Lunch in Iraq: Honors Students Talk Politics with Expert Tom Ricks

Pulitzer Prize winning reporter Thomas E. Ricks met with Westminster College Honors students over lunch on March 9th to discuss President Obama’s first year in office. Ricks has won multiple Pulitzer Prizes during his distinguished career as a reporter for both the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal, and he has covered American combat in Somalia, Haiti, Korea, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Kuwait, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He has also authored two New York Times bestsellers on the Iraq war. This gathering allowed students to assess both the foreign and domestic policies of the Obama administration with a decorated military correspondent and bestselling nonfiction author who also happens to be a Washington insider.

Suggesting that President Obama increasingly resembles a “21st-century Jimmy Carter,” Ricks postulated that the tension between Congressional Democrats and the President has been amplified by weak leadership from Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid. He portrayed a grim picture of the current state of affairs in our country, including economic devastation, an aging infrastructure, and poorly funded schools across the United States. Ricks also shared his insights into foreign policy in his discussion of President Obama, analyzing America’s current stance on Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, and Iran. Ricks explained his approval of President Obama’s choice to increase troop levels in Afghanistan, but chastised the President’s decision-making process as too deliberative and drawn out. He also highlighted important policy differences concerning Iraq between Senator Obama, the Presidential candidate, and President Obama, the commander-in-chief, and expressed doubt in the ability of the most recent round of Iraqi elections to quell sectarian violence, reminding students of how the purple finger elections of 2005 plunged the nation into civil war. Ricks did offer some praise for the Obama administration’s efforts to reach out to Iran through diplomatic means. The decision by Iranian diplomats to reject American overtures offers the United States, according to Ricks, significant political clout in the potential formation of an international coalition to contain Iran.

The real fun began when Ricks concluded his assessment of President Obama’s first year in office and answered questions from the two dozen Honors students in attendance. Ricks raised three potential wild cards for American national security during the question period by highlighting Mexico, Nigeria, and Cuba. Ricks began his remarks on Cuba by stating the obvious: Castro’s death is imminent and normalized economic relations with America. This prospective economic growth in Cuba could provide employment for thousands of Haitians, as Haiti and Cuba are separated by a short ferry ride. The magnificent learning environment created by Ricks’ discussion elated Honors students. David Mursener Gonzales, a junior in the Honors program, appreciated the chance to hear a journalist with such a rich understanding of American efforts in the Middle East to offer his perspective in such a conversational setting. Jacob Wayman, another junior, was intrigued by Ricks’ analysis of Cuba, particularly the implications of a Cuba without Fidel Castro. While they were also able to attend Ricks’ lecture, “The Iraq War: Three Things Americans Still Don’t Understand,” given to the campus community later in the evening, Honors students undoubtedly benefitted from the opportunity to examine foreign affairs in the more intimate atmosphere of the lunch. This most recent speaker in the Kim T. Adamson lecture series did not disappoint: he provided insight, analysis, and fun for the Honors program and campus alike.

-Cooper Henderson
**News**

**Profs Pick the Flick**

**An Introduction to Film Noir**

Dr. Sean Desilets is a relatively new professor to the Westminster Honors program, but his quick adaptation to the Honors environment was evident as he enthusiastically hosted “Profs Pick the Flick” on January 28th. Dr. Desilets showed *Sweet Smell of Success*, a 1957 production starring Tony Curtis and Burt Lancaster.

Recognizing that this was many students’ first experience with film noir, Dr. Desilets began by providing a brief introduction to the genre. The film itself was a stunning representation of power and coercion, in the type of tale typical to film noir. It is the story of Broadway columnist J.J. Hunsecker (Lancaster) who forces press agent Sidney Falco (Curtis) to break up his sister’s romance with a jazz musician. Falco is the epitome of a power-hungry publicist who, while he hates himself for it, will do anything to end up at the top with J.J., breathing in the “sweet smell of success.”

After the movie, in the characteristic fashion of an Honors learning environment, students conversed with each other about their impressions. While Dr. Desilets led the discussion, it moved seamlessly through topics that the students found intriguing. Although he regretted not saying a little bit more about film noir in general, Dr. Desilets pointed out that he wanted to “rein in his professorial tendency to talk a lot.”

Reactions to the film and the presentation were enthusiastic and appreciative. One Honors freshman, Laura Wolf, said, “I hadn’t seen much film noir before this, but I loved every second of its style. It’s always a fantastic experience to come across great movies for the first time.” The students in attendance also pleased Dr. Desilets. He praised the sense of community he saw and “was struck by how much the Honors students did see this event as their own.” This event gave him a new perspective on the sense of Honors working as a peer community. At the end of the night, everyone stole back to reality, pleased with what they had taken from this event. -Camber Stoddard

**Fresh Faces in the Honors Classroom**

**Honors Welcomes a Host of New Professors**

Honors students recently noticed the abundance of new faces in the Honors program. However, these new faces belong to professors rather than students. Because students and professors have strong ties in Honors, this article provides an opportunity to introduce two new faces to the program.

