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The Newsletter of The Honors College at the University of Houston

Vol. 25 No. 1

Honors Takes D.C. by Storm

From October 28 through November 1, nine students and eight faculty and staff from The Honors College attended the 44th Annual Conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) in Washington, D.C. NCHC is the professional association of undergraduate honors programs and colleges; honors directors and deans; and honors faculty, staff, and students. As an organization that encourages undergraduates to present at its national convention, NCHC helps launch the careers of many students. With presentations on best practices and innovations in honors curricula, our representatives contributed to the growing national reputation of the University of Houston Honors College.

Among the presenters were **Dr. John Harvey** and **Katelyn Halpern**, a student who led a drama master class and, with senior **Blair Ault**, gave a presentation describing our Center for Creative Work. "NCHC was a great way of understanding more about the honors community on a national level," commented Ault. "It was encouraging to see other honors programs moving forward to engage their students in creative ways."

Other presenters included **Assistant Dean Jodie Köszei**, who described the virtues of The Honors College's unique space in the MD Anderson Library, and sophomore **Krystafer Redden**, who gave a presentation on the *Phronesis* program. With **Andy Little** (Coordinator of Academic Services), students **Peter Zachry**, **Janet Dowden**, **Angela Grasso**, and **David Tucker** described The Honors College's study abroad

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Alumni Event in New York



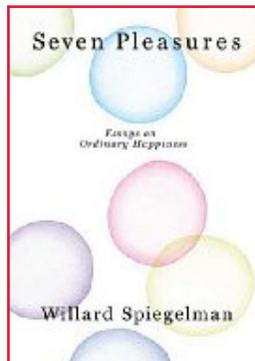
Top picture, top row: Cecilia Alatriz, Jorgelina Foglietta, Shannon Parrish; bottom row: Zimuzo Agim, President Renu Khator, Bill Monroe, and Gailon McGowen; Bottom picture: Jody Williams, Joe Tutt, Tanya Fazal, and Jesus Perez (More pictures from NY event on page 13)

David Mikics Interviews Willard Spiegelman

The following is an excerpt from **David Mikics's** interview with **Willard Spiegelman**, author of *Seven Pleasures: Essays on Ordinary Happiness*. The entire interview can be found online in our podcast series at *The Open Academy: Honors Professors in Conversation*.

DM: Willard, you begin the book by making a confession in response to a conversation you had on an airplane with a woman who mentions that she has endured some horrible traumatic events in her life and you say something along the lines of “nothing horrible has ever happened to me” and I just wanted to ask you how that realization shapes the book.

WS: The realization shapes the book because one of the things I realized as I was preparing a plan for the book is that the happiness industry in this country now seems to have two pillars. The twin pillars are religion on the one hand—and this is a much stronger pillar now than when I was a young person, religions of all stripes are more powerful in the way they draw people in—and on the other hand you have the psychopharmacological industry. We all know someone whose lives have been saved by pharmacology, but this is a recent phenomenon. I'm a person who has never chosen to hew either to religion or to psychopharmacology, and I realize in many ways this is a matter of bodily chemistry.



DM: You're a weirdo. (laughs)

WS: (laughs) I suppose I'm the weird one, for my sanity. Part of it is chemistry, much psychological difficulty has a genetic base, but also I grew up

in a situation where there was nothing much to complain about. Most memoirs nowadays are about abuse and tragedy, that's what we really like; it's a great schadenfreude. My life is much more tepid, which is why I hesitated to write about myself because I don't think I'm very interesting.



WS: (later in interview) I take very seriously the truth of Thoreau's observation that most men lead lives of quiet desperation. And it's because most people seem either to have lost or never to have had a passion. I think it's important for everyone, 18-year olds and 80-year-olds, both to do the things that give you pleasure (assuming these are legal things and are not self destructive), and at the same time, always be on the lookout for new things that will give you pleasure. Do not be unwilling to try something new.

So, in my case it was doing things like becoming a dancer, which I had never thought I would do. And all of a sudden I was hooked on it. So there is always the chance to find new pleasures and to pursue them. The book is about the pursuit of pleasure in the pursuit of happiness, in order to maintain a sense of balance and (the word that I used in the beginning) sanguinity, or cheerfulness, which will help keep you afloat on the tide of life's other kinds of turmoil.

To download the entire interview, visit <http://TheHumanSituation.com>.



HUMAN SITUATION: FROM VIRGIL TO VIRTUAL

The Human Situation has long been the portal to the Honors experience for students, but now that portal is going virtual. **Professor Richard Armstrong** and the Human Sit professors are expanding the course's presence through a new website that will be targeted to a three-layered audience: prospective students, current students in the course, and Honors alumni. "I'd like this site to be a place people return to," says Armstrong. "It's not just a useful addition to the course; it's a statement about the Honors experience and our community. We initiate new members to our community every year through the Human Situation, and the site should help us to develop a clearer image of who we are."

With the help of a \$23,000 Faculty Development Initiative Program (FDIP) grant, Armstrong has tried to distill the best parts of the Human Sit experience into a site that reflects the vibrant learning environment that emerges every year as new students work their ways through the course. Like any course website, this one houses some nuts and bolts information: lecture schedules, booklists, policy pages, and information about the final exams. But it also offers a growing collection of study aids, including writing resources, tips from both teachers and students on how to succeed, interactive quizzes on plagiarism and key terms, blogs by professors, and links to authoritative websites relevant to the syllabus.

Such a resource is bound to help current students, but it is also designed to reassure prospective students that the Human Sit is a challenge they will enjoy. "A key to humanizing the course and giving a sense of fun to it will be the use of current photographs from the actual classes," says Armstrong. "I think young people will see these and think, 'Wow, that looks like fun. I could see myself doing that.'"

A recent photo feature shows Human Sit professors getting hit by pies during a charity event (see below). "Professors are professors, but they are also people. I hope this comes out more, because for a freshman, that's the biggest worry: 'Are these guys even human?'"

