Comprehensive Conversations in Humanities
Curriculum Change Generates Successful Results

Humanities is infamous for testing students’ reading, writing, and thinking abilities with a difficult final consisting of cross-disciplinary textual analysis and critical thinking about difficult texts from the entire semester. Last fall, however, professors experimented with the class format by adopting a “Comprehensive Conversation” in place of the written final prompt exercise.

Humanities has been slowly shifting its focus toward conversation, based partly on the work of Janet Flammang, who describes conversation as an important aspect of civil society. Richard Badenhausen, Director of the Honors program, along with other Humanities professors, wanted to extend the idea of civil discourse into the final class evaluation. Last year’s change represents the first step toward implementation of Flammang’s ideas. The instructors also wanted to acknowledge the many different learning styles of their students by varying assessment of their work as much as possible.

The Comprehensive Conversation itself consists of a fifteen-minute conversation between individual students and their two Humanities professors. The professors offer conversation prompts and questions, but students are free to discuss any of the texts studied during the semester. Students are graded on their understanding of different texts as well as their ability to analyze, develop claims, and make connections between the various works.

The students were understandably nervous at first, but the idea of talking one-on-one about so much complicated material scared the professors as well. “I was terrified it would be a disaster,” admitted Badenhausen. He worried that students would struggle to recall everything they had read, would be too nervous to speak, or would simply panic during the new format. No one was entirely sure this method would be a fair way to grade students on their learning. Everyone was happy to discover, though, that the conversation sessions were constructive and successful after a few minutes of discussion. “Students were comfortable, they enjoyed themselves, and everyone was pretty well prepared,” noted Badenhausen.

Because of this, the Comprehensive Conversation became an excellent tool for measuring how much students had learned throughout the semester. It gave every student an opportunity to speak his or her mind and share ideas with professors, who also enjoyed the process. Both professors and students agreed that it was a much more enjoyable way to end the semester than another essay. “It’s easier for me to verbally express my ideas than it is to write them down,” said Humanities student Rosanise Odell; and many of her fellow students agree.

In the end, the Comprehensive Conversation turned out to be an enjoyable and helpful learning experience. By giving students the confidence to perform in a stressful setting with higher stakes, the new final has enriched class discussion, especially in the second semester of Humanities. Change is essential for effective learning, and this new element of Honors Humanities classes will no doubt continue to challenge students in meaningful ways, giving them even more intellectual flexibility and academic strength for their journey through Honors.

By Elaine Sheehan

Honorable Mention
mentioning Westminster honorables since 2002

Riveting Reads: This semester, students read and discussed The Trial by Franz Kafka, Paradise Lost by Milton, and other classics.

Enriched Discussion: The new final helped to make second semester of Humanities more dynamic.

Spring 2015
Beginning in fall 2016, Westminster’s LE Curriculum and the Honors program will undergo exciting changes. For years, the college has discussed and planned revising the LE structure into what will now be called the “WCore” campus-wide general education curriculum. These changes have also empowered conversations about revising Honors at the same time.

During the course of the current academic year, over fifty members of the faculty, staff, and student body participated in revising Honors program-wide learning goals, designing new Honors seminars, and generating opportunities for diverse groups of students to experience Honors through the creation of a lateral entry option for students who did not start in the program as first-semester students. The new Honors LE proposal has been approved by four separate college faculty committees and now just awaits approval from Westminster’s Board of Trustees.

With the Honors program’s current “one-size-fits-all” model, only traditional freshman can apply, and they are required to take all seven core seminars—students have no choice about what classes they may enroll in. This restricts several groups of students from participating in Honors, such as transfer students, students from under-represented groups who might not be aware of Honors opportunities in high school, and students who decide, once on campus, they would like a more challenging LE experience. In response, the Honors program has introduced a second pathway that will allow a larger variety of students to participate in Honors.

In order to accommodate the lateral entry students and the revised program learning goals, four new courses will be introduced into the program.

First, a course called “Welcome to Thinking III” will be offered as a starting point for lateral-entry students. This course will be a sort of compressed version of Humanities for lateral entry students to take together in a single semester and help new students get up to speed on Honors in the same way that Humanities helps first-year students make the transition to college.

Two core seminars will also be introduced to address underserved areas in the Honors curriculum.