Sabrina Hom, co-teaching her first semester of Science, Power, and Diversity, joins Honors with a diverse background. After graduating from Wellesley College with a degree in Philosophy and obtaining her Ph.D from Stony Brook University in New York, Sabrina spent two years teaching at McGill University in Montreal, where she received a certificate in Women’s Studies and worked closely with the Theatre Department. At Westminster, Sabrina is actively involved in the sculpting of Feminist Theory courses. She also teaches Race Theory, Introductory Social Sciences, a Philosophy Thesis class, Modern Philosophy, and Applied Ethics, in addition to Science, Power, and Diversity. Stepping into an Honors seminar originally designed by Bonnie Baxter and Bridget Newell, Sabrina enjoys the feeling of community and the energetic students offered by the Honors program. She also enjoys co-teaching with her counterpart in the sciences, Sarah Hutchinson.

Kristjane Nordmeyer, one of the two professors teaching Human Culture and Behavior, had always been interested in the cultural divisions of labor as defined by sex and/or gender. After graduating from the University of Utah with a bachelors degree in Social Psychology, she continued in her studies with a Masters in Gerontology and earned a Ph.D. in Sociology. Professor Nordmeyer spent four years teaching and researching at the University of Utah. Now in her second year at Westminster, she has expanded her palette considerably and teaches Quantitative Research Methods, Aging and Life, Human Sexuality, Intro to Sociology, Gender in Society, and Race, Class, and Ethnicity, as well as our favorite, Human Culture and Behavior (or as the students call it, Sexology 101). “I love this class,” says Kristjane, “because the students are so eager to learn and always have well-thought-out questions. They always bring something new to the class discussions, and I really appreciate that.” Kristjane hopes to continue teaching this class in the future, saying that she absolutely loves the material, and thoroughly enjoys working with Psychology and Neuroscience professor Lesa Ellis.

The Honors program is proud to welcome these two professors, along with a multitude of other talented instructors. These include: Sean Desilets (Arts in Performance), Chris LeCluyse (Arts in Performance), Christy Seifert (Science, Power, and Diversity), Lance Newman (Humanities II), Dick Chapman (Political Economy of Conflict), and Michael Zarkin (Political Economy of Conflict). And coming on board next year are Bill Bynum and Richard Wellman (History & Philosophy of Science), Scott Gust, Heidi Van Ert, and Michael Vought (Arts in Performance), and Han Kim (Science, Power, and Diversity). The Honors program invites the Honors community to get to know these fine new contributors to the Honors educational experience. -Caitlyn Stringham
Goodbye to a Dear Friend
Douglas Stefan Wright (1952–2009)

Doug Wright, longtime beloved Honors professor, passed away at home in Salt Lake City surrounded by friends on November 29, 2009 after an eight-month battle with lung cancer.

Doug first arrived at Westminster College in 1995 and soon began teaching in Honors. Over the next fifteen years, he would inspire hundreds of Honors students in classes like Humanities, History and Philosophy of Science, and Arts in Performance. Doug taught that last class this past fall term with English professor and singer Chris LeCluyse right up until he died, often remarking that his students kept him getting up each morning, in spite of his illness. After Doug passed away, the entire seminar watched a documentary about Doug’s struggles with cancer made by his life-long friend, filmmaker Paul Babin.

Doug’s favorite word to describe his students was “astonishing.” In fact, he bored many a faculty member at lunch bragging about some interesting thing his students did in class that day. Even in his last days, Doug was still teaching and learning; he struck up a deal with Honors grad Ben Rackham (’09) to teach Ben to play the drums in return for Ben helping out Doug with his computer (which he could never quite get the hang of). Doug was a regular in the year-end Honors student-faculty softball game. His face would get redder and redder as the game progressed, until he would finally confess, “I can’t run any more.” The Honors faculty never lost a game with Doug on its team.

Throughout his battle with cancer, Doug maintained his humor and delight at the English language, especially the way in which it provided opportunities for bad jokes, puns, and outrageous comparisons. Before having surgery in May to relieve problems with his pleural cavity, Doug announced: “They’re lining my lungs with talcum to increase my inner beauty.” He coached a colleague to ask him if dying was hard, so that he could respond “Dying is easy; comedy is hard.”

Per Doug’s wishes, there was no funeral service. He asked that his ashes be spread in Mill Creek Canyon; a group of faculty and students will carry out that wish this summer, once the snow melts in the canyon.

