it.

Yes, at that late hour, the place was dying down. Earlier, when the event started at 8 o’clock on Friday, March 7th, the place had been bustling; probably thirty people were mingling about the joint. The guys and gals looked spectacular in their glad rags: tuxedos, suit coats, glitter gowns, the works. Honors students happily serviced the bar, serving virgin fruit drinks so everyone could whoopee without getting ossified. The buffet had everything from the finest shrimp down to Wheat Thins. And the tiny, but nifty, battery powered stereo kept everyone’s dogs dancing with swell jazzy sounds.

But not now. Now it was near midnight. The crowd had dimmed to about ten. We were huddled around the table as the Rock Man and Chert fought to the finish. They were sweating bullets. Everyone had piped down; the only sound that could be heard was the chips moving back and forth across the table. The place got stuffy, the competition thick. I turned to whisper something to a fellow Honors student and when I turned back around, it was over. Chert and the Rock Man were shaking hands. The Rock Man had won the tournament!

He looked at Chert and said, “Tonight, kid, the second place prize is a mountain bike.” Then with the swish of a trench coat, he was gone. Chert was sorry to lose, but grateful for the Rock Man’s generosity. So grateful that he donated the bicycle to Nunemaker Place so that any Honors student could enjoy the spoils of poker. What a good guy, a real bee’s knees. And that was just another night at Casino Nunemaker. -Creed Archibald
**Parent Contributions to Student Honors Council Fund**

The Westminster College Honors program is very grateful to the following parents of Honors students who have contributed to the “Student Honors Council Fund” since the last newsletter. This past fall saw the highest number of contributors in the history of the program as well as the highest amount donated.

This fund supports travel grants to assist Honors students in making decisions about continuing their educations in graduate school. That initiative fits nicely into the broader mission of the Honors program to help mentor students in a variety of different ways at different stages of their academic careers. Contributions to this fund, which are tax deductible, can be made at any time of the year and should be sent care of the Westminster College Honors program, 1840 South 1300 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84105. Those in excess of $150 are acknowledged on the Parents’ Honors Roll plaque, which hangs in Nunemaker Place, home of the Honors program.

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**Honors Parent Contributors**

- **John and Regie Bradford**
  parents of Ray Bradford, Honors Degree grad 2007
- **Ellen and Kenneth Ciancone**
  parents of Chris Ciancone, class of 2010
- **J. Michael and Dorothy Coombs**
  parents of Demetrius Coombs, class of 2011
- **Ramona Crebs**
  parent of Colin Crebs, class of 2009
- **Jay and Lorie Gonzales**
  parents of David Mursener-Gonzales, class of 2011
- **Elizabeth and Paul Henderson**
  parents of Cooper Henderson, class of 2011
- **Jessica and Randy Jones**
  parents of Cassidy Jones, class of 2011
- **Leonora Midgley and Gary Resnick**
  parents of Jesse Resnick, class of 2010
- **Nick and Kathy Paras**
  parents of Gus Paras, class of 2010
- **Gary and Gwen Pascoe**
  parents of Heath Pascoe, class of 2009
- **Joseph and Lisa Rotunda**
  parents of Grant Rotunda, class of 2009
- **David Sherry and Jeanne Armbruster**
  parents of Ty Sherry, class of 2009
- **Byron and Diane Young**
  parents of Yommie Young, class of 2011

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Friends, peers, and colleagues,

Alas, another year comes to a close, and it is with a mix of emotions that we bid it farewell. Like all of you, we are stressed about approaching final exams and papers, and we are relieved to have made it so far. Moreover, we are happy to have forged so many new friendships with this year’s freshmen, and we are equally happy to have renewed and strengthened the friendships with those of you we have known a while longer. We are excited to see the future open up, bright and promising, before those Honors students who will be graduating at the end of the year, but it is with heavy hearts that we watch our friends move on without us. Finally, we feel privileged to have served you as the Student Honors Council, and it is with great hope and expectation that we look to the upcoming year. An exciting future awaits us all—as individuals and as a program—and it is our sincere wish that we will all move forward to greet it together. So, in closing and from the bottom of our hearts, goodbye, good luck, and God bless.

*Your SHC, 2007/2008*
How has the Honors program’s emphasis on collaboration influenced your educational experience?

