Using the Humanities to Connect High Schoolers to College

This semester, a group of Honors students and Honors professors have begun teaching in the Clemente Course in the Humanities, a community partnership being piloted this year by the Utah Humanities Council in conjunction with Westminster and the University of Utah.

Modeled after the Clemente Course in Chicago, the program serves underrepresented high school sophomores in the AVID program at East High School—students who hope to be the first in their families to attend college. The Clemente Course uses the humanities to introduce these ambitious students to a collegiate learning experience.

Last fall, faculty and students from the University of Utah’s Honors College taught classes on art history and philosophy. This semester, History professor Dr. Gary Marquardt and senior Nicole Bedera are teaching the history class, while English and Film Studies professor Dr. Sean Desilets and junior Willy Palomo are teaching the literature class.

The theme for this semester’s classes is African-American migration patterns. Palomo explained that this topic is relatable for the Clemente students, many of whose parents were migrants themselves. As an overarching project for the classes, students will create oral histories by interviewing someone who has had an experience relating to migration.

Each class has taken a unique approach to helping students unpack and make connections with texts. Dr. Marquardt and Bedera have encouraged students to look at history in a different light. “We want them to conceptualize history in a more advanced way with more room for discussion and fewer ‘right’ answers,” said Bedera. Students recently examined historical texts, from newspapers to Twitter feeds, and discussed their properties as primary or secondary sources.

Dr. Desilets and Palomo have brought this same critical focus to the literature class. Recently, students learned about close reading by analyzing a song by hip-hop artist Mos Def about living in Brooklyn. “Students came out with some very inspiring and positive... realizations about working through struggle and finding meaning in difficulty,” said Palomo.

Bedera and Palomo’s role in the program as “teaching fellows” is a unique aspect of the Salt Lake Clemente course. Bedera described teaching the course as a process of “learning along with the students,” and Palomo has enjoyed facing the challenges of lesson planning while structuring each class with Dr. Desilets. Westminster Honors Program director, Dr. Richard Badenhausen, added that Clemente students benefit from the teaching fellows as well. “Clemente offers Westminster’s Honors teaching fellows a chance to model for these determined high school students what success in college looks like.”

The Honors connection in Clemente is also evident through the classes’ focus on interdisciplinary analysis. Students read excerpts from the autobiography of 18th-century Nigerian abolitionist Olaudah Equiano in both classes, once from a historical perspective and then again as a piece of literature. Moreover, like Honors classes, the Clemente Course teaches students to make arguments about texts. “The students don’t read poems or songs and then say what they mean,” Dr. Desilets said. “Instead they make meaning from the material of the words.”

The Westminster Clemente teachers are hopeful that the course will offer these students a new understanding of the humanities and of college, opportunities that Dr. Marquardt called “an invaluable experience for under-represented students.” Bedera said she had reason to be optimistic about Clemente’s impact on students: “Above all, they’re excited and curious—those are amazing things to be.”

By: Melanie Long
Finding Our Own Cause

As a noted activist and prominent journalist, Charlayne Hunter-Gault heard one question repeatedly from students over the course of her visit to Westminster: “How do you think we should get involved?” Each time, her answer remained the same—and she wasn’t going to let us off easy. According to her, the best way to get involved is to figure out how to do it yourself. “You need to choose a cause that matters to you,” she advised. “Every generation must find its own cause,” she said, emphasizing that the decision to support a movement (or create one) must come from a place of personal passion and commitment, but that the specific way you choose to contribute to society is merely a detail.

Hunter-Gault’s own story certainly reflects her decision to attend the University of Georgia had nothing to do with wanting to make waves; she just wanted to pursue a degree in journalism that wasn’t available at any of the historically black colleges in the state. Her passion for journalism led her to the struggle for civil rights and, more recently, women and children’s AIDS prevention in Africa.

Choosing a cause, whether you seek it out or let it find you, is just the first step. Hunter-Gault reminded students that, whatever cause they choose, they need to do right by those they seek to help. She spoke ardently about empowerment, reminding us that activism should create solutions rather than perpetuate helplessness. Hunter-Gault also advised future activists to feel free to feel. “I have been touched by my subjects,” she explained, “and that touches my listeners.” By making civic engagement personal, activists not only empower themselves but also have the potential to spread their stories, becoming more invested in their causes, but also that they have the potential to spread their work further and with more compassion.