When Doug first learned he had cancer, he was asked by a staff member at the college what was on his “bucket list,” in other words those activities that he wanted to make sure to do before he died. Doug replied, “I don’t have a bucket list…I’ve spent my entire life pursuing each and every one of my passions.” -Richard Badenhausen

End-of-Year Announcements

2009–2010 Writing Award Recipients
Alex Thomas
*Humanities (Badenhausen & More, Humanities I)*
“The Play’s the Thing: The Impact of Genre on Montaigne’s and Shakespeare’s Views on Pretending and Death”

Sam Webster
*Science (Goldsmith & Cline, History and Philosophy of Science)*
“Their World or Ours: The Degredation of Nature in Environmental Sciences”*

Camber Stoddard
*Arts/Social Science (LeCluyse & Wright, Arts in Performance)*
“To Sing or Not To Sing: Opera as a Medium for Performing Shakespeare”

*Best Paper Overall

2010 Independent Summer Research Grant Recipients ($2,500/each)
Cooper Henderson
“The Institutional Incentive for Corruption within Utah State Government”

Cassidy Jones
“Art and Activism in Escalante Country: An Environmental Literary History”

Tyler Sutton
“The Ethical Evaluation of Newborn Screening as an Opt-out Program vs. Opt-in”

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 fund supports travel grants to assist Honors students in making decisions about continuing their educations in graduate school. Contributions to this fund, which are tax deductible, can be made at any time in the year and should be sent care of the Westminster College Honors program, 1840 South 1300 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84105.

Anonymous
John & Regie Bradford
J. Michael & Dorothy Coombs
Elizabeth & Paul Henderson
Doug and Brandy Hoffman
Hai Ho & Das Tran
Robert & Theresa Lane
Thomas Rees
In the last week of January, a flock of bright-eyed high school academic competitors descended upon the Westminster College campus, at the invitation of the Honors program. On Friday the 29th and Saturday the 30th, the Honors program hosted the Utah state Academic Decathlon for the second year in a row. The Honors Peer Mentors and Honors freshman class volunteered their time and assistance for this event, ensuring it ran smoothly. Many Honors students at first wondered why the Honors program chose to host Academic Decathlon, but they were ultimately impressed by the professional air of the competitors and happy to engage in this annual program-wide service project. Furthermore, this competition provided a good chance to introduce high-achieving, high school students to the Westminster Honors program in addition to putting them in touch with actual models of academically successful undergraduates.

Honors students, decked out in “festive Honors t-shirts,” according to Assistant Director Dave Goldsmith, greeted the teams. The first day, the students competed in various events, including speeches and interviews, which Honors students moderated and judged. Many Honors students shared a laugh with the high school students regarding how creative impromptu speeches were. The contestants played games in the foyer of Converse Hall while awaiting their turn with the judges, interrupting the normally serious air with their jovial yet competitive attitude.

Students participated in many other events over the two days, such as essay writing, math tests, and art-history exams. Honors volunteers moderated and graded these events and, while they concurred that some of the essay-writers may have been too honest when they admitted in their essays that they had not read the assigned book, they were impressed with the overall quality of the work.

The final event, Super Quiz, brought all 150 competitors together to cheer each other on during full-team question and answer sessions. Saturday evening, the weary competitors collected their awards and headed home. The Honors students who helped over those two days ensured the success of this sometimes-chaotic competition. -Yvonne Clark and Paula Porter

Honors students waiting for the Super Quiz to begin. From left to right: Sam Hall, Annie Brings, Paul Christian, and Annie Brantley.

Yvonne Clark welcomes high school students to Westminster's campus for the Academic Decathalon.

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Sara Rees will be working at a Genetics Lab this summer.

- Demetrius Coombs spent spring break volunteering with Orphanage Outreach in the Dominican Republic.

The Westminster Chamber Singers, including Honors students John Cook, Christian Della-Iacono, Natalia Noble, Jeffrey Pedersen, Garrett Schoonover, and Fehmi Yasin will tour Ireland during May.

- Honors student leaders of V-day 2010 included Stacy Blaylock, Amanda Ruiz, Robin Hill, and Tracy Hansford.

- Erika Rodriguez presented at the Rocky Mountain Peer Tutoring Conference.

- Lauren McCrady and Erika Rodriguez will present at the National Undergraduate Literature Conference (NULC) and at the 18th Annual Pacific Northwest McNair/EIP Conference at the University of Washington.

- Seven Honors students were elected to ASWC positions: Cooper Henderson (President), Tyler Sutton (Dir. Clubs and Orgs), Camber Stoddard (Attorney General), and Mai Hoang, Caitlyn Stringham, Chris Roundy, and Teri Elliot (Senators).

- Last semester, Robin Hill and Tracy Hansford traveled to India, where they volunteered for the Wai/Westminster project.

- Meghan Hekker, Lauren McCrady, Erika Rodriguez, Heath Pascoe, Sara Rees, and Michael G. Bell presented at the Utah Conference for Undergraduate Research.