**Faculty Response**

Bonnie Baxter, Ph.D  
*Associate Professor of Biology*

The opportunity for collaboration in the Honors program has truly impacted my scholarly endeavors. To show its significance, I will give a snapshot of the process of inventing of our Honors seminar course.

Dr. Bridget Newell, Professor of Philosophy, and I co-teach HON 222 “Science, Power and Diversity.” The genesis of this course grew out of our mutual interest in underrepresented groups in science. At our very first handshake, long before we taught in Honors, we discovered a shared desire to create a course highlighting diversity issues in science.

Simultaneously, as chair of the Sciences Division and a member of the first Honors council P.B. (Pre-Badenhausen), I was on a mission to update the Honors science offerings. It was clear to me that any high-achieving student should visit contemporary issues in science, graduating with an appropriately modern scientific literacy. After hiring our illustrious leader, the council agreed to renovate the science courses. What would these courses look like? Clearly, we all valued the history and philosophy of science, and it seemed obvious that we should retain one semester of such a course. However, this would leave open the second semester in the series, and we reserved this new course for issues that folks in current times should care deeply about.

Dr. Newell had been busy almost single-handedly developing the Diversity program across campus. Now the college instituted a new requirement for the Liberal Education program: a course that brought diversity issues to each student. It seemed to be an opportunity to build the Honors course we had talked about – a course that would fulfill the rest of the science requirement and the diversity requirement at the same time.

To build this course we educated each other about the respective lenses of our disciplines. Some of this happened in the planning stages, but much happened in the classroom in front of the students. Bridget and I love learning from each other, but it is even more spectacular when our students’ ideas enrich not only the current course, but add to course topics for the next year. Ultimately, I found that my own teaching was strongly impacted. Perhaps more surprisingly, my research was challenged by the feminist criticisms Dr. Newell brought to the course. This collaboration has been very important to my career.

**Student Response**

Whitney Strong  
*Class of 2009*

Students at Westminster are privileged to have the undivided attention of their professors; instead of squinting down at them from the back rows of large auditoriums, we sit in half-desk-half-chairs in intimate seminar rooms. When a Westminster professor shows a film, he or she often joins students in those seats. The Honors program takes that undivided attention one step further by offering two professors who can collaborate with students in an interdisciplinary, integrated curriculum.

That’s not to say that Honors students are being surrounded and intimidated by authority figures all the time. In fact, the format simply gives you more opportunities to ask professors questions about grades, get clarification on key issues, and receive help picking a paper-topic, a definite plus. Senior Honors student Greg Bowen, for example, says that “while the Honors program provides more access to instructors during office hours, it is really about getting the most out of teaching time.” Like Greg, I also think that the focus of the program is on the classes. During class, Honors students have opportunities to hear two sides of an argument or two different reasons why we should listen to Kaki King. Even if that day’s topic focuses on one professor’s specialty, we are generally enlightened by the other professor’s opinion or the findings in his or her field.

I’ve learned one very important thing through my involvement in the Honors program: specialization is not as high and mighty as we generally think. I’ve discovered that if different groups would take stock in each other’s findings, a lot of problems in our society could be remedied. Students often define themselves by their major as if it were really so difficult to talk to people majoring in different disciplines. It might be awkward to first try to figure out how two totally different fields relate, but I think we’ve all come to realize that different schools of thought often co-exist quite nicely.

In the end you will probably end up spending a lot of time with people who share the same beliefs, goals, and opinions on David Sedaris: whether you think he’s funny or don’t care who he is, as long as we learn the value of collaboration from the Honors program we will be able to filter information from a variety of fields and form opinions for ourselves.
Man's fall in *Paradise Lost* occurs due to a revolution in the epistemology utilized by Adam and Eve for making judgments. Originally, Adam and Eve rely on their fealty to God to determine their decisions, a methodology of formulating judgments analogous to Descartes’ theory of rationalism. Later, the pair allows judgments based on experience to take precedence over God's command, abandoning their Cartesian rationalist system of knowing for the empirical one advocated by Hume. Satan facilitates this revolution by appealing to Eve through distorted sensual experiences which appear to present significant gain without apparent punishment for violating God’s singular statute. Contrary to Satan’s claim that eating the forbidden fruit will not provoke divine retribution, Adam and Eve fall for their transgression, losing the innocent love instilled within them by God. Their choice to prioritize experience above God’s command illustrates the fundamental miscommunication caused by man's constant acquisition of experience and God's static nature. John Milton's portrayal of the fall of man as the end result of a paradigm shift from a rationalist epistemology to an empirical one advocates the former as a better method of creating judgments as it emulates God's omniscient knowledge; however, this rationalist methodology contradicts man's dynamic nature and makes it impossible for man to understand God's will.