Beyond humanizing the faculty, Armstrong also plans to highlight their achievements on a section called *Faculty Roundhouse*. This features appearances by Honors faculty in the media, links to podcasts and other online media presentations, and news of faculty awards and events. It hosts a *Letters from* section, comprising news from retired and former faculty who wish to update the Honors community about their lives. It also houses the web directory for *The Open Academy: Honors Professors in Conversation*, a new iTunes University podcast that features faculty discussing topics of general interest. The podcast also highlights some of our visiting speakers, such as author Willard Spiegelman (see page 2) and poet James Armstrong. A *Your Human Situation* section provides links to Facebook groups as well as to other student-generated content. You can access the web portal at <http://TheHumanSituation.com>.



Left: Ayesha Mela assisting Dr. Iain Morrisson;
Right: Christalina John holding Dr. John Harvey's target



Undergraduate Research Day 2009

Ninety-four undergraduates gathered in the Rockwell Pavilion on October 1st to present their work at the 5th annual Undergraduate Research Day, an event that recognizes the accomplishments of undergraduate students conducting research under the guidance of UH faculty mentors. This year's event was unprecedented in its size and scope, with nine different colleges and 29 different disciplines represented. The students presenting were enthusiastic and eager to share their findings with attendees and were instrumental in making this the most successful research day to date.

This year's research projects included studying eye tracking, determining how autistic and non-autistic subjects function differently when presented with a visual task, exploring why water can support so many living creatures (by using computer simulations to model its structure), and investigating the impact that 20th century printing equipment has had on the modern printing industry. Clearly, a wide range of original, creative, and ambitious projects were demonstrated at the event, which allowed for a more dynamic and significant celebration for the University of Houston.

Several hundred faculty, staff, and students attended UR Day, and were genuinely impressed by the caliber of the research posters and the number of students presenting. **Thomas Lowder**, Assistant Professor in Health and Human Performance, shared, "I was very impressed with the event. I expected some good things, but I was literally taken aback by the quality of the entire session, from the posters to how well it ran." **Simon Bott**, Undergraduate Chair of Chemistry, added, "This event supported our push for Tier One status. It was a good day for our students and a good day for the University of Houston."

The success of this year's research day is even more impressive considering how much the event has grown since its inception. The first Undergraduate Research Day took place in 2005 and had only 27 presenters and a handful of attendees. The success of this year's event demonstrates that the campus community supports Undergraduate Research Day, making it one of the University's premier events.



Top left: Bill Monroe and Regent Nandita Berry; Center: Dr. David Brenner; Top Right: Dr. Daniel Price and junior Erica Fletcher; Bottom left and right: group shots from Undergraduate Research Day 2009



INVESTIGATING PUNISHMENT

Supported by a UH Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) grant, **Dr. Tamler Sommers** recently finished teaching his philosophy course Punishment, a research-intensive course approved for The Honors College minor in Politics and Ethics (*Phronesis*).

The QEP grant enabled Dr. Sommers to redesign the course with a focus on undergraduate research, and the differences were apparent. At the semester's end, each student presented his or her results in a poster presentation open to the public; the posters and oral presentations were complemented by traditional term papers on the same topic.

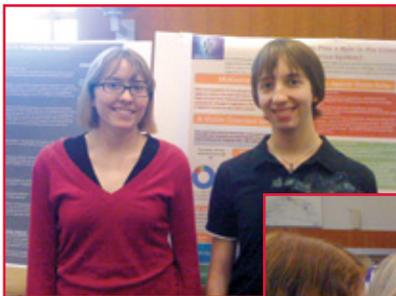
"It was nice to see the students really embrace their projects," Dr. Sommers said. "Because the [poster] project forced the students to pick a topic that they would be happy to stand up and talk about, they showed some real excitement."

"Theories of punishment make all kinds of assumptions about psychology and biology," Dr. Sommers said. "The idea was first to figure out what each of those theories assumes, and then to investigate whether it holds up."

Some projects addressed issues beyond psychology or biology. One student applied theories of punishment to the current trials in Rwanda, while others analyzed individual court cases to determine what they reveal about our own contemporary approaches to punishment.

The coursework was augmented by a visit in October from **Dr. William Ian Miller** of the University of Michigan Law School. In addition to his class visit, Dr. Miller gave a public lecture ("An Eye for an Eye") and had lunch in The Honors Commons with students in the *Phronesis* program. "He left with a great impression of our students," Dr. Sommers said. "He thought they were smart, bright without knowing it, enthusiastic, and curious." And as his students were challenged by the unique demands of a research-intensive philosophy course, Dr. Sommers marked an improvement in their engagement and the quality of their work.

"The students exceeded any reasonable expectations that I had of them," he said. "I was proud of the students for the way they worked, and I was very impressed with their projects."



Top left: Lisa Maloney and Phillip Stout; Top right: Mark Ellis talking with Oliver Sifuentes and Jacob Franchek; Bottom left: Dr. Susan Collins with Mia Morey; Bottom right: Jose Perez



Honors Student's Documentary Explores HIV/AIDS Among Latinas



Erica Fletcher is not your typical college student. The 19-year-old University of Houston junior not only juggles two majors—anthropology and psychology—and her Honors courses, but also is working to increase awareness about HIV/AIDS among the Latino community.

Fletcher's approach to a complex challenge is simple: allow HIV-infected women to speak for themselves in a powerful and disturbing documentary. Titled *Marianismo*, the film explores the cultural factors that contribute to the disproportionate spread of HIV/AIDS among Latina women.

"The concept of *marianismo* typifies the reasons why HIV is becoming a major problem within the Latino community," Fletcher said. "The term *marianismo* comes from the idea of the Virgin Mary, the model woman who is pure, selfless and submissive and who will quietly endure suffering for the sake of preserving her family."