While perhaps initially daunting, Hunter-Gault’s expectation that we find our own causes reflects our ability and duty to do right by the world. Whether we revolutionize an unrecognized social problem or simply do our part as good citizens, we all have something to contribute and have the capacity to recognize what that is, if we’re willing to try.

By: Nicole Bedera

Charlayne Hunter-Gault’s Visit to Westminster

At the age of nineteen, she became the first female African American student to attend the University of Georgia. When asked about her experiences as a college student, Hunter-Gault reframed the questions. She explained that her decision to attend the University of Georgia had nothing to do with wanting to make waves; she just wanted to pursue a degree in journalism that wasn’t available at any of the historically black colleges in the state. Her passion for journalism led her to the struggle for civil rights and, more recently, women and children’s AIDS prevention in Africa.

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By: Nicole Bedera

Honors student wins state-wide essay contest, meets Madeleine Albright

Pratik Raghu, a junior in the Honors program, won the statewide 2013 McCrory Family Foundation essay contest in November for his essay on the role of independent journalism in diplomacy.

The contest was held in conjunction with the eighth annual McCrory Family Foundation Lecture Series: In Praise of Independent Journalism. Former US Secretary Madeleine Albright was the speaker for the 2013 installment of the lecture series and presented Pratik with a $2,500 check in front of a packed house of about 500 audience members.

Raghu based his essay on the work of Gladson Dungdung, a human rights activist and writer from India. According to Raghu, Dungdung brings “marginalized peoples to the attention of mainstream Indian society in the hopes of improving their lives through engagement and dialogue.”

After receiving the award, Raghu also had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Albright. “For someone who has shartered so many glass ceilings throughout her career,” he said, “she is very approachable, humorous, and frank.” Raghu encourages all his peers to enter the 2014 McCrory Essay Competition and attend this year’s lecture.

He enjoyed his experience and said that the McCrory lectures are “excellent opportunities to expand your minds and think deeply about the information-rich, increasingly globalized age in which we live.”

By: Anabel Alvarado

Honors students win state-wide essay contest, meets Madeleine Albright

Pratik Raghu and Madeleine Albright at the 2013 installment of the McCrory Family Foundation lecture series: In Praise of Independent Journalism.

Visiting Sochi as an NBC tour guide during the winter Olympics

With twenty-three students participating in the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Westminster had plenty to celebrate this spring. But watching it all was Honors student Brett Carroll, a junior Marketing major with a minor in outdoor leadership, who participated in an NBC internship that took him to Russia alongside the athletes.

As a tour guide for NBC’s guests, Brett and his fellow interns herded NBC’s marketing partners and top salespeople through crowds and security to view events. In his (rare) free time, Brett also helped with merchandise work, luggage service, and staffing the ticket desk in NBC’s office. Often getting back from events at 1:30 in the morning only to get up again at 6:30, Brett kept plenty busy.

As a guide, he was able to watch many events in person, including both the women’s and men’s super-combined, ski jumping, team figure skating, and the preliminary match between Canada and the US in women’s ice hockey. He also got to meet some of the Olympians, including women’s halfpipe gold medalist Kaityen Farrington and men’s slopestyle coach Skogen Sprang.

Although the games were amazing, Brett also enjoyed visiting a different country. Contrary to reports by US media, problems with amenities in Sochi were virtually nonexistent. The hotels were nice, the water clean, and the few stray dogs were very friendly.

Brett also enjoyed meeting the Russian people, who, he says, did not smile much, but were very friendly once a conversation got started.

Brett did regret not being able to experience more of Russian culture, though—by spending his time solely in the Olympic security “bubble,” Brett was not even able to go to the official town of Sochi, about thirteen miles away.

Brett grew up skiing and hiking in Massachusetts, developing a love of the outdoors from an early age. He began to broaden his sporting horizons when he got to Westminster, participating in the freshman outdoor doors orientation trip. Brett is now heavily involved in the outdoor program, working for the Outdoor Recreation office and frequently leading student trips. His love of outdoor recreation made his experience in Sochi particularly exciting.

He hopes to return to the program as a paid senior guide for the Rio de Janeiro Summer Olympics in 2016.

By: Emma Deloughery

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Brett Carroll joined other students as an NBC tour guide during the 2014 winter Olympics.
Honors alumni give their perspective in a new video series

Over the winter break, a number of Honors alumni returned to campus to be interviewed about their experiences in the program. These alumni are pursuing everything from travel to PhDs or full-time careers. Despite their varying goals, though, they each have found that their experiences in the Honors Program have helped them gain the skills necessary to be successful thinkers and communicators.