- Paula Porter has been accepted to Ohio State University Medical School and the University of Utah Medical School.

- Cooper Henderson has been selected as a finalist for the Truman Scholarship.
On February 9, 2007, I listened to my best friend cry over the phone. Around 5:00PM she was washing her hands in a restroom at the Salt Lake City Public Library when a man hidden in a stall jumped out, attacked her, and tried to pull her clothes off. Luckily, she had a pen in her hair and was able to defend herself. I could hear the pain in her voice as she described the incident to me. Unfortunately, my friend’s experience is not an isolated incident. One in six women in Salt Lake City has been the victim of attempted or completed rape. I was disgusted to think that thousands of women in Salt Lake City have experienced the same pain and suffering as my friend. I was inspired to act.

In 2009, I started the V-Men Coalition with a passion to engage men to fight against violence towards women. I was unsure whether or not men at Westminster would be receptive to the V-Men. We had our first event in October, where we screened the movie, *The Tough Guise*. The turn-out surprised everyone: there were over twenty people in attendance, all of whom engaged in an open dialogue about gender scripts and the role of the media in sexuality. Since our first event, we have promoted several open dialogue events, and have spoken in various classes including, Science, Power, and Diversity; Human Culture and Behavior; the Psychology of Women; Social Psychology, and Community Psychology. After every presentation, I have received emails and phone calls from men, passionate about becoming involved. The V-Men has received enormous support from the local community. Since the fall, we have gathered over 1,000 signatures of men pledging to treat women respectfully, and we have had an incredible response from the community. We have received help promoting our cause from the Governor’s Office of Diversity Affairs, the Fathers and Families Coalition of Utah, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and the Rape Recovery Center of Salt Lake City. The V-Men have become an integral aspect of Westminster College’s V-Day movement, helping promote the *Vagina Monologues*, the Clothesline Project and other creative events to raise money for the Rape Recovery Center. As a senior, I have seen the V-Men grow immensely over the last two years. I am confident that the V-Men will continue to engage men at Westminster in the fight to end violence against women. With new leadership and a constant growth of volunteers, the V-Men will be a force to be reckoned with!

Robin Hill

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Lauren Robinson and Camber Stoddard starred in the One Act Play *The Power and the Glory*, directed by Tracy Hansford.

Jessica Hawkes, Cooper Henderson, and Demetrius Coombs have worked with the College Democrats club.

Honors students Camber Stoddard, Tess Graham, Cooper Henderson, and Tyler Sutton competed at the National Ethics Bowl Tournament.

Cassidy Jones is studying French and environmental literature abroad in Madagascar this semester.

Meghan Hekker is having a paper published in the undergraduate research journal *The Honors Review*.

Paula Porter and Demetrius Coombs were selected to present their undergraduate research at the national American Society of Microbiology meeting in San Diego in May.


John Cook, Paula Porter, and Gus Paras attended the Pacific regional Mock Trial competition and John Cook won an all-region attorney award.

Heather Dalton will attend Creighton University School of Medicine in the fall with a full scholarship from the Air Force Health Professions Scholarship Program.

Yvonne Clark, Hailey Henderson, Mai Ho, and Meghan Hekker attended the Honors Western Regional Conference.
Honors students have always played a part in Westminster’s theatre program, either onstage or behind the scenes. Recently, however, the number of Honors students involved in theatre has increased exponentially. In this year’s spring production *Red Noses*, the largest show Westminster has produced, almost one-third of the cast is comprised of Honors students. Fifteen Honors students were involved in the show either as actors or crew members.

“The arts create scholars,” Westminster’s theatre program chair Michael Vought said, commenting on the crossover between the programs. He explained that theatre involves economic, social, and historical aspects, not just artistic issues. Vought appreciates the crossover. He said theatre attracts student who are sharp-witted, assertive, vocal, and outgoing, which are characteristics that Honors encourages. Thus, since both departments foster these skills, the two programs enrich one another.

“You take intellectual chances in both programs,” freshman Annie Brings said. “I’m not afraid to be wrong.” Because she is accustomed to taking chances onstage, Brings feels Honors courses are a little less intimidating.

“I find myself more willing to be wrong onstage than in an Honors class,” junior Camber Stoddard said with a smile; and other Honors actors agreed, though it is hard to believe that an Honors classroom could be more frightening than a full audience. Since Honors students read a broad
range of material, they have many resources to use to build characters. Freshman Hailey Henderson said that Honors has strengthened her ability to analyze a character because Honors encourages an analytical mindset.

The Honors freshmen involved in the theatre program enjoy the strong Honors presence in Red Noses. The group has created a community within a community; after rehearsals, the freshmen have “prompt parties” to help each other finish their Honors work. This incorporation of two parts of their lives creates a support group for the students, making the challenges more manageable.

