



areté

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HONORS COLLEGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ISSUE 29

Every year the Honors College sponsors a Fall Convocation for the University community. Last year our special guest was President Renu Khator. In her remarks, President Khator praised the Honors College as “the jewel of this university.” She went on to talk about the University of Houston’s overall mission:

“We do not live in an ivory tower. We do not believe in living in a vacuum. We are out there engaged with the community, engaged with society. Our students are out there, our professors are out there, because that’s what we believe. We believe that great universities are built by great communities, and great communities are served by great universities.”

In the pages of this redesigned issue of areté, you will see vivid evidence of how the Honors College is living out this commitment to community engagement, from a vegetable garden on campus to the Padre Island National Seashore, healthier homes in Houston to an orphanage in Haiti. These savvy and energetic efforts by Honors students are helping to make service learning the jewel in our crown.

The redesign of areté is part of a reconfiguration of our Honors publications. The winter issue of the magazine has been replaced by *Shine and Rise*, our annual report. Look out for the report on 2014 early next year.

Best,
Robert Cremins
Editor



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areté is published by the Honors College at the University of Houston. The name is a Greek word designating courage in a warrior and civic virtue in the polis. areté has come to mean excellence in character and action.

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SPEECH & DEBATE TAKES OFF

The University of Houston Policy Debate squad has made its mark on the national circuit this year — only two years since the new beginning of the Speech & Debate Program.

The squad won trophies at tournaments at UT Dallas, the University of North Texas, the University of Texas at Austin, and many others. The squad also managed to get a team to the quarter-finals of the National Debate Tournament, the oldest and

toughest debate championship tournament in the country. The Policy Debate program is new to Houston, but coaches Sarah Spring and Joshua Gonzalez have many years of experience developing champions at universities across the country.

In 2013 and 2014, the team traveled to tournaments outside of Texas such as Wake Forest, University of Kentucky, and Georgia State University. The Debate squad also contributed

to local events, such as hosting a public debate on energy dependency between the University of Houston Policy Debate Team, featuring students Eric Lanning and Sahar Sadoughi, and the Rice University Debate Team.

This summer a team of UH debaters, comprising of Danny Alexander and Eric Lanning, traveled to France with the Young Ambassadors Program. Danny and Eric had competed at the Lafayette Debates in Washington, D.C., which was

hosted by the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies of George Washington University. Danny and Eric were awarded the trip to Paris for being finalists.

During this trip, Danny and Eric continued their exploration of the tournament firsthand. This included meeting with French policymakers, scholars, and professionals to exchange views and build relations.



PHILIP ZELIKOW DISCUSSES COUNTER-TERRORISM WITH HONORS STUDENTS

Phronesis, our program in politics and ethics, hosted a special guest on April 25. Philip Zelikow has had an illustrious career as a public official, serving as Counselor of the U.S. Department of State, Executive Director of the 9/11 Commission, and a member of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board. A University of Houston Law Center alumnus, he is a distinguished attorney, professor, and author. He talked to our *Phronesis* students about the 9/11 Commission Report, specifically the section on counter-terrorism.

HONORS MAL: A MODEL DELEGATION

Every year, a team of Honors students prepares months in advance for something most people worldwide never dream of doing: representing a country at an assembly of nations while discussing today's biggest issues. This simulated assembly is Model Arab League.

MAL, an active Honors College organization for 25 years, offers students an opportunity to enhance their debate skills and knowledge of world cultures, as well as a chance to compete both regionally and nationally against other colleges and universities.

During the three-day conference in Washington D.C., more than 600 students gather and work in teams, acting as committee delegates for a select country. Each committee discusses different topics the delegates have researched for months.

The program pulls students out of their comfort zone and asks them to think about problems and solutions for countries hundreds of miles away from them.

"The experience demands that you take a critical and pragmatic look at the situations that these Arab countries are faced with," said Tyler Swenson, the newly appointed secretary general. "You grow to understand why things are the way they are in an extremely troubled region of our world and perhaps most importantly, you learn to respect others even if you disagree fundamentally with their philosophies."

Last year's impressive Honors team brought home four awards, with Swenson calling the wins "phenomenal and



Ryan Graham and Andrew Dugat, conquering the capitol during their MAL trip to Washington D.C.

unprecedented." Swenson, who previously served as Assistant Secretary General, now leads the national organization and will make sure everything at next year's conference is perfect.

Another task for Swenson is leading the organization in the Honors College, and he and Head Delegate Chloe Stowell will have to do some recruiting to maintain last year's senior-heavy team's legacy.

"My goals this year are to increase our efforts to recruit

more underclassmen as we have a lot of space with all of our seniors leaving," Swenson said. "As the outgoing head delegate, Chloe and I, along with our faculty sponsors Dr. Jesse Rainbow and Keri Myrick, are working to change the way that our local student leadership is selected to provide for a more democratic and stable transition of responsibility."

Swenson and the MAL veterans should have no problem recruiting, as the organization has an unparalleled experience to offer eager world learners:

"MAL will teach you, if nothing else, these two things: how to give an impassioned, descriptive, and persuasive argument that conveys the most critical pieces of your reasoning that is tailored to the sensitivities and interests of your audience, and that does all of this within your 45 second speaking time," Swenson said.