“Environments and the Space of Art” will serve as an additional arts seminar and will put art in dialogue with environmental studies. Brent Olson, an assistant professor in Environmental Studies, believes the “course will be dynamic, engaged, and will touch on some critically important questions regarding how we relate to the world around us.”

Sean Raleigh will be participating in a pilot class called “Data/Society/Decision-Making,” which will be another core seminar. “I can’t wait to teach it,” he said of the course, whose focus is taking quantitative issues and looking at how that data influences decision-making in society. “I am thrilled to see quantitative literacy reflected in the curriculum of the new Honors seminar” said Katie Mullin, an Honors student and QUARC statistics consultant who was also involved in the design of the class. With these two new core courses, Honors students will not be limited to seven required courses, but will be able to choose among nine options.

Finally, a senior thesis course titled “Capstone Conversations” will enable seniors doing thesis work in their major disciplines the opportunity to discuss and compare their research with fellow Honors students from different majors. Neuroscience professor and Honors Council member Russ Costa also participated in many of the recent discussions and says of the capstone course: “I love the interdisciplinary conversations we often have in the regular Honors seminars, so I was excited by the opportunity to help craft a capstone seminar that extended these interdisciplinary discussions to the senior thesis process.”

This course will be treated much like an upper-division Honors course and will be offered as a single-credit class during both fall and spring terms.

The new program design will also offer three tiers of participation, two of which are similar to what currently exists in the program (renamed as the Honors degree and the Advanced Honors degree) and one new tier to accommodate lateral entry students (the Honors certificate).

Westminster’s Honors program strives to offer high-achieving students an alternative LE experience with interdisciplinary course design, team teaching, and seminar-style discussions of challenging primary texts. With the newly re-worked learning goals, new flexibility and variety introduced by new courses, and the unprecedented lateral entry option, more Westminster students will have the opportunity to make their college experience an Honors experience.

By Mackenzie Crow
The Honors program is traditionally made up of cohorts, or groups of students who enter the program in their first year, take challenging seminars together, and graduate together with an Honors Certificate or Degree. As Westminster shifts toward a more flexible LE program, however, Honors is leading the way by introducing a new lateral entry option. This new option will allow non-traditional students, nursing majors, late arrivals, and transfer students to join the close-knit community and atmosphere of academic commitment that Honors provides.

Three pilot students are currently enrolled in Honors classes and testing out the new pathway into Honors. Olivia Perez, Emma Metos, and Tim Lindgren are the first group of lateral entry students, and Catherine Blakemore, a transfer student from Abilene Christian University, will join them this fall. The program did no recruiting to find these new students—each became interested in and connected with Honors through professors, roommates, friends, and colleagues. Three additional students have recently applied to Honors through this process, each of whom was looking for a greater challenge in his or her LE experience.

For Perez and Metos, the allure of Honors came from its reputation for being academically rigorous. “I was really frustrated with my LE classes because they weren’t engaging or challenging,” said Perez. “I brought it up with my freshman faculty advisor, Tamara Stevenson, and she told me to get in touch with Richard about the Honors program. Luckily, lateral entry was something that was already in the works, so I was encouraged to apply.”

Metos similarly stated that “during my first semester here at Westminster College I found myself incredibly bored and disengaged in my LE classes. During Slam Poetry Club, I was telling Willy Palomo and Selina Foster about my disinterest in my classes. Willy and Selina then informed me about the potential for lateral entry and got me in contact with Richard Badenhausen.”

Lateral entry represents a valuable opportunity for high-achieving students to experience, learn, and grow from Honors, but also it will also create a more diverse environment for current Honors students. Engaging with students who have had different academic experiences in the past will help Honors become more inclusive, while simultaneously reflecting the college’s learning goals and continuing to challenge all students’ thinking and writing abilities. The initiative also aligns nicely with Westminster’s increased focused in first-year retention efforts.

Faculty members have high hopes for the lateral entry program based on the positive experiences of current pilot students. “I am terribly excited about the whole thing,” said Dr. Badenhausen. “It is going to be really cool.”