Henderson commented that being involved in both Honors and theatre has strengthened her work ethic. She said she must be constantly productive to keep up with her course work. These cross-over students juggle not only Honors and theatre but also work and volunteering.

“It is hard. We had to read two hundred pages of Kafka and I thought ‘Oh great I'll do that, after rehearsal,’” Brings said. Honors actors agreed that the most difficult thing about being involved in both programs is how homework and rehearsal compete for time and energy.

The Honors program and Theatre program create bright students and brilliant actors. Next time you have the opportunity to see a production at Westminster, you’ll be more than likely to find cast and crew of the Honors variety who would appreciate your support. -Tracy Hansford
**Student Profile**

**John Cook IV**

A senior majoring in Economics with minors in political and computer science, John Cook IV has had many rich, life-enhancing experiences at Westminster College, from participating in Mock Trial and the vocal group the Griffin5 to being an active Student Honors Council president. John makes it clear that his Honors program experience has been one of the most significant of his college career. When I asked what made him decide to leave Colorado, John smiled and said that the Honors program, with small-class sizes and challenging liberal arts seminars, brought him to Westminster.

Unlike most seniors who are nervous about life after graduation, John has a plan in mind. He intends to work for two years, go to law school, and then practice business law in Colorado. John believes that the Honors program helped him develop his critical thinking significantly, which makes him different from other students. He said, “The Honors program is designed for students who want to challenge themselves. You will learn how to learn.” John hopes these skills will help set him apart as a law student and lawyer.

Often people associate competitiveness with Honors students. However, John thinks that Honors students at Westminster College have created a supportive community. He claims, “The Honors program is not designed for competitiveness, but for cooperation. Competitiveness is only a side product because of the intelligent and competitive nature of students in Honors. However, the program promotes activities outside classroom, which aim to create a friendly and close-knit community.”

Looking back as his four years in the Honors program, John will never forget memories of National Collegiate Honors Council conventions, summer research projects, Student Honors Council, and especially Humanities courses in his freshman year. John wished that he had spent more time digging deeply into philosophical and literary works. He says, “When you are a new freshman just experiencing college, Humanities seems to be the most challenging class. When you step back, you will realize that Humanities brings you valuable critical thinking skills, from which you gain a lot of benefits in the long run.” With all his knowledge, critical thinking skills, and leadership abilities, John is now ready and eager for the future. -Mai Ho and Meghan Hekker

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**Faculty Profile**

**Peter Goldman**

Although Peter Goldman has worked as a carpenter, fisherman, taxi driver, cannery worker, and even in the U.S. Forest Service in Alaska, he always found enjoyment in English literature. As a small child he remembers the vast array of titles filling his parents’ bookshelves; he found himself especially fascinated by thick books such as Ulysses and The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich. When he was worried about what field to study in college, Dr. Goldman found great inspiration in his father’s suggestion to “pick something you love.” Dr. Goldman prides himself on living out his father’s dream of choosing to pursue an academic discipline purely for the sake of interest, receiving his doctorate in English from the University of California, Irvine, in 2000.

When Dr. Goldman was about five years old, living in New York, he remembers the strain his family experienced from investigations by the House Un-American Activities Commission. Despite the fact that his father and brothers fought in World War II, both his father and grandfather were investigated for no legitimate reason in a time when to be suspected was to be considered guilty. Dr. Goldman views this childhood experience with McCarthyism as a formative event in his life, catalyzing his moderately conservative viewpoint and appreciation of skepticism.

Dr. Goldman was drawn to teaching because he feels that it keeps one grounded—in grad school, scholars often find themselves consumed by esoteric research and disconnected from the so-called “real world.” He feels that teaching remains essential to facilitating dialogue and keeping ideas balanced and applicable for an audience. Finding teaching a very rewarding experience, he feels that Westminster is a place where he fits in with the ethos focused on teaching and student-centered learning.

With regard to Honors, Dr. Goldman loves team-teaching because having a good partner adds great value to the class, especially when the professors are from different disciplines. He appreciates the unique environment of Honors as a class of highly motivated and engaged students working with professors to cultivate meaningful intellectual development. He remarks that making the Honors experience one’s own richens the learning experience altogether—students are often surprised that incorporating supplemental information is encouraged, but in writing one must make the piece one’s own in order to make it interesting for both the author and the audience. -Demetrius Coombs
How does the Honors program help shape strong individuals who pursue their own goals and passions?

**Faculty Response**

Richard Badenhausen  
*Honors program Director*

The Honors program helps students cultivate intellectual independence on the way to setting goals and pursuing passions during the admissions process, well before they arrive at Westminster. During that process, we stress the unique learning approach in Honors and encourage prospects to join the program for the right reasons. We strongly discourage students from applying to Honors because they “think it’s the right thing to do” or because it will “look good on the resume”; instead, we hope to attract students who are excited by the Honors classroom environment, one in which students will be asked to challenge themselves, question their values, and participate in a free exchange of complex ideas.