"The other thing you should take away from MAL is a greater understanding of cultures perpendicular to your own."

—by Natalie Harms ('14)



Corey Davis and husband, Andrew, at this year's Lence Dinner

ANDREW DAVIS THE ART OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Honors was lucky to have had the genial and dynamic Dr. Andrew Davis serving as associate dean during the 2013-14 academic year. Davis was “talent out on loan” from the Moores School of Music, where he has worked since 2003.

During his year with Honors, his task was to coordinate the Honors-led drive to bring a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest academic honor society, to the University of Houston.

Davis's assignment in Honors was not just a matter of luck;

there was also a little bit of destiny mixed in there. His time as an undergraduate at Penn State was notable not only for a switch of majors from engineering to music, but also for his intellectual formation in their honors program.

“I ended up with this liberal arts education that basically changed my life,” Davis said. “It changed the way I look at education; it changed the way I teach; it still even to this day informs the way I look at music and the arts.”

After graduation, Davis said, he “never stopped being

committed to the value of a liberal arts education” — a commitment evident to all of us who worked with him as he took care of myriad details in the months leading up to the Phi Beta Kappa site committee's visit to Houston last February, which was by all accounts a great success.

Graduate studies saw Davis, now a budding music theorist with a strong interest in Italian opera, earn a Master's degree at the University of Massachusetts and a Ph.D. at Indiana University's high-profile music program. It was at Indiana that he had his first taste of the administrative side of academic life, serving as the graduate student representative on the Dean's Advisory Council. This was an eye-opening experience.

“If you were going to be at a university, then the surest and fastest way to make a difference at the level of the institution was to get into the administration,” Davis said. “You could improve the life, improve the experience, improve the education of the students.”

In 2003, having earned his doctorate, Davis interviewed at four universities for tenure-track positions and quickly decided Houston was the place for him: the combination of an “active and vibrant arts scene ... a dynamic and interesting university ... and a large and complex music school” made for the perfect cultural mix, he said.

Just three years later, Davis was making a difference at the administrative level in the School of Music with his appointment as Director of Graduate Studies. In David Ashley White, the renowned music educator and composer, Davis found one of the

two colleagues he credits as being key UH mentors — the other being our own Dean, Bill Monroe — and, as of June 1, Davis succeeds Dr. White as Director of the Moores School of Music. His wife, pianist Corey Davis, also works at the school.

Davis got to know Dean Monroe not through music but during the University's last campaign to bring Phi Beta Kappa to our campus, as both are actively involved in the Houston Chapter of the PBK Alumni Association. The current campaign, which Davis describes as “a mammoth task,” envisions Honors housing a PBK Chapter on behalf of the entire university — and it has been this interaction with the entire institution that Davis has enjoyed the most over the last year.

“The PBK project (has) required reaching into every unit of the University's operations — some of which I didn't know existed! — from athletics to student affairs, from academic affairs to central administration,” Davis said. “That's been the great benefit of it personally: I think I know everybody on campus.”

Those of us who work and learn in Honors have certainly enjoyed getting to know Davis over the last year. And, though he is returning to his “home school” of music, we can still count him as a Fellow — not to mention friend — of the Honors College. Indeed, Davis sees a great similarity between the Moores School and the Honors College: “People come and they don't want to leave.”

In that spirit, we are not saying farewell to Dr. Davis, but rather, see you around.

—by Robert Cremins

SCHOLARS DAY BRINGS TOP STUDENTS TO CAMPUS

As the inaugural class of Tier One Scholars started their last semester before graduation, the University of Houston launched a new Tier One tradition: in January and February, the Honors College hosted the University's first Tier One Scholarship Invitationals. Nearly 300 Tier One Scholarship candidates attended these events to participate in a small group interview; explore the campus; and meet with deans, faculty, staff, and current students.

To welcome Tier One candidates to the University, more than

130 faculty, staff, and students from colleges across campus volunteered their time. In addition to giving tours, answering questions, and aiding in logistics, current students served on interview panels with faculty and staff.

David Zinsitz, 2011 Tier One Scholar and Honors Ambassador, enjoyed meeting the next class of potential scholars. “While interviewing prospective students, I could see myself in their shoes as a nervous incoming Cougar,” Zinsitz said. “But now on the other side,

I become excited by the energy these students are bringing to this Tier One University.”

Brenda Rhoden, Director of Student Affairs for the Honors College, said the Tier One Invitational allowed the Honors College to showcase the University and also “provided the occasion for our current Honors students to thoughtfully engage in the recruitment process by serving as both ambassadors and interviewers.”

Volunteers' “engagement and passion buoyed the Tier One

Invitationals and assisted in creating connections that helped land some of the best and brightest of the fall 2014 incoming class,” Rhoden said.

Over the past four years the Honors College has welcomed more than 150 Tier One scholars to its student community. Tier One Scholars are a vibrant part of the university community through participation in athletics, spirit organizations, research, and study abroad.