The documentary opens with a statement scrawled across the screen: While African-American and Latina women make up only 30 percent of the U.S. female population, they make up 80 percent of AIDS cases among women. The AIDS rate is eight times higher in Latina women than in white women. From there, the film delves into the lives of two HIV-positive women and another woman with AIDS, who speak frankly about how they were infected with the virus.

"They were so brave to speak to me about these issues," said Fletcher, who previously didn't know anyone who was HIV-positive. "Their struggle really touched me. I hope their stories will move other people to become more aware and educate themselves about this problem." The film also includes interviews with social workers from AIDS Foundation Houston, Dia de la Mujer Latina, and **Dr. Janis Hutchison**, UH anthropology professor, whose research interests include condom use, HIV/AIDS, racism and health, and health issues among people of color.

"The intent of the film is not to stereotype Latina women into the simple category of victim but to show the complexities of their cultural situation," Fletcher explained. "That being said, even the word Latina does not capture the great cultural variety among the 22 countries that comprise Latin America; nevertheless, cultural emphasis on the purity of women, the importance of caring for the family, and allowances for male infidelity are widespread among Latino communities."

Fletcher added that the purpose of the documentary "is to generate further discussion on cultural awareness and education strategies will lead to the effective promotion of healthy lifestyles among Latina women." Her interest in HIV/AIDS was sparked by a class, *Anthropology of HIV/AIDS*, taught by Hutchinson. Following the class, Fletcher applied for and received a \$2,800 Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship from UH's Office of Undergraduate Research to produce the documentary under Hutchinson's direction. Fletcher has presented the documentary at the University of Houston, the Thomas Street Health Center, and the AIDS Foundation of Houston. She hopes to take the documentary on the road to other universities and organizations across the nation.

*Story by Francine Parker,
UH Office of Internal Communications*



SPACE TO BREATHE

What is asthma? According to **Dr. Dan Price**, the answer is not a simple one. To a parent with an asthmatic child, it is a medical condition; to a public health official, a result of air pollution; and to a geneticist, a function of one's genome.

Asking how the problem of asthma gets framed is the goal of Dr. Price's course this spring in The Honors College—*Asthmatic Spaces: Houston/New York*.

"In philosophy, we are always asking 'What is the object of study?'" says Dr. Price. "Here we want to take this humanities question and apply it to the sciences." The students themselves will begin to answer that question through their own semester-long research projects, which will incorporate different disciplines.

Through documentary films, presentations, posters, web sites, and other media, Dr. Price's students will present the results of their very different research projects. While filmmakers could create short documentaries about those living with asthma, a chemical engineering student will be working with officials in the City of Houston, and others have the opportunity to research air quality with **Dr. Barry Lefer** in the University of Houston Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences.

The "New York" connection comes through the class's web site, which combines their data with that of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York.

The conversation begun in the course will continue at a conference next fall hosted by The Honors College, in which experts from several disciplines, such as public health and atmospheric science, will present their research. The goal, says Dr. Price, is to use asthma to learn how each discipline "sees" health.

The big problems of our society can only be solved once we view them correctly. And this spring, Dr. Price's students are raising their own and others' awareness of that process.

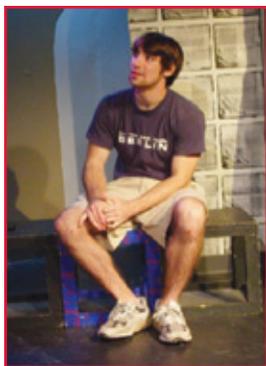


Winifred Hamilton, BCM & Arturo Blanco, Air Quality Control City of Houston; Kim Fortun, Rensselaer, Science and Technology Studies; Barry Lefer, UH Dept. of Atmospheric Science; Elena Marks, Former Director of Health and Environmental Policy City of Houston; Dan Price, UH Honors College

Honors Students on the Move

After winning the Southwest Regional Improv Tournament last November, **John Phillips** and five other University of Houston Theater majors competed as the improv troupe *Scatter!* in their first appearance at the national improv tournament this February. Through *Scatter!* Phillips has been a part of “some of the most liberating theatrical work I have ever done,” he said.

Scatter! specializes in the sometimes less-comedic “long form” improv, in which “you have to make the quick decisions and associations of short form, but you then have to sustain those choices with believability and quality for about five times longer,” said Phillips. “I think our biggest advantage is that we are six actors improvising, not six comedians improvising.” Of course, nothing great can really happen without his outstanding team of actors: **Roland Ruiz, Jared Doreck, Matt Lusk, Caleb George,** and **Adam Sowers.**



Phillips will graduate this spring with a B.A. in Political Science, and wrote an original play, *The Philadelphia Connection*, as his senior thesis. The play had a formal reading in The Honors College Commons in December. Written over his four

years in The Honors College under the particular influences of professors **John Harvey, William Monroe,** and **Andy Little,** the play helped Phillips better understand both tragedy and theatricality in general.

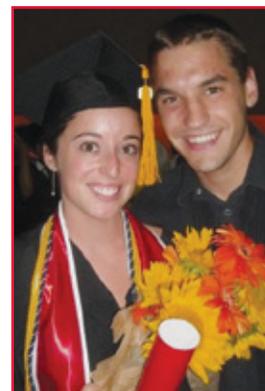
In both his Honors College classes and onstage in improv, the ability to think flexibly and make rapid connections is essential. In both areas, “you improvise and you have to immediately connect things,” said Phillips. “The more you read, the more you soak in, the more full your improv ‘rolodex’ becomes. It’s all about making those instant connections—a lot like a Human Sit paper, if you will.”

Mariana Guerrero ('09) has received the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship to attend Université Paris Sud 11 in pursuit of a Master’s of Public Health (M.P.H.). The scholarship allows students to study abroad for a year to serve as goodwill ambassadors while preparing to tackle important global issues.