Hume describes empirical epistemology and its applicability to Adam and Eve in *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. He asserts that all one can know is derived from experience and “creative power of the mind amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the senses and experience” (721). As one experiences he develops new ideas and creates new judgments. In the absence of experience one exists in a state of ignorance, a state Hume applies to the first man: “Adam, though his rational faculties be supposed, at the very first, entirely perfect, could not have inferred from the fluidity and transparency of water that it would suffocate him, or from the light and warmth of fire that it would consume him” (725).

To obtain understanding humans, specifically Adam and Eve, must first experience; only after may they infer or develop ideas. However, Adam and Eve as part of their creation obtain the idea of God and his sole commandment of them, indicating another method of knowing. Immediately upon their creation, before obtaining any empirical knowledge, God dictates to the first mortals: “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, / Subdue it” (531-532). Through this command Adam and Eve receive their first knowledge: that they hold dominion over the earth granted by their creator, God. Though God instills these ideas within Adam and Eve through speech, Adam and Eve receive them as innate because they possess nothing to relate them to and, therefore, must integrate them as part of their creation.

Adam and Eve’s initial, innate respect for God’s will follows Descartes rational epistemology discussed in his *Meditations*. Descartes endeavors to find something undoubtedly true and to this end abandons everything falling under the smallest shadow of doubt. Most notably he criticizes the senses because it is impossible to determine whether they portray reality or merely a consistent illusion and, therefore, discards all judgments based on the senses: one knows most certainly what is known innately or known with thought alone. However, this methodology lies at odds with the dynamic, ever changing, ever evolving, life of man because it requires one doubt all his experiences and weigh innate ideas above any burden of empirical evidence.

Initially, Adam makes judgments using rationalism valuing innate beliefs over those empirically derived judgments. Knowledge instilled within him by God exists independently of experience, paralleling Descartes argument for the existence of God: “it would not be possible for my nature to be what it is, possessing the idea of a God, unless God really existed” (423). Adam fears the “death” God promises as punishment for eating “the tree/ Which tasted works knowledge of good and evil” but has no experience in death or knowledge of evil (7.543-5). He founds his judgment upon his rational fealty to God and fear of breaking God's command but has no experience with breaking God’s commands as there is only the one. Adam voices his faith in God’s infallibility when he refuses Eve’s request to part ways and accomplish more work: “best are things as the will/ Of God ordained them. His creating hand/ Nothing imperfect or deficient left” (9.343-5). When Adam claims that God’s “creating hand/Nothing imperfect or deficient left” he relegates experience to a submissive role with no power over God's laws.

Milton first presents Eve as a rationalist relying on the innate idea of Adam’s authority, inherited from God. She defers to Adam and requires his assent to act, even venturing so far as to claim: “Unargued I obey: so God ordains. / God is thy law, thou mine” (4.635-6). Eve’s acceptance of Adam’s requests and their source God’s will protects her from Satan's first rational appeal to her: Happy though thou art/ Happier thou may'st be, worthier canst
not be./ Taste this and be henceforth among the gods/ Thyself a goddess, not to earth confined/ But sometimes in the air as we! (5.75-9). This tempting urge tries to convince Eve that eating the fruit will elevate her to the status of God and free her from worldly constraints but fails to convince her because it requires she create new rational judgments contradictory to the ones instilled by God. Satan asks that Eve accepts the fallibility or maliciousness of God without any empirical evidence; he accuses God either of accidentally making an unjust command or maliciously limiting Adam and Eve's potential. Because it directly contradicts her innate God-given beliefs, Satan's first attempt to ruin Eve fails.