By Erin Cavender
Digital Avatars as a Life Form?
Emily Churilla Speaks at Westminster

Westminster’s Honors program and the English Department co-sponsored a recent interdisciplinary presentation titled, “Making it Whole: Technology and the Creation of Artificial Life.” In her lecture, Ph.D. candidate Emily Churilla incorporated biology, literature, technology, and linguistics to investigate the concept of biogenesis. Her research begins in avatars, questioning how creating a digital representation of ourselves alters our language, sense of self, and manner of living. She also draws heavily on gaming culture, both as a community built of online avatars and as example of a growing reliance on technology. Gaming culture is alive with discussions about the implications of technology and on our modern notions of communication. This connection between technology and language is key since technological advancements contribute to the evolution of language.

Greg Egan explores this construct in his novel, Permutation City, which is the literary basis for Churilla’s exploration of avatars, language, and biogenesis. In a techno-scientific reading of Egan’s novel, Churilla asks – “Is the creation of an avatar a sort of biogenesis? If these digital representations of ourselves have their own grammar and syntax that influence our language just we influence it, are they alive in some sense?”

Churilla draws a parallel between her research and the Open Worm Project—an effort to code the biophysics of the C. elegans species of worm. Both this computerized worm and online avatars exist somewhere between static computer code and actual life, and Churilla suggests that the act of creation is not making something new, but rather making something visible. The Open Worm and online avatars both strive to make certain aspects of life more visible. In the process of coding any kind of avatar, we propagate internalized biases and cultural assumptions. We assign human traits and values to things that are not intrinsically human. In a sense, this forces the computer code, technology, and language to act as metaphors for our life itself. We derive our own sense of self at least partially from things like Facebook, online games, and even emails—all of which are avatars.

Are these avatars alive in some sense? In a similar philosophy to the Honors program curriculum, Churilla tackles this question from several different disciplines. Certainly these avatars will “live” in some philosophical sense after we die. They certainly have their own sort of language that has influenced the manner in which we communicate. As coding capabilities and technology improve, they may even come to resemble us in biophysical structure, similar to how the open worm grows more similar to C. elegans. This returns to the question: are we creating some sort of life when we rely on these digital representations? Is our ever-growing construct of technology and external avatars a biogenesis in its own right?

By Selina Foster
Honors students are never content to leave their knowledge inside the classroom. Instead, students such as Brett Carroll, Ian McCracken, Katy Dalrymple, and Nathan Maples allow their learning, curiosity, and discipline to take them new places—namely, the great outdoors. For these students, outdoor activities have been an integral part of their college experience, and their passion has truly enriched the community at Westminster and especially in the Honors program.

When senior Brett Carroll heads outdoors, he spends his time rock climbing, backpacking, downhill and backcountry skiing, as well as exploring “Utah’s wild landscapes.” From his First-Year Outdoor Orientation trip to Moab to a more recent May Term trip to Nepal for a trek through the Himalayas, Brett’s outdoor interests have taken him all over the world and have opened up opportunities for him as a student, leader, and activist.

Brett currently holds several leadership positions related to his interests in the outdoors. He is a trip leader and program assistant for Outdoor Rec, serves as co-vice president of Westminster’s Ski and Snowboard club, is part of the Environmental Center’s Sustainability Council, and will also complete a minor in Outdoor Education and Leadership.

Brett’s experiences have sparked a special interest in environmental policy and have made him an outspoken supporter of conservation. “Having spent so much time exploring these wilderness areas myself,” he said, “I have experienced many of the priceless, but sometimes immeasurable, benefits that protected wilderness area provides.” After college, he still plans to continue participating in the conversation about Utah’s land and natural resources.

After graduation, Brett will attend a summer Rocky Mountain Instructor Course offered by the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), which he hopes will lead to a position as a NOLS field instructor. “I am really excited about pursuing a career in outdoor education,” he said, and reflected that this path will allow him to accomplish one of his most
important goals: “making the outdoors more accessible.”

For junior Ian McCracken, Utah’s world-famous snow was one of the biggest factors that drew him to Westminster. He jokingly reflected, “I chose Westminny for the wrong reasons,” but after starting classes and establishing himself in the Honors community, he realized that “it was the perfect academic environment as well.”

Ian’s long-time favorite outdoor activity is skiing, (he started on the slopes at age two), but he also enjoys mountain biking, rock climbing, and surfing. His recent interest in trail running—which simply began as a time to de-stress and reflect after busy days—has taken him to competitions, including one in Patagonia last summer in which he placed third.