Guerrero, who begins her Rotary Scholarship in October 2010, was introduced to her current field through a course in The Honors College’s Medicine & Society Program. “During my junior year, I took an Honors College colloquium class taught by **Dr. Dacso** called *Experiencing the Future of Health*,” she recalled. “In Dr. Dasco’s class, I learned about community health care and international medical aid, and I quickly realized that that is where my passion lies.”

After earning her M.P.H., Guerrero plans to return to America to study medicine, eventually using her expertise in public health to work for Doctors Without Borders in developing countries. With undergraduate degrees in Biology and French, Guerrero was a strong candidate for the scholarship, which required her to compose three essays in French and undergo an interview with the scholarship committee. Thanks to her wide interests in social and scientific issues—which were encouraged by the variety of ideas and people she encountered in The Honors College—she proved successful.

“The Honors College helped me meet interesting and intellectual people, both students and professors, with whom I could share my passion for learning and develop my knowledge and ideas,” Guerrero said. *Mariana on right with fiancé, Honors senior Rhys Forgie*



CONTEMPLATING THE HUMAN SECURITY PARADIGM



In November, The Honors College was fortunate to host **Dr. Mient Jan Faber** of Vrije Universteit in Amsterdam as a guest lecturer. Dr. Faber, father of Honors alumna **Hanneke Faber** ('90, Journalism, '92, MBA), worked at the Interchurch Peace Council in

the Netherlands for 30 years and has spent time in war zones in Afghanistan, Bosnia, India, Iraq, and Palestine. For three weeks, he shared his experiences with seven Honors students in Military Interventions and Human Security, an Honors colloquium. Due to the course's short duration, the meeting schedule was intense: students spent three hours with Dr. Faber each day, Monday through Friday. **Andy Ingalls**, a participant in the class shared, "We argued and fought tooth and nail over the natural goodness of man, his ability to compromise, the necessity of deadly force, the possibility of police states, and the efficacy or inefficacy of the UN and NATO."

The course focused on what is known as the human security paradigm. Proponents of human security believe that vulnerable civilian populations in war zones should be protected. When the national government is no longer able to do so, the international community should be prepared to intervene peacefully. To gain a deeper understanding, the students applied the human security paradigm to wars in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Georgia, Iraq, Kosovo, The Netherlands, and Palestine. At the conclusion of the course, each student authored an op-ed on a human security topic of their choosing. "This course gave me the understanding and the tools of analysis necessary to navigate through the devastating conflicts that are increasing with alarming frequency. Faber isn't a detached lecturer who simply passes on second-hand lessons; he brings to the table first-hand experiences

and raises questions even he has yet to answer," stated course participant **Andrew Hall**.

The Honors College hopes to host Dr. Faber for similar courses in the near future because of the significant impact he had on his students. **Andy Hamilton** said, "In a purely academic environment we may sometimes get the sense that the world of contemplation has little effect on the world of action. Classes like Dr. Faber's help to dispel that wrongly conceived notion—they remind us that at its best, contemplation informs action." Ingalls added, "There was a hope behind everything we discussed that by the knowledge of these things, both from books and firsthand accounts, we could get involved, we could find a place to put our hands to work and help. This course was an experience like no other, an encounter with a wealth of experience in places and situations I could not have imagined before I met Mient Jan Faber."

Story by Derek Goodwin



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program. In the presentation, Dowden, a junior, shared her experiences in The Honors College Study Abroad program, which she recounts with passion: “I’m a kinesiology major! I would’ve never gotten the opportunity to go to Italy and Syracuse to study Thucydides anywhere except The Honors College.”

Tucker also sat on the standing Committee on Teaching and Learning, a group of honors deans from across the country. “It was really interesting to hear the plans that they had for their honors programs, because almost all the things they were discussing we already had here,” he said. “The main thing that I took away from NCHC was how good our program is.”

“Graduates cannot begin to know how gratifying it is for their former teachers to see or hear from them.”

Connecting with D.C.-area Alumni

The trip also allowed some Honors College faculty and staff to reconnect with Honors alumni in the D.C. area. At a dinner and reception at Bobby Van’s Grill on October 30, 22 Honors College alumni enjoyed food, drink, and conversation with each other and Honors staff and faculty, including **Dr. Bill Monroe**, **Dr. Christine LeVeaux-Haley**, and **Dr. John Harvey**.

Dr. Ted Estess says that over his 15 years of meeting with D.C.-area alumni, he has come to love the meetings as much for his own sake as for that of the



Photos from NCHC D.C. Trip

*Top: seniors Angela Grasso and Anish Pillai;
Bottom: Honors professor John Harvey with seniors
Katelyn Halpern and Blair Ault*

alumni. “I have to say that I am very selfish about these alumni gatherings,” he said. “I am always personally exhilarated to see former students, to learn about their families and their work, and to hear about their children. Graduates cannot begin to know how gratifying it is for their former teachers to see or hear from them from time to time.”

Several alumni who attended the dinner are doing big things around Washington. **Brodi Fontenot** (’98) is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget in the Department of Transportation. Having also worked for the Senate Budget Committee and the Government Accountability Office in the



Photos from NCHC D.C. Trip

Top: admissions counselor Sarah Bhojani and interim assistant dean Christine LeVeaux-Haley;

Bottom: alums Sabita Soneji and Brodi Fontenot with director of student affairs Brenda Rhoden

past, Fontenot has seen many sides of Washington politics. And everywhere he looks, he finds that the skills of Honors’ graduates are precisely what Washington needs. “For most jobs here, it’s the ability to think about a problem, solve it, and communicate it to others that is needed,” he says. “And that’s exactly what The Honors College teaches.”