While you can find a few of their thoughts below, their full interviews are online at www.westminstercollege.edu/honors.

“Long term, I do want to be a professor, and not just a research professor, but an educator. That is, in part, due to … seeing these passionate faculty who really love what they do.”

Chris Roundy, ’11

“I was able to spend an entire summer researching how I wanted what I wanted, at my own pace.”

Elizabeth Nelson, ’13

“There is a lot that goes into communicating with other people. … From day one, the Honors Program had a very intensive writing curriculum. That’s something that I carry with me.”

Jeff Pedersen, ’13

“I was able to spend an entire summer researching how I wanted what I wanted, at my own pace.”

Elizabeth Nelson, ’13

“Professors were interested in talking to you regardless of whether or not you were in the major that they usually supervised. I think that was really valuable for me to have.”

Jill Edmonds, ’12

“While students will be encouraged to participate, they will be challenged … ultimately for the purpose of growing professionally, academically and personally.”

Marie Martin, ’08

“Everything shares this really strong interconnectivity. Every seminar is team taught… to really show there are multiple sides to every field of inquiry.”

David Luhr, ’13

“The Honors Program taught me to defend a position … without it being a confrontation.”

Jay Springer, ’09

“In the Honors program, students and faculty strive for active learning strategies that contextualize and invigorate knowledge, making our learning relevant to the complexity and variety of today’s world. Few learning strategies are more active and experiential than travel.”

This May, seven Honors students will do just that, thanks to a generous grant from Westminster alumna Kim Adamson. Adamson’s previous donations to the college have enabled the creation of the Kim T. Adamson Alumni House, the Anne Newman Sutton Weeks Reading Room in Giovale Library (named after her grandmother), and the Adamson Lecture Series, along with the endowed academic chair currently held by Honors’ own Richard Badenhausen.

Travel has been an essential part of Adamson’s life since 1972, when she attended the Munich Olympics as a member of the US Olympic Youth Delegation. After beginning college, she spent many years as a police officer in Salt Lake City and traveled extensively within the United States through the International Police Association. In 1974, Adamson joined the Marine Corps, and during her 30 years of service, she did two tours of duty in Afghanistan and two in Iraq.

Apart from her professional experiences, she has also traveled a great deal to pursue her personal interests. She has taken cycling tours through Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and New Zealand, and has also participated in trips designed for aid and disaster relief, including a trip to the Virgin Islands after Hurricane Hugo and one to Senegal with the Marine Corps where she worked with a team offering medical services to villagers. Currently, she has visited 47 US states and every continent except Antarctica—though now that she is retired, she enthusiastically plans to finish off those lists!

Adamson’s extensive travels have dramatically shaped
Adamson Grants At a Glance

$20,000 donated, supporting seven students on five trips taken to eight countries.

1. The Lessons of Nazi Science: Poland, Austria, Italy
2. Gender Utopia: Norway, Sweden
3. Irish History: Ireland
4. Service Learning: Thailand
5. Glasgow Principia: Scotland

her values and views on life. She prefers to “travel with purpose,” approaching each new country and culture not as a tourist, but as a productive, open-minded, and adaptive visitor. Whether her goal is providing aid, working alongside other citizens, learning about history and culture, or participating in events, Adamson travels to fit in, learn, meet new people, and allow each new experience to broaden her understanding of the world and its people. Her generous grants to these seven Honors students will allow them to begin doing the same. During May Term experiences and, for one student, a semester of studying abroad, these students will travel to a grand total of ten countries on academic trips that will allow them to experience, study, and actively engage with different cultures.

All of the students are incredibly excited for their upcoming trips. Seniors Cera Cantu and Melody Redmond will both be going on the Thailand Service Learning May Term trip, which will involve service projects in rural Thai villages, city tours, a meeting with iconic sexual health activist Mechai Viravaidya, and even elephant rides at the Lampang Elephant Conservatory. For Cera, this trip fits in perfectly with her Public Health major by allowing her to observe the workings of Thailand’s public health system—particularly the mechanisms in place for dealing with HIV/AIDS, family planning, and sexual health. According to faculty leaders Han Kim and Peter Ingle, “this trip changes people,” and Cera looks forward to bringing a new, international perspective into her future in the field of public health.