Once students arrive, they are thrown into the year-long Humanities experience, which features an intense, Socratic environment in which they learn how to ask questions and handle difficult questions asked of them. This approach, which has been featured in Honors for many years, has been emphasized recently in the work of Harvard University’s Tony Wagner, who points out that learning to ask questions is a crucial activity because it is tied to independent thinking.

Honors reinforces the development of one’s intellectual voice through an emphasis on writing. In the nine-month Humanities sequence, for example, students write 24–28 papers and four essay exams. All of that material receives feedback from two professors. “Finding one’s voice,” as Irish poet Seamus Heaney so eloquently put it, “means that you can get your own feelings into your words and that your words have the feel of you about them.” By the time Honors students are ready to graduate, we want their writing (and speaking) voices to have the feel of them about them.

It’s important not to underestimate the benefits of the program-wide learning community that is Honors. The fact that Honors students take classes with 135 other Honors students, do an enormous amount of peer mentoring in formal and informal relationships, and possess a wide variety of backgrounds and interests means that new Honors students have models of what impassioned learning looks and feels like. Honors students are leaders in student government, theater and music productions, and countless clubs and teams; this high standard encourages others in the program to pursue their passions. Is the process hard? You bet. But I think if you ask any senior Honors student if her journey has been worth it, she will say “yes,” in her very own, unique way.  

- Richard Badenhausen

**Student Response**

Tyler Sutton  
*Class of 2012*

We are always told how important it is to set goals and follow one’s passions, but how do we find these passions and decide what path to pursue? It is clear that the key to happiness is doing what you love. Honors helps students outline their goals and discover what they are interested in. Part of the reason Honors is so influential in students’ lives is because it allows them to tailor their own experience. Henry David Thoreau said, “Thought is the sculptor who can create the person you want to be.” Similarly, Honors acts as the vehicle for stimulating thought, thereby allowing students to sculpt their own intellectual desires and goals. Thus, Honors provides students with the opportunity to sculpt their futures and themselves.

Honors faculty and staff make a sincere effort to expose students to fields they have always known but from a new perspective. Regarding “Science, Power, and Diversity,” Honors student Chris Roundy said, “This seminar helped me see the entire broad scope that is biology, which ultimately showed me what I really wanted to do: public health.” The seminar is unique in that it details a biological concept and illustrates how it has shaped the public’s interest, showing the need for a link between science and public policy. The interdisciplinary nature of all the seminars fosters this kind of macroscopic lens.

Personally, “Human Culture and Behavior” prompted me to consider the role of ethics in human experimentation. This type of critical thinking has proved to be more motivational than I ever anticipated. For me, this class sparked an interest in Bioethics. Since then, the Honors seminars have continued to help me narrow my interest in Bioethics through a unique and individual experience. This prompted me to make Bioethics my contractual major.

In “History and Philosophy of Science,” Michael Popich, professor of philosophy, spent an entire day speculating on the technical imperative, which puts into question how far we should pursue our scientific endeavors as a human race. This line of questioning puts what I want to do and how I can achieve it into perspective.

Although Honors has helped me narrow my goals, it most certainly has not narrowed my intellectual perspective. That is what it is truly remarkable about the Honors program: its ability to create a tailored learning experience, while at the same time, exposing students to different philosophical vantage points.  

-Tyler Sutton
In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Montaigne’s Essay 19, both authors utilize diction belonging to the theatre to construct their respective attitudes about pretending and death. Montaigne describes pretending as a way for people to conceal truths about self and death, and that only death reveals these truths. On the other hand, Hamlet bestows acting with the capability to replicate and reveal truths about people and events. Shakespeare’s employment of a play within a play succeeds in mirroring themes that pervade *Hamlet* as a whole, such as Hamlet’s purpose of revenge and his later acceptance of death. In a drama, Shakespeare controls the smaller play’s capacity to mirror truth about Hamlet’s death and the ready attitude with which he meets it. However, in Montaigne’s philosophical work, death has not yet revealed the truth of his philosophy about pretending. The value of pretending and its relationship to death depends on the authors’ ability to control the main characters’ death; and since the genre of either drama or philosophy affects the extent to which the author controls their characters’ death, the value of pretending depends on its use in either Shakespeare’s drama or Montaigne’s philosophy.