Mike Dimock (’90), who develops and reports on research projects and polls for the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in Washington, first learned the importance of communication in a course with **Dr. Ross Lence**. “The first paper I turned in had a big red ‘F’ at the top, and more red marginal notes

than typed words,” laughs Dimock. “He took me into his office, and we talked for an hour about how I didn’t know how to think.” Now, in his work analyzing and presenting polling data, Dimock performs a task similar to that demanded by Dr. Lence many years ago. “I have to take a mass of disorganized information and then figure out how to make it make sense to someone else,” he says.

Another D.C.-area alumna, **Katie Stout** (’06), works for IDS International, a small defense contractor. “At The Honors College, I learned how to read, write, and think,” says Stout. “And that’s what I do now, in the context of the major security challenges among agencies.”

To get involved with the D.C. Alumni Group, contact Katie Stout at katie.stout@gmail.com.

Stout is one of several Washington, D.C. alumni who are forming an alumni group. Right now, they are just beginning to set their goals, which could include serving as a social club, networking group and sponsoring internships for current Honors students. These ideas are all under consideration, and they hope that with more input and support from area alumni, they can clarify their mission.

Between a successful conference and visits with exceptional alumni, it seems The Honors College invasion has hit Washington, D.C.

TWIGG WINS TEACHING AWARD

In August, Michael Twigg ('03) was named the Texas Region 4 Secondary Teacher of the Year. Twigg was one of 90 nominees in Region 4, which encompasses 54 school districts with over a million students and is the largest of 20 regional education service centers in Texas. He has taught English classes at Waller Junior High School since graduating with a Psychology major and an English minor.

His growth into the challenging and caring teacher he is today—which also includes teaching developmental writing at Lone Star College-Tomball—began at the University of Houston in the course Religion and Personality with **Dr. James McGehee**. “Dr. McGehee realized right off the bat that I was coming from high school, where I never really had to apply myself, to a situation where I had to [apply myself] like never before,” said Twigg.

Twigg had never seen himself as an especially strong student until he was encouraged by one of his classmates, **Josh Crank** ('02, Computer Science). Crank, who was in The Honors College already, asked to bor-

row Michael’s notes, which were essentially a transcript of Dr. McGehee’s class. “He told me I had the best notes he had ever seen,” recalled Twigg, “but I was too embarrassed to tell him I wrote down every word the professor said because I was afraid of looking dumb.”

Crank told him, “You should be in The Honors College,” and Michael took the suggestion. Once he was in, he found the Human Situation sequence immensely challenging—and a spur to growth. “Going from Antiquity to Modernity in one year forced me to learn and hone skills I never knew I had or that I could develop,” Twigg said. “I realized that anyone, with determination, could do anything they set their mind to doing.”

His experience with professors in The Honors College who challenged and took an interest in him—including **Dr. Andrew Haas** and **Dr. Cynthia Howard**—helped in his own teaching, as well. “I have to realize what a student needs and to help them out,” Twigg said. “I have high expectations, but I teach my students how to believe in themselves and find the answers despite any barriers.”



Michael with daughter Isabel and son Isaac



Michael’s interview with Courtney Zavala from Channel 2 News Houston



Dr. Bill McKinney, Executive Director, Region 4 Education Center interviewing Michael



Michael with Richard McReavy, Waller ISD Superintendent

NOTES FROM DEVELOPMENT

Update from Development

It's that time of the year again: time to start making plans to attend *The Great Conversation*. This year the event—the 18th annual—will be held on Wednesday evening, April 7, at the Houston Country Club. **Vince Foster** ('82, J.D.) and **Michael Gapinski** ('94, Mechanical Engineering) are leading the efforts to make this event our most successful yet. Many thanks also to **Karen Webster** ('95, Management) and **Lani Ramsey** ('94, Interdisciplinary Studies) for their work in rallying the alumni troops. *The Great Conversation* is the premier fundraising event providing scholarships and annual support for The Honors College. Even better, it attracts many of your fellow alumni and community friends for a night of fun! Please contact **Shannon Parrish** at 713.743.9973 or sparrish@uh.edu for more details. Or, visit our website <http://uh.edu/honors/alumni-giving/index.php>.

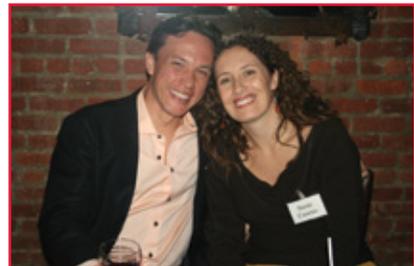
Honors on the Road!

Each year we try to take Honors on the road to visit with alumni. This fall we traveled to New York City in September and held a dinner at the Croton Reservoir Tavern (see pictures on right). Nearly 35 alumni attended to welcome **Dean Bill Monroe** and our very special guest, **President and Chancellor Renu Khator**. Go Coogs!

At the NCHC conference in October, The Honors College hosted a dinner in Washington, D.C. Everyone had so much fun that we are hoping to get an alumni group started there. See the feature story on page one for all the details of this great event.



Mary Beth (Brown) Erfert and husband David



Jason and Susie Casero



Wendy Paris and Chris Brunt



Dan Brown, Bryan Barreras, and Ravi Thakur

1980s

Natalie I. Lancaster ('80, Political Science) is Vice President, Director of Training for Stewart Title Guaranty Company. Previously, she managed the Katy office for Stewart Title Houston. She is married with three children.

nlancast@stewart.com



Dan Workman ('83, Psychology) joined the Producers & Engineers Wing, Steering Committee for the Recording Academy (The Grammys) this past fall.

danw@sugarhillstudios.com

Aris Economon ('89, Economics) and **Hanneke Faber** ('90, Journalism, '92, MBA) moved from Geneva, Switzerland, to Indian Hill, Ohio. Hanneke works for Procter & Gamble. She is now Vice President and Global Brand Franchise Leader for Pantene and Herbal Essences shampoos.