In Melody’s case, this learning experience does not directly relate to her Communications major, but like Cera, she has wanted to take this class since her freshman year. She wants to experience a culture that is dramatically different from that of the United States, but more importantly, she wants to spend her time abroad serving other people. Both Cera and Melody look forward to this adventure, and state that without the financial help of the grants, they would not be able to take advantage of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Senior Marlayna Townsend will be delving into the fields of psychology, medicine, physical sciences, ethics, and history this May in the “Lessons of Nazi Science,” where students will travel through the Czech Republic, Poland, Austria, and Italy. This trip will be led by three different professors, including Dr. Russ Costa (neuroscience), Dr. Chris Cline (physics), and Dr. Giancarlo Panagia (justice studies), and one staff member: Amy Fairchild (Administrative Assistant for the School of Arts and Sciences). It will focus on the complicated place of scientific research during WWII. According to Marlayna, the interdisciplinary nature of this class makes it the perfect conclusion to her Honors experience. “As a future physician and researcher,” she says, “I am aware of the importance of looking at not only the conclusions drawn from scientific discovery but also the means by which scientific progress was and is made.” For Marlayna, this trip represents a rare and valuable intersection between the ever-evolving nature of biomedical science and the powerful effects—both inspiring and tragic—of the field for real people. The class promises to be as eye-opening and personally meaningful as it is academically rigorous.

Nicole Bedera, a senior majoring in sociology with an emphasis in gender studies, will be traveling with the “Gender Utopias” class to Norway and Sweden to study issues of gender and equality. This seminar will offer valuable new insight into her study of gender through a sociological lens, which has been the focus of her entire academic experience at Westminster. “Often, we compare the faults in our own gendered system to the greater equalities outside of the United States, especially in northern Europe. The Gender Utopias trip seemed like the perfect opportunity to delve into those differences (and, surely, similar struggles) in person instead of through textbooks,” she said. In terms of what she hopes to gain from this class, Nicole eagerly anticipates going through the inevitable culture shock of visiting a new place, and hopes to “gain some cultural compassion and perspective” through the experience.

Juniors Shianne Gray and Megan Peters are bound for Ireland this May Term. The “Irish Film & History” class, led by Dr. Natasha Sajé and Dr. Georgiana Donavin, will focus on the art and culture of Ireland. Megan, a marketing major, chose this trip as a complement to her film minor and cannot wait to study Irish film and to learn more about the cultural influences that shape the country’s cinematic endeavors. “I love traveling,” she said, “and I love film. I have also wanted to visit Ireland since high school, particularly for its rich culture and history.” Shianne, a psychology major, chose this trip as a way to fulfill her interest in film studies, and also wanted to visit Ireland since high school.

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It's difficult to be in the Honors program without hearing the illustrious name of senior philosophy major John Allred. His restless, witty, and friendly demeanor leaves an impression on everyone he meets. Plus, John has served as a peer mentor for the last three years, participated in a variety of Honors events, and tries to interact with anyone in the program whenever the opportunity presents itself.

John is the youngest of nine children, and his parents began traveling a lot while he was in high school, which fostered his personal love of travel. From Germany to Ireland, or even just Colorado, John has seen a large portion of the globe. During his sophomore year, John learned about Mongolia. While abroad, he lived with shepherds, rode a horse while herding sheep, and interviewed a monk in the Gobi Desert. According to John, it's unusual and exciting experiences like these that draw him to travel.

In addition to travel, John has a passion for philosophy and writing that extends outside of the classroom and manifests itself in club participation. For the last three years, he has been a member of the Ethics Bowl Team, competing at Nationals his junior year. John also joined the Westminster Slam Poetry Team this past year and discovered a new love of creative writing. These clubs allowed him to cultivate the two abilities he considers most important in life: critical thinking and self-expression.

John noted the large impact Honors had on his overall college experience and life. "The work with objective criteria despite the uncommon arrangement in the world creates an unusual and exciting experience like this methodological practice of thinking motivated his love of philosophy because it taught him how to think."

"Challenge yourself. Don't just try to do something notable; try to do something that is outside of your comfort zone."

"Don't just try to get through college fast. Take classes that are outside of your comfort zone. Do something that you love, and accomplish something that you are proud of."
In her book, *Quiet*, Susan Cain discusses the different ways in which extroverts and introverts negotiate a culture that overvalues extroversion. In your experience, how has mixing a h...
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