As a pre-med Honors student, Ian carefully plans his schedule in order to make time for the outdoors. He does this by planning regular “micro-adventures” with friends (many of whom he met through Outdoor Rec trips) to places such as the Wasatch backcountry, Moab, and Snowbird. Occasionally, he guarantees a few wide-open runs for himself by arriving on the mountain at 3:00 AM.

As of now, his top choices for medical school are the University of Utah or the University of Washington, both of which offer challenging academics and easy to access opportunities in nature waiting just outside.

Senior Katy Dalrymple chose Westminster for the opportunity to play lacrosse at an academically engaging college. After Katy realized collegiate athletics would not work for her life, however, she looked for other interests and decided to try one of Westminster Outdoor Program’s weekend rock climbing trips. On that first trip, she connected with peers who shared passions both for rock climbing and a general lifestyle that integrated nature into it.

After sampling more trip opportunities through the college, Katy came to love the general diversity of Utah’s landscape and outdoor opportunities. Her favorite experiences have been backpacking and packrafting trips (backpacking with a lightweight raft to navigate terrain that mixes land paths and waterways) because walking and paddling through trails help her engage with nature in a meaningful way.

Taking inspiration from some of her peers, Katy eventually became a trip leader for Outdoor Rec, and she is now also a facilitator at the college climbing wall for women’s climbing hours.

Katy finds that her quiet times in nature offer some of the most
personally satisfying and enlightening moments of her life. Taking time to sit and breathe in the smells of deserts or forests reminds her of the world’s immensity and makes her appreciate her ability to connect with and belong to such an awe-inspiring world.

Katy hopes to pursue a graduate degree in environmental humanities that integrates literature and philosophy to explore the importance of nature in human lives and society. (Regardless of what graduate school brings, though, she plans to keep backpacking!)

Nate Maples is another senior who loved the idea of attending classes and snowboarding on fresh powder in the same day, so Westminster was an obvious choice. Although the mountains drew him to Utah, he became interested in exploring the state’s desert landscapes, which contrasted sharply with his rainy Oregon home. He signed up for Outdoor Rec trips to explore and rock climb in Utah’s many geographically diverse locales.

Like Brett and Katy, Nathan eventually trained to become an Outdoor Rec trip leader. In addition to planning these trips, he also enjoys hiking, camping, and climbing on his own time and will continue to maintain an active lifestyle after he graduates.

In fact, Nate hopes his life does not change too drastically after finishing his degree, and he plans to make snowboarding and climbing priorities in his life. He does, however, want more time to continue reading works by his favorite Western environmental authors from his classes at Westminster.

Ian, Brett, Katy, and Nate have shown success as leaders in many types of outdoor activities at Westminster, and they are certainly not the only Honors students who love adventuring, recreating, and learning in the outdoors. Indeed, they all hope that every student has the opportunity to find something they love about nature and that the college will continue to prioritize outdoor recreation and outdoor leadership learning opportunities for students, so that between classes and the outdoors, students can have a well-rounded and personally fulfilling college experience.

By Jessica Bowen and Chris Cunningham
Leonardo Figueroa-Helland, commonly known as Leo, is a professor of political science whose areas of expertise include international relations, political philosophy, and indigenous studies. Leo enjoys participating in a variety of academic disciplines, and he is deeply devoted to addressing social and global problems. This passion, coupled with his desire to propel change, led him to his career as a professor.

This spring was Leo’s first time co-teaching the Honors seminar Political Economy of Conflict and, rest assured, it will not be his last. Leo enjoys the seminar-based format of Honors because he believes that the co-taught, interdisciplinary dialogues are much closer to the pursuit of knowledge than a single ephemeral voice speaking. Another reason Leo enjoys the Honors classroom is the students—especially their dedication, autonomy, and advanced reading abilities, which make him feel comfortable introducing difficult texts.

Outside the classroom, Leo has a diverse set of interests. He enjoys skiing, especially when there’s fresh powder. Leo is also a vegan and loves spicy food—especially Indian cuisine. When asked about soda, he said that he does not drink it because “we shouldn’t pay for diabetes.” Although he does not own a television, he enjoys watching documentaries on his laptop. One film Leo suggested is “Call of Life: Facing the Mass Extinction.” It’s sure to make you think about humans’ interactions with biodiversity on a global scale.