Eve falls when she chooses to accept empirical evidence over rational knowledge. . . she argues with her “law,” Adam, and Satan confronts her with a new empirical based argument: Look on me! / Me who have touched and tasted yet both live/ And life more perfect have obtained than fate/ Meant me by vent’ring higher than my lot (9.687-90). Rather than appeal to her mind alone, Satan presents Eve with evidence. In contrast to Satan's first perjury, his second relies on sensual stimuli; he asks Eve to “look” upon him, he that “touched” and “tasted” the fruit and yet lives. After seeing a snake talk, Eve must wonder: what could the fruit do beginning with my faculties? These empirical thoughts convince Eve to taste the illicit fruit and fall. Her initial euphoria upon feeling the fruit's effects prompts her to praise the fruit for the knowledge it granted her and experience for guiding her to eat it: “Experience next, to thee I owe, / Best guide. Not foll’wing thee, I had remained/ In ignorance” (9.807-9). Eve recognizes that experience guided her to eat the fruit even before becoming aware of its negative effects. She refers to empiricism as a “guide” that leads her: one that leads her to judgments contradicting her “law,” Adam.

Eve's fault reflects itself in Adam when he chooses his empirical feeling of attachment to Eve over his innate fealty to God. Adam recognizes the evil in Eve's action and reprimands her for violating their creators command; yet he makes the same decision, because he views Eve to be integral to his being: “The link of nature draws me, flesh of my flesh, / Bone of my bone thou art and from thy state/ Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe” (9.914-6). God created Adam in his image and Eve from him—they share a unique and homologous birth bonding them together. Adam refers to this integral bond when he refers to Eve as his own “flesh” and “bone”. Furthermore, since creation Adam and Eve have a bond developed in time by experience—a bond so strong it drives Adam to forsake his creator's only command. The loss of innocence and happiness in Adam and Eve's fall illustrates Milton's distaste for weighing empirical evidence more heavily than rational knowledge. When Adam and Eve chose empirical judgment above divine law they fell, lost their innocence and became subjects to guilt, sin, and death.

In exchange for their “naked majesty” before succumbing to empiricism's treachery, they receive “dreaded shame”. This vivid contrast between pure glory and grimy shame demonstrates Milton's disgust at privileging empirical evidence above divinely implanted ideas.

Rational judgments are superior to empirical judgments because they mimic God's method of knowing; he is omniscient and knows all without experience or thought. Milton illustrates God's all encompassing understanding and perfect grasp of time when the angels praise God as the “omnipotent, / Immutable, immortal, infinite, / Eternal King” (3.372-4). Rationalism is an epistemological effort to mimic, even emulate, God's method of knowing. It endeavors to make judgments without experience and with the mind alone. One's rational knowledge exists prior to the thought of it even if it exists unknown to the knower; for example though Descartes used a conscious process to conclude that he must exist because he thinks, he was already distinctly aware of his identity as a thinker and of his existence. Rational ideas exist innately within their knower, like God's knowledge exists innately within him. In contrast, empirical judgments rely on experience to sow the seed of knowing and the individual to reap the benefit through logic. Rational knowing occurs innately while empirical ideas appear only in the fall.

Men can never achieve the a priori understanding of God because they are burdened by an empirical nature that is the curse of all sensual beings. God is static; he knows all from the beginning, and is always certain. In contrast, mortals are dynamic, constantly experiencing new things and developing new judgments from those experiences. Innate ideas will never be enough to sustain a man because the weight of experience piles upon him day after day, year after year until they disappear beneath the rubble. The failure of rational judgments to remain at the forefront of men's minds under the constant deluge of experiential data causes men to lose focus on the innate ideas implanted by God. Consequently, there exists a fundamental miscommunication between men and God that prevents men from comprehending the ways of God.

Works Cited
Musings
From Your Editors . . .

Honors students collaboratively engage with their communities in many ways, whether on campus through the Finance Competition or the V-day Bake sale or in other countries, working with foreign governments. And in this very issue, two Honors professors actively demonstrate how honest conversation can lead to social responsibility and civic engagement.

As co-editors of *Honorable Mention*, we know well the value of collaboration. To produce a single issue we must bring together student writers and photographers, faculty, and organizers of other campus events. Furthermore, we must pool our editorial talents and work together to create the actual piece of literature you hold in your hands. We believe the collaboration that is necessary to create *Honorable Mention* extends from the central value of collaboration that the Honors program holds as a whole.

Ultimately, the Honors program’s commitment to collaboration prepares Honors students for the “real” world where cooperative work and group projects rule the successful workplace. We wish our fellow collaborator, Sharayah Coleman, the best of luck as she graduates and moves into that “real” world...knowing full well that she, and every other Honors student, has already gained experience in the reality of collaboration.

Honorably Yours,

Sharayah Coleman
Paula Porter
Brooke Turner
co-editors of *Honorable Mention*

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