economon@bluewin.ch

alumni news

1990s

Kim Hooker Ballesteros ('90, Communication) is currently living in San Antonio with her husband, Sean, and son, Lyle, raising money for Riverwalk Jazz.

kimbosita@hotmail.com

Cindy Shoemaker Clayton ('91, French) and her husband David welcomed daughter Iris Austen Clayton on June 22, 2009. Iris joins big sister Audrey, born in 2005. Cindy is in her third year as Documentation Manager for Chemstations, Inc., where she is proud to work alongside other Honors alumni. cindyc@io.com

Mark Brokowski ('92, Marketing) is now in Chicago, Illinois as head of sales for the Great Lakes region for American Express Business Travel, having returned to the U.S. after four years with American Express in Toronto. Mark and his wife, Donna, have a 3-year-old daughter named Kenna.

mbrokowski@usa.net

Cheryl (Dube) Worley ('92, Music) and **Kirk L. Worley** ('96, JD) are pleased to announce the newest addition to their family: Paige L. Worley, born on August 2, 2009. Both Kirk and Cheryl have been named 2009 Texas Rising Star Lawyers by Texas Monthly.

cworley@hwa.com

John L. King ('92, Accounting) is a partner with Ernst & Young, one of the "Big Four" global accounting and advisory firms. In May 2009, John delivered the commencement address for the Bauer College of Business commencement. john.king@ey.com

Joey (Lockwood) Halm ('92, Music) completed her M.S. in Pastoral Counseling at Loyola College of Maryland, and now serves as a Personal Counselor at Georgetown Visitation School, a preparatory school for girls in grades 9-12 in Washington, D.C. She lives in Alexandria, Virginia, with her husband, Joe, and their three children. jhalm@visi.org

Bernie Luger ('92, Chemistry and Mathematics) is now teaching 7-12 Mathematics at St. Regis School District in St. Regis, Montana, and is working toward his M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction from MSU-Bozeman. He is also learning to ski.

bernie@montanafishandgaming.com

alumni notes

Trey Wilkinson ('92, Marketing, '02, MBA Finance) serves as president of Select Asset Management and is a member of The Honors College Advisory Board. trey@select-asset.com



Scott Sonsalla ('93, Military Science and Business) has left his position as a battalion executive officer at The Old Guard in Washington, D.C., and assumed duties as the Professor of Military Science at The University of Texas at San Antonio. scott.sonsalla@us.army.mil

James Lee ('93, Economics) and **Karla Lee** ('94, Journalism) are living in Kansas City with their daughter, Jessica (14), and just sent their son, Jacob, to study engineering at UH. James is now a partner at a financial consulting company he founded in 2004 and Karla is a corporate account manager for OraPharma, a division of Johnson & Johnson. jkjlee@sbcglobal.net

Jeffrey Sink ('93, Mathematics) just had twin boys, Liam and Peyton, and is working as Vice-President of an investment bank in San Francisco. jsink13@yahoo.com

Michael Gapinski ('94, Mechanical Engineering) has taken the position of Senior Vice President & Wealth Advisor with Morgan Stanley Smith Barney. Mike and his wife, **Kim (Young) Gapinski** ('94, Russian Studies), live in Kingwood, Texas, with their son, Donovan. michael.gapinski@morganstanley.com, kygapinski@embarqmail.com

Hettie Richardson ('94, Sociology) and her husband, Rik Young, welcomed their daughter, Canice Elyse Richardson Young, on November 6, 2009. In addition to being a first-time mother, Hettie is currently serving as co-chair of the Department of Management at Louisiana State University. hricha4@lsu.edu

Chris VanHoose ('94, Computer Science) and **Ann VanHoose** ('92, Accounting, MIS) had twin boys, Tripp and Trace, on November 24, 2009, to join big sister Lori (8) and big brother CR (5). Chris is Chief Technology Officer of CT Lien Solutions; Ann is a financial analyst for Shell Oil Company. amvanhoose@usa.net

Julie (Baumgarten) Pradel ('95, Finance, '99 JD, '99 MBA) and her husband, Tom Pradel, welcomed their son, Jack Thomas Pradel, on November 21, 2009. Julie is Senior Counsel with The Williams Companies, Inc.

juliebaumgarten@sbcglobal.net

Matthew Brawley ('95, Radio and TV) is the Videographer/Editor/Director for KUHT-TV, Houston PBS. Matt won a 2009 Emmy for directing the Houston-PBS Spelling Bee, which was the first regional Spelling Bee ever broadcast on a PBS affiliate. He currently directs Houston PBS' nationally-syndicated talk-show "InnerVIEWS with Ernie Manouse" and the local current affairs show "Houston 8," which was awarded a 2009 Lone Star Emmy in its first season in the category of outstanding informational program. mbrawley2@uh.edu

Damon Wilkinson ('95, Management Information Systems) and **Tina Lee** ('98, Anthropology) had their first child, Evelyn Avis Wilkinson, on November 11, 2009.

tinalee85281@yahoo.com



alumni news

Domenico Ippolito ('96, Electrical Engineering) earned his J.D. from UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law in May, and started work as an Associate at HOWREY LLP in East Palo Alto in September. He passed the California State Bar Exam as well as the Patent Bar exam, and looks forward to his second career as a patent attorney.

domenic@unitedunderdogs.com

Summer (Shahida) Amin ('97, Journalism) recently left her position as Director of Marketing/Communications at Chief Executives Organization to start her own company, NiMA, an integrated marketing boutique headquartered in Washington, D.C.

summer.amin@gmail.com



Chris Brewster ('99, Accounting) lives in Austin and was recently named partner in the Austin law firm of Lloyd Gosselink Rochelle & Townsend. He represents cities in electric utility issues before the Public Utility Commission of Texas and the Electric Reliability Council of Texas. Chris and his wife, Holly, have a two-year-old daughter, Lucy, and welcomed a son, Simon, on January 15th. cbrewster@lglawfirm.com