In short, Leo is a new member of our small Honors family who fits right in. He looks forward to teaching in the program for many years to come.

By Adia Thornton

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Katie Mullin is a senior Honors student and neuroscience major born in Salt Lake City, whose hobbies include skiing, gardening, cooking, and creating photorealistic paintings with watercolors and oil paints. Although she lived most of her life in Northern Kentucky, she returned to Salt Lake and attended Westminster because of the Honors program’s emphasis on critical thinking and discussion-based classes.

Katie’s rigorous class schedule complements her academic interests by allowing her to work closely with her professors and peers. In particular, she loves working in the neuroscience lab with professors Lesa Ellis and Russ Costa. Katie enjoys communicating with and learning from her professors and fellow researchers inside the lab, and her experiences there have allowed her to cultivate skills that will shape her future. Katie thinks that working in the lab has established a great foundation for future research experiences, graduate school, and life after college.

On top of working in the neuroscience lab, Katie is a member of the prestigious McNair Scholars program. McNair seeks to diversify the population of people who teach and work in higher education. The program accomplishes this by providing mentoring opportunities and funding for research to low-income or first generation college students as well as groups that are underrepresented in graduate education. Through her involvement with McNair, Katie conducted research projects over the past two summers, which has helped in the development of her senior project.

Katie is also involved in a variety of other activities, including the Quantitative Analysis and Research Cooperative (QUARC), which has allowed her to use math and consult with people in many different disciplines. Katie’s involvement with QUARC allows her to assist Westminster’s community by providing GRE assistance for graduate school applicants and helping students with statistics projects.

Katie has learned many important lessons from the Honors program—especially the importance of clear and effective communication. Reflecting on her time at Westminster she says, “The Honors program is a wonderfully close-knit network of students and faculty. My involvement in Honors has helped me feel as if I belong at Westminster.” After graduating from Westminster, Katie will attend the University of Utah’s joint MS-PhD Speech-Language Pathology program in the fall to train as a research clinician.

By Claire Prasad
What is one unexpected challenge you’ve encountered in Honors and what did you learn from the experience?

Russell Costa  
Professor of Neuroscience

Early in my career at Westminster, a colleague at another institution told me: “It must be difficult co-teaching with so many faculty in different disciplines!” I responded, (half) jokingly, “Dealing with the different disciplines is easy; the different personalities of my co-instructors is the main challenge.” I’ve learned a lot over the past few years, not only from reading new texts, thinking about new ideas, and exploring assumptions and approaches of new disciplines, but also from the variety of classroom personalities and teaching styles of my colleagues and co-instructors in other academic programs.

This was all to be expected of course; I knew that half or more of my teaching responsibilities in the job I had applied for and accepted would involve team teaching. The unexpected challenge was handling the students in these co-taught, interdisciplinary seminars. How could we discuss demanding, primary texts and complex ideas at the level expected in an Honors classroom amongst a group of non-majors? Especially when no prior disciplinary knowledge could be assumed and no prerequisite coursework was required. And, in this context, how could students who did happen to hail from the academic area in which a particular text or lesson was drawn from still be challenged?

Through trial and a considerable amount of error, I came to realize that possible solutions to this challenge lay at the edges and intersections of disciplines (this locale should have been readily evident to me as an attention and perception researcher). As opposed to teaching “in” two fields, say science and philosophy, I learned to teach “between” them. For example, we have often discussed the ethics of patenting human genes in the Science, Power and Diversity seminar I co-teach. This topic allows for biology majors to share their expertise in genetics during the class discussion, philosophy and justice students to raise ethical arguments relevant to the topic, and business students to comment on the financial implications of such patenting. The disciplinary experts are then challenged to apply their expertise outside of their usual domain, and the resulting discussion is not merely surface-level coverage of basic genetics, ethics, or patent law, but rather an in-depth discussion of a complex issue at the boundaries of multiple disciplines.

Tessa Eihausen  
Senior

When I first came to college, I was accustomed to being the smartest person in the room.

Okay, that’s a lie: I was accustomed to thinking I was the smartest person in the room.