In Essay 19, Montaigne presents his ideas on happiness and its connection to pretending and death:

…”this same happiness of our life, which depends on the tranquility and contentment of a well-born spirit … should never be attributed to a man until he has been seen to play the last act of his comedy … In everything else there may be sham; the fine reasonings of philosophy may be a mere pose in us … But in the last scene, between death and ourselves, there is no more pretending; we must talk plain French … (Montaigne 55)

In utilizing diction such as “sham,” and “pose,” Montaigne emphasizes the concealing quality of pretending. Neither of these words signify the honesty or naturalness implied by “plain French.” In particular, Montaigne suggests that pretending impedes happiness. Given that Montaigne defines a happy soul as that in possession of an inner contentment, an unhappy and discontented soul would feel the need to conceal its insecurity by pretending to be something other than itself. Montaigne enhances his idea that pretending only conceals with his treatment of death in Essay 20. There, Montaigne devotes a significant amount of thought to death because he treats it as a subject that he needs to unmask and accept (Montaigne 68). Therefore, Montaigne especially rejects pretending due to its association with those who cannot face death, a subject he takes seriously and for which he expresses a particular “fondness” (Montaigne 62). Montaigne warns those who try to conceal the reality of death: “Death is the condition of your creation, it is a part of you; you are fleeing from your own selves” (Montaigne 65). Since Montaigne refers to pretending as an action demonstrative of one’s untrue self, anyone who denies death likewise tries to conceal a truth about their nature. Montaigne also enhances the futility of pretending by having it potentially undermine his view that individuals need to contemplate, accept, and prepare for death.

In contrast, Hamlet values acting or pretending as a means to reveal truth rather than conceal it. To Hamlet, actors are the “abstract and brief chronicles of the time” and the purpose of acting, “both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature; to show…the very age of time his form and pressure” (Shakespeare 2.2.535, 3.2.21-25). According to Hamlet, acting and pretending do not conceal truth. In a condensed way, the play potentially reveals truths about nature and mimics actual events of the time. While Hamlet laments that he has neglected avenging his father’s murder, he realizes he can use the fictitious world of acting to depict truths about the real court, namely Claudius’ murder of Hamlet’s father and the incestuous marriage between Gertrude and Claudius. In staging a play, Hamlet plans to hold the mirror up to Claudius and accurately depict the Ghost’s account of Hamlet’s father’s murder. Hamlet hopes that the staged scene will not only reveal whether Claudius is the murderer, but will reveal the truth of the Ghost’s words.

As a brief chronicle, the Player King’s speech within *The Murder of Gonzago* summarizes and mirrors the way in which grief and revenge function in *Hamlet* as a whole.

> Purpose is but the slave to memory,  
> Of violent birth, but poor validity…  
> The violence of either grief or joy  
> Their own enactures with themselves  
> destroy…  
> (Shakespeare 3.2.194-203)

The Player King asserts that a mix of passion and purpose forecasts failure. Since Hamlet vows revenge in a state of visible grief (Shakespeare 1.2.68-107), his purpose
for revenge could potentially die along with his grief. Considering that despite one allusion in Act 4, Scene 5, Hamlet neglects any further specific reference to his grief or revenge, the Player King’s observation appears true in that Hamlet’s grief has weakened. Following the Player King’s words about grief and purpose, the last lines in the speech parallel the way Hamlet perceives the effects of unpremeditated events and the way in which he perceives his own death. “Our wills and fates do so contrary run/That our devices still are overthrown;/Our thoughts are ours, their ends none our own” (Shakespeare 3.2.217-219). The speech predicts the effects of external, divine, or unforeseen circumstances on Hamlet’s plans. Despite a decision to kill Claudius, unfortunate circumstances continually divert his singular purpose for revenge: he accidentally kills Polonius, Claudius sends him to England for his execution, and though Hamlet escapes that unfortunate end, he returns to find a dead Ophelia and a vengeful Laertes. After escaping his execution, Hamlet says, “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,/Rough-hew them how we will” (Shakespeare 5.2.10-11). Here Hamlet agrees with the Player King’s claim that despite man’s construction of a plan or purpose, a higher power proves stronger in shaping the outcome of events. The Player King’s and Hamlet’s words use the same diction of “wills” and “ends” to enhance their view that there exists a gulf between man’s plots and the ability to which he can control the outcome of those plots.

Considering the Player King’s speech and Hamlet’s own words, Hamlet’s purpose succumbs to the constant influx of tragic events, and Hamlet bestows superiority to the intervention of God, or fate, or some other unknowable force. Moreover, Hamlet’s words prior to his fight with Laertes specifically emphasize his lack of control over his death. Hamlet admits to misgivings, yet states, Not a whit, we defy augury. There is special Providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, ‘tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves knows, what is’t to leave betimes? Let be. (Shakespeare 5.2.220-225)
The actor’s lines in the mini-play suggest that while humans do not control the outcomes, they are allotted sovereignty over their thoughts. Similarly, Hamlet recognizes that in the midst of an uncontrollable, yet inevitable end, he can only rely on an inner readiness for death.