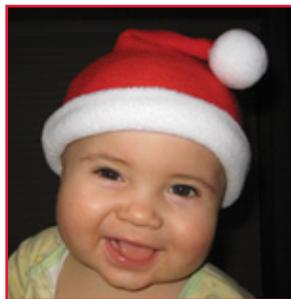
2000s

David A. Berntsen ('00, Optometry, '02 Optometry, OD) will join the faculty in the Clinical Sciences Department in the College of Optometry at the University of Houston as an Assistant Professor on September 1, 2010.

dberntsen@optometry.osu.edu

Kamrun Jenabzadeh ('01, Biophysical Sciences) and his wife, Nicole, welcomed a new addition to their lives, Adel Gaven Jenabzadeh, on the Persian New Year, March 20, 2009. Kamrun is currently finishing his surgery residency at the University of Minnesota.

kamrunj@yahoo.com



Lukas Grabiec ('02, Political Science) is currently serving as Corporate Counsel for Intel Corporation based out of Phoenix, Arizona, and advises clients globally. He recently was selected by the Arizona Bar Association to serve on the Arizona Bar Leadership Institute.

Lukas and his wife, Karolina, and their two boys, Patryk and Vincent, welcomed a new addition to the family, Dominika Felicja Grabiec, on November 19, 2009.

lukasgrabiec@yahoo.com

Marshall West ('02, Information Systems Technology) is currently the IT Manager for Child Advocates, Inc., Houston.

marshall.west@childadvocates.org

Hanskarl Borck ('03, Chemical Engineering) and **Beth Kungel Borck** ('03, Sociology and Theatre) welcomed son Konrad Wesley Borck on June 23, 2009, joining older sister Isabella (2). Beth has been re-elected to serve as Board President for a third term for Unhinged Productions (www.comeunhinged.com), Houston's GLBT Theatre.

borckb@uhcl.edu

Justin Gilmore ('04, Music) launched Shift Forex in July of 2009. Shift Forex is a currency trading and alternative investment advisory firm based in New York, offering services to individual investors and investment firms.

justin@shiftforex.com

faculty news

Carol Stojan Schmidt ('07, Chemical Engineering) served as chair for the young professionals group of the South Texas Section of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (YP STS-AIChE) and will be featured in the *Houston Chronicle* for National Engineering Week (E-Week).

carol.schmidty@gmail.com

Send your alumni notes to Edith Dugas at egdugas@uh.edu.

Faculty News

Prolific Honors Professor a “Better Scholar” Thanks to Honors

Honors College professor **Rob Zaretsky** has had a prolific year, publishing two recent books—*Albert Camus: Elements of a Life* (Cornell UP 2010) and *Modern France and its Empire Since 1870* (Oxford UP 2010), co-written with **Alice Conklin** and **Sarah Fishman**—and a multitude of recent articles, from “Silence Follows: Albert Camus in Algeria” (*Virginia Quarterly Review* Winter 2010), “Fifty Years Later, Camus Lives On” (*Le Monde Diplomatique* January 2010), and “Ever Returning to the Same Sea and her Silence,” (*The Drawbridge* Winter 2009) to articles on *Avatar* and

the Haitian earthquake in the *Houston Chronicle*. In a recent *New York Times* opinion article (“The Tea Party Last Time” February 2, 2010), Zaretsky compared the current Tea Party protesters to the Poujadist movement of 1950s France. He describes how the “political center evaporated” in a “movement that [brought] nothing to the ballot box except anger.”

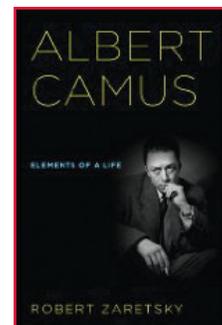
In relating these personal accomplishments to his work in The Honors College, Professor Zaretsky gives credit to the College, his colleagues here, and his students. “I wouldn’t have written so successfully without the support of Honors and **Ted [Estess]**,” Professor Zaretsky said. He’s quick to point out that the interdisciplinary nature of the College and The Human Situation course have played a role as well: “I’m writing books I would never have written as just a historian. I’m a better scholar and a better writer because of Honors.”

In fact, one of Zaretsky’s earlier books—*The Philosopher’s Quarrel: Rousseau, Hume, and the Limits of Human Understanding*, written with former Honors College professor **John Scott** (now a professor in political science at UC Davis), has its origins directly in The Hu-

man Situation course. The Human Situation, with its “exchange of ideas among people of very different disciplines” in “mostly an atmosphere of friendship” led to conversations between professors Zaretsky and Scott that led to a screenplay. After realizing that their goals were more suited to a book, *The Philosopher’s Quarrel* was the result.

Continuing and contributing to the ongoing conversation, professors Zaretsky and **David Mikics** gave a talk in The Honors College Commons asking “Do Intellectuals (Still) Matter?: A Conversation on Albert Camus and Jacques Derrida.” The professors described how Camus and Derrida were both similar and different, and defined what it meant—and still means—to be an intellectual. The well-attended talk, which featured both professors reading from their recent books, drew members of the Honors community and from across the university for open questions and discussion.

In addition to his writing, Zaretsky continues to teach in The Human Situation, and has been working with **Brian Johnston**, an English teacher at Sam Rayburn High School in Pasadena, to teach a seminar on the *Iliad* for high school students in the Estess Alumni Library.



Other Faculty Accomplishments

Charles Orson Cook is an American historian who has taught for the past 15 years in the University of Houston's Honors College. Professor Cook teaches the Honors survey course in United States history and is currently leading an Honors seminar on the history of Houston, a subject on which he has focused much of his research.

Nineteen of his entries are in the new *Oxford Encyclopedia of African American History*, and he has an essay on William Jennings Bryan in *Major Documents of American Leaders*. Honors College students **Ronnie Turner** and **Amanda Carr** assisted with the Oxford entries, and student **Dan Gerig** worked on the William Jennings Bryan essay.