During my first semester in Honors at Westminster, however, it became abundantly clear that I was not the smartest person in any room—not even close. After submitting my first prompt, a disorganized diatribe about how people must have “the audacity to be happy,” I was told that I needed to substantiate my claims with “meaningful evidence.”

After years of gold stars and “Great job!” stamps from my high school teachers, this comment shocked me. With a single assignment, I had tumbled from the top of my class to mediocre at best. My ego, at this point impervious to self-doubt, urged me forward; all my thinking needed was a nip here, a tuck there, I told myself. After all, the praise I had received in high school could not possibly have been all wrong!

Of course, the cosmetic changes I undertook were inadequate. I continued to receive negative comments on my papers, ranging from the relatively diplomatic—“This is not enough analysis”—to the painfully blunt: “You’re missing the point.” Over and over, I failed to substantiate my claims with meaningful evidence. My self-confidence faltered. I, the once-smartest person in the room, began to realize that the room around me had filled with smarter people, and I would need to make major changes if I intended to keep up.

At first, my transition to genuine intellectual engagement seemed impossible. Unable to rely on clichés, I was forced to form my own opinions—heaven forbid. I had to question everything, down to the very foundation of my beliefs. Gradually, I began reading critically, thinking critically, and asking meaningful questions. I became the queen of the petulant “but why?” much to the chagrin of everyone I met.

Now, in my final semester of college, I can proudly say that I have become a wise, enlightened human, fully aware of her own privilege and biases, the sole occupant of my own personal intellectual nirvana. Unfortunately, I cannot say any of that with a straight face. In reality, I recognize that, while I have made progress in overcoming my own superficial perspective, I still have a great deal of work to do, but Honors got me started. Ancora imparo.
Kristy Owens ('01) owns a bookkeeping company called Source Solutions and is also co-owner (with her husband) of twelve Wing Nutz restaurants across three states, the most recent of which just opened in Las Vegas.

Mike Wallstedt ('06) is a software engineer on the Google team that recently launched a new email product called “Inbox.”

Andrew Waterhouse ('08) will start the Utah State/Weber State veterinary program this fall.

Lindsey Roper ('09) is about to complete her Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology and has accepted a position as Assistant Professor at Southern Utah University starting this fall.

Lexie Banks ('12) has been working as a Project Coordinator with the Provost’s Office at Westminster and recently began working as the Public Relations Manager for Cranium Café.

Danny Barber ('12) is a Judicial Intern at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit.

Mai Ho ('12) recently left Goldman Sachs to join the Business Development team for Storm8, one of the top mobile gaming developers in the Bay Area.


Morgan Anderson ('13) is now a program assistant for the Center for Sustainable Development at the School for Field Studies.

Annie Brings ('13) appeared in the Pioneer Theater Company’s production of The Crucible this winter.

Hailey Henderson ('13) has been living in Eugene, Oregon where she has had numerous acting roles at the Very Little Theatre including in Private Eyes, Leader of the Pack, and A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum.

Jennifer Mattis ('13) is a Preventative Medicine Specialist in the U.S. Army.

Nicole Bedera’s ('14) essay, “Never Go Out Alone”: An Analysis of College Rape Prevention Tips,” has just been accepted for publication by the academic journal Sexuality & Culture. This work developed out of an Honors Independent Summer Research grant.

Derrick Fan ('15) will begin a Masters in Finance and CEMS Masters in Management program at ESADE Business School in Barcelona, Spain this September.

Derrick Fan ('15) and Hannah Williams ('16) are creating an economic impact report for Westminster, which they will present in May.

Shibl Gil ('15) presented his paper on modeling the spread of Ebola, which he wrote for a mathematical modeling contest, at the Mathematical Association of America Conference at Brigham Young University.

Shianne Gray ('15), Erin Cavender ('16), Hannah Williams ('16), and Sierra DuCharme-Hansen ('18) are team leaders starting the first annual Great Salt Lake Fringe Festival in Sugar House, set to premiere in August 2015.

Katie Mullin ('15) will begin a joint MS/PhD program in Speech-Language Pathology at the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Utah this fall.

Willy Palomo’s ('15) short story “Fish” appears in the 2015 edition of the Honors journal Scribendi, which is published by the University of New Mexico and has an acceptance rate of 10%. Willy is the fourth student in the thirty-year history of the journal to have had work published for four consecutive years.