Shakespeare’s employment of a play within Hamlet provides a way for subtle repetition of important themes involving Hamlet’s revenge and death. While the mini-play uses the speech in specific reference to the marriage between Gertrude and Claudius, the same words apply to Hamlet. Nevertheless, in the genre of drama, Shakespeare can more easily demonstrate the value of plays and acting. In control of the play, Shakespeare can freely employ and affirm Hamlet’s claim that acting functions as a mirror by writing a play within a play that mirrors Hamlet as a whole. Not only can Shakespeare control to what extent Hamlet as a whole affirms or denies the themes addressed in the Player King’s speech, he can exert control over how and with what attitude Hamlet meets death. With a complete knowledge of Hamlet’s death, the reader can fully apply the Player King’s to Hamlet’s views on death. The smaller play held a mirror up to Hamlet’s neglected revenge plot and accurately predicted Hamlet’s future words about the inevitability of death. Furthermore, Shakespeare confirms Hamlet’s attitude by having Hamlet calmly face Laertes’ challenge despite his ominous misgivings. As Hamlet says that “but in a fiction” (Shakespeare 2.2.562) can people portray believable emotion and purpose. Nevertheless, Shakespeare grasps and expresses the value of the fictitious world of drama in its capacity to duplicate human emotion and reality. Even though the smaller play exists as a fiction, Shakespeare uses his control of it to accurately reflect Hamlet’s ideas about revenge, purpose, and Hamlet’s composure in the face of death.

Writing in the world of nonfiction, Montaigne does not possess the luxury of control afforded fiction. Like Shakespeare, he makes claims about pretending and death. Unlike Hamlet, Montaigne does not reside in a play and his views on pretending cannot yet be affirmed. Montaigne admits a fascination with death and claims that he is “constantly brooding over [his] thoughts [of death] and settling them within [him]” (Montaigne 61). Like Hamlet, “the readiness is all” for Montaigne. Both characters stick to the idea that preparation for death exists as the best way to face its uncertainties. The difference lies in the fact that the reader does not witness Montaigne’s deathbed as they do Hamlet’s. While Montaigne devotes an intellectual approach to the study of death and pretending, he himself admits, “I leave it to death to test the fruit of my studies. We shall see then whether my reasonings come from my mouth or from my heart” (Montaigne 55). Only death will potentially reveal the truth of Montaigne’s philosophies. Unlike the case of Hamlet, the fact that Montaigne is still alive complicates a reader’s confirmation or denial of his philosophy. In Montaigne’s philosophical work, written while he was still very much alive, the non-fictional work lacks the luxury of generating a desired conclusion. Based purely on Essays 19 and 20, the reader remains ignorant of Montaigne’s death. Perhaps his death revealed his fine reasonings as mere sham. In saying that his philosophy may just come from his mouth, the author certainly allows this possibility. Nevertheless, if Hamlet speaks truthfully about acting as a mirror, both the Player King’s speech and Hamlet affirm Montaigne’s description of death as an inevitable outcome, and both agree with Montaigne’s claim that humans always have their thoughts and preparedness as a means to accept such inevitability.

Works Cited
Student Honors Council

Dear Honorables,

At the end of another year, we would usually look back at the year’s events and muse about the memories shared. In previous years, we might have talked about the great conversation that followed Professor Chapman’s explanation of the financial collapse, the dramatic film noir screened in Nunemaker, or the spontaneous dance party that emerged from Monte Carlo night. Not this year, though. This year, we look forward… to the end-of-year softball game. We hope to cap an amazing year of Honors events with a historic defeat of the faculty!

As we’ve entered a new decade, the SHC has been privileged to see the amazing students and faculty that make up our Westminster Honors program. To those graduating: we have all faith in the positive change you’ll work wherever life takes you. To those with more years in Honors: we look forward to seeing how you’ll continue to improve our great program. Keep up the good work and have a memorable summer.

‘Your Student Honors Council’

From Your Editors

Dear Colleagues,

Students enter the Honors program with their own goals, passions, and fledgling identities. One of the defining characteristics of the Honors experience is surrounding yourself with like-minded colleagues, but at the same time Honors offers a myriad of opportunities to define yourself and your education.

Time and again, Honors students rise to the occasion. From fostering dialogue regarding sexual violence, discussing politics with Pulitzer prize-winning authors, starring in just about every campus production, or cutting loose and playing cards, Honors students show varied interests as well as the initiative to pursue their passions.

As another academic year winds to a close, we welcome back editor Cassidy Jones from her study abroad in Madagascar. We also bid farewell to editor Paula Porter, as she wraps up her Honors experience and moves on to embrace her passions in medical school. Until next fall we hope you continue to assert your individuality, follow your dreams, and make your future your own.

Honorably Yours,

Paula Porter
Meghan Hekker
Jackie Wilson
Elizabeth Nelson
Co-editors of Honorable Mention

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Clockwise from top left: Jake Wayman, Vice President; Camber Stoddard, Secretary; John Cook IV, President; Tracy Hansford, Treasurer.