Dr. Cook is one of several collaborators on a new book, *African Americans and the Presidency: The Road to the White House*. Student **Daniel Mendiola** assisted with this work. In the summer of 2011, two of Dr. Cook's essays—one on James Weldon Johnson and another on Colin Powell—will be featured in an anthology entitled *Major Documents of African Americans*, and four of his entries will be in the new *Congressional Quarterly Encyclopedia of African American Political Thought*.

Dr. Cook is currently writing a chapter on Houston that will be in the soon-to-be published *The Harlem Renaissance in the West*.

faculty news

Stuart A. Long, Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Research and The Honors College, was presented the inaugural University of Houston Teaching Excellence Career Award in 2009, the highest teaching award given by the institution.

In addition, Professor Long helped bring two grants to the university this year. The National Science Foundation awarded a group led by Professor Long a five-year, \$2 million grant to support programs for recruiting and retaining students in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. Specific programs involving undergraduate research, student seminars, project based courses, women in engineering, and summer engineering camps for high school students will be developed.

Professor Long and other UH researchers received a nearly \$3 million grant in 2009 to support an initiative aimed not only at enriching the education of university graduate students, but for engaging area schoolchildren and teachers in physical sciences. The grant will place UH Ph.D. students from engineering and science into science classes at

Houston-area schools to provide an additional knowledge base for the teacher and a role model for the students, as well as training for the graduate students in explaining their research endeavors to general audiences.

David Mikics published *Who Was Jacques Derrida? An Intellectual Biography* with Yale University Press in 2009. Morris Dickstein of the CUNY Graduate Center wrote about the book that "David Mikics is the real thing, a gifted, polymathic reader," who "writ[es] not as a polemicist but as a humane interpretive critic." *Publishers' Weekly* called the book "blessedly readable," and Martin McQuillan, who chose *Who Was Jacques Derrida?* as the *Times* Higher Education Book of the Week, wrote, "I applaud Mikics's intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness... he shows himself to be a reader of considerable range and sensitivity."

Professor Mikics has another book forthcoming in March 2010, *The Art of the Sonnet* (Harvard University Press, co-written with Stephen Burt).

staff news

Iain Morrison, Instructional Assistant Professor in The Honors College, presented “Nietzsche, Economics, and Morality” at the Southwestern Philosophical Society’s annual meeting in Dallas in November. He has been invited to host a “Meet the Author” session at the American Philosophical Association Convention this April in San Francisco to discuss his book on Kant and the role of pleasure in moral action. Professor Morrison is also a finalist for a university-wide teaching excellence award, which will be announced in April.

Other publications from our highly esteemed faculty include “The Traditional View of Hamilton’s Federalist No. 77 and an Unexpected Challenge: A Response to Seth Barrett Tillman,” in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* (Vol. 33, No. 1 (2010): 169-84) by **Jeremy Bailey**.

Tamler Sommers published a book entitled *A Very Bad Wizard: Morality Behind the Curtain*. (McSweeney’s Press, November 2009) and articles entitled “More Work for Hard Incompatibilism” in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (November 2009) and “The Two Faces of Revenge” in *Biology and Philosophy* (January 2009).

Staff News

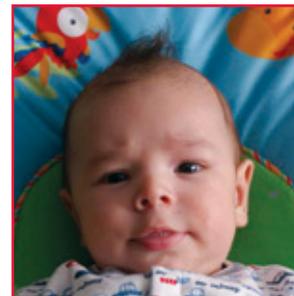
Honors welcomes **Libby Ingrassia** (’94, English and History) as the new Director of Communications for the College.

We also say goodbye and good luck to **Alison Romano** (’88, English) and **Jason Browning**. Alison plans to pursue an MPH this fall, and Jason is currently exploring a wide range of IT-related projects with a group of colleagues—look out Google!

Congratulations to staff members **Brenda Rhoden** (Director, Student Services) and **Ornela Santee** (College Business Manager) on the recent additions to their families. Brenda welcomed **Callan Joy Rhoden** on September 8 and Ornela welcomed **Liam Wesley Santee** on October 19.



Callan Joy Rhoden



Liam Wesley Santee

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON



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The Honors College

William Monroe, Dean
Stuart Long, Associate Dean
Christine LeVeaux-Haley, Interim Asst. Dean
Jodie Köszegi, Asst. Dean

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Contributing writer: Michael West
Contributing editor: Libby Ingrassia
Newsletter designer: Karen Weber

HONORS CALENDAR

See our online calendar at TheHonorsCollege.com

February 22, 4-6 p.m.

The Aesthetics of Italian Fascism: A Discussion with Michelangelo Sabatino and Alessandro Carrera
The Honors College Commons

February 24, 4-5:30 p.m.

“Whose History? An Open Forum on New Standards for Social Studies in Texas”
Sponsored by the Center for Public History, the Houston Teachers Institute, and The Honors College
The Honors College Commons

March 4, 4:30-6 p.m. *Phronesis Event*

“Are All Values Relative? Seeking Common Ethical Ground in a World of Conflicting Beliefs”
Robert Kane, University Distinguished Teaching Professor at The University of Texas at Austin
The Honors College Commons

March 26-28, 30 *Center for Creative Work Event*

Electra

CCW presents a new translation of *Electra* at UH’s Wortham Theater for the City Dionysia

April 7, 7 p.m.

The Great Conversation

For more details on The Honors College’s annual fundraiser at the Houston Country Club, contact Shannon Parrish at sparrish@uh.edu or visit Honors at <http://TheHonorsCollege.com>.

April 14 and 20, 4 p.m.

Poetry Month Events

Daniel Rifenburg and Bradford Telford poetry reading

August Kleinzahler poetry reading and craft talk
The Honors College Commons