Jorie Page ('15) is the managing editor of Ellipsis, Westminster’s national literary journal.

Jorie Page’s ('15) essay “Redefining the Traitor: Mordred in Arthurian Tradition and The Book of Mordred” was accepted for publication in The Myriad and is one of five featured articles in the Westminster journal’s upcoming issue.

Jake Winter ('15) will begin the MD/PhD program at the University of Utah this summer.

Mackenzie Crow ('16), John Okal ('16), and Hannah Williams ('16) will be interning with Goldman Sachs this summer.

James Steur ('16) will serve as the Speaker of the ASWC Senate for the 2015-16 school year.

Hannah Williams ('16) will serve as ASWC Director of Budget & Accounting for the 2015-16 school year.

Gano Hasanbegovic ('18) and Mariah McCoy ('18) competed with the Westminster Ethics Bowl team at the National competition in California.

Leah Weisgal ('18) is using a Westminster grant through the Outdoor Program to create an outreach program for 7th-12th graders in South Salt Lake. The program will provide opportunities for underprivileged and immigrant students to participate in outdoors workshops and trips.

Leah Weisgal ('18) restarted a Students of Choice chapter at Westminster, as a link between Planned Parenthood and the campus. Upcoming events include an educational Sex Week—check the group out on Facebook!

At this year’s Giovale Library Undergraduate Research Awards, Seamus Branch ('18) received the Emerging Researcher Award for his essay, “I Ain’t Taking No Shit: The Expression of the Queer Black Movement through Hip Hop and Rap.”
2014 Writing Award Winners

**Humanities Category**
*The Problem of Patriarchy: Nietzsche’s Gender Double Bind in The Handmaid’s Tale*
Selina Foster

**Sciences Category**
*The Mechanics of Scientific Belief*
Michael Warren Cook

*Categorization and the Inevitable Oppression of the “Non”*
Katherine Dalrymple

**Social Sciences Category**
*An Argument for Kantian Research Ethics*
Emma DeLoughery

**Best Overall**
*The Mechanics of Scientific Belief*
Michael Warren Cook

### Senior Challenge

Every year, Honors Director Richard Badenhausen challenges the class of graduating seniors to donate to the Student Honors Council Fund. In return, he promises to match the gift if the class reached a cumulative donation of $500. Even more importantly, if 100% of the class participates, Richard adds another $500 of his own money to the fund.

“As you know, Honors is all about challenge. You self-selected into Honors because you wanted a challenge, you challenge each other in the Honors classroom every day, and we have fun with challenge on the softball field each spring,” his request read.

The request worked on this year’s seniors. Thanks to a combination of intimidation and incentives, the 2015 graduating class has met both goals. The group raised $612 in total and has become the first graduating class to meet the 100% participation challenge!

Thank you to everyone who donated and also to Richard for his own donation which motivated our generosity. Not only have we set the bar for future classes, but we have also set the bar for ourselves as soon-to-be alumni.

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### Donor Contributions to the Student Honors Council Fund

The Westminster College Honors program is very grateful to the following friends of Honors who have contributed to the Student Honors Council Fund since the last newsletter. This fund supports modest travel grants to assist Honors students in making decisions about continuing their educations in graduate school.

*John & Dana Adams*
*Richard Badenhausen & Katherine Venti*
*John & Regie Bradford*
*Jean Butcher & Thomas DeLoughery*
*Bonnie & Vernon Frol*
*Steve and Diane Green*
*Kelly Holtman*
*Tori & Lorri Shaver*

Contributions to this fund, which are tax deductible, can be made at any time of the year to the “Student Honors Council Fund” and should be sent care of the Westminster College Honors program, 1840 South 1300 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84105.

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### Students Attend National Collegiate Honors Conference

2014 National Collegiate Honors Conference participants Chris Cunningham ('15), James Steur ('16), Alicia Foster ('15), and Erin Cavender ('16) pose for a photo in historic Sakura Square in Denver, CO. Not pictured: William Palomo ('15).
We will be nationally recognized as an exemplary community of learners, distinguished by our distinctive educational programs, our record of preparing graduates for success in a rapidly changing world, and our commitment to continuous improvement, effectiveness, and value.

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