—By Colleen Seitz ('13)

A TIER ONE WARRIOR: A NEW UH UDALL SCHOLAR

Just recently we had dramatic proof of the difference these scholars are making in the life of both the College and the University. Sophomore Vanessa Alejandro, a geology major and 2011 Tier One Scholar, became the very first UH student to win a prestigious Udall scholarship.

Each year, the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation awards some “50 scholarships ... of up to \$5000 ... to sophomore and junior level college students committed to careers related to the environment, tribal public policy, or Native American health care.”

Alejandro's focus is on the environment. She is the founder and president of the non-profit educational group Warriors of the Wild. Her future plans “involve joining the Peace Corps, obtaining my Ph.D. in geology, and working as a research-oriented professor while leading scientific expeditions,” Alejandro said.



PROJECTS TRAVEL BACK IN TIME

This spring, students in Dr. Irene Guenther's Honors U.S. History course submitted an extraordinary array of creative projects, including web sites, short stories, plays, spoken word poetry, artwork, a quilt, and even a symphony. These projects, Guenther said, "focused on issues and developments that arose from the Great Migration of more than six million African Americans who moved out of the South in the 20th century. ... I was deeply moved by many of the students' work, thought, energy, and effort. In turn, they were clearly moved, touched, angered, inspired, and informed about the nation's more recent struggles with race and racism's sometimes visible, sometimes invisible consequences that haunt us to this day."

Here we present, in words and images, a selection of those inspired and inspiring projects:



"THE WEIGHT OF THE GREAT MIGRATION," CHANDIKA SILVA

"This class was amazing. Not only was I opened up to new information, but I also realized that the things we think were small in history are actually bigger and more painful than what some educators might let on.

"When we were learning about the Great Migration, instead of reading a textbook, we actually read diaries and personal accounts of what happened. When I read these accounts, I became aware that the Great Migration took more bravery than I had ever thought possible. African Americans were treated with such hostility in the South, and soon left their homes and families in search of something better. They braved the distance and made it to the North, where they were met with the same and sometimes worse forms of segregation. What made it even worse was that now they had nothing familiar like home and family to comfort them.

"The amount of fear they experienced must have felt like a planet on their shoulders, and as I read about their pain I thought they resembled the great titan Atlas, who carried the world on his shoulders."



"THE RISE OF A RACE," CAMERON MEYER

"I collected the landmark achievements of some of the most prominent and influential African Americans of all time. After placing them in a timeline spanning 50 years, 1900 to 1950, which is the period I found most interesting, I designed a weathered and worn album that documents these renowned figures. What resulted is a collection of accomplishments of people who pursued and grasped their goals in an era that kept them, at every turn, bound to a repressive and restrictive past. This book could have been found in the attics of those listed or the storehouses of the faces I've gathered on these pages to serve as a testimonial to a flame that never wavered. This album serves as an educational tool for those studying black history, specifically a time that offered African Americans so little opportunity and so many obstacles."

IT WAS THEN, IT IS NOW REBECCA PHAM

It was then.
They told him he couldn't do it,
They said he wasn't good enough.
But he was.
He may have been better,
Known more than them.
Yet they still kept him working the tracks
Or in the factories.
He wasn't happy,
But what could he do?
He prayed for change.

It was then.
He lived in a small apartment.
Him, his wife, and children.
He looked all over,
But he was turned down.
This was the only place,
And he had to pay threefold.
The little he made,
A lot was taken off.
He struggled,
But what could he do?
He prayed for change.

It is now.
He is a policeman,
A professor, a doctor,
A president.
Though he holds these titles,
Is he really equal?
He still makes less,
Works less,
And is treated less.
He still hurts,
But what can he do?
He still prays for change.

UHS STUDENT REGENT ASIT SHAH

Honors student Asit Shah was selected to serve as the Student Regent on the University of Houston System's Board of Regents. Shah, a junior finance and supply chain management major, is a co-coordinator for Honors Advocates and also minors in one of Honors' newest programs, Energy & Sustainability. Read more about Shah's experience with the new minor on page 25.





THE RIGHT TO JUSTICE

This past academic year, many students in the Honors College have done some sustained thinking on issues of human rights and social justice. A speaker series, organized by Dr. Shasta Jones and Dr. Irene Guenther, tackled topics such as the challenge of balancing power and restraint, and the connection between women's empowerment and international development. The series culminated in an address to Honors students by Nobel Peace Prize-winner and UH professor Jody Williams. These conversations on 21st century citizenship began in classes taught by Dr. Jones and Dr. Guenther, on *Global Health and Genocides*, respectively. Here, history major Melissa Silva ('14) writes about her deepening involvement with crucial issues of human rights:

When I was signing up for classes to take in my next-to-last semester at UH, I was not sure what classes would be my best options. As I was looking through the available courses, I stumbled upon a class titled "20th Century Genocides" taught by Dr. Irene Guenther.

I decided to take the class because I thought I could learn more information about the Jewish Holocaust, but I was in for quite a surprise when I first saw the class syllabus.

Like most people, when I hear the word "genocide," I immediately think of the Holocaust. It was not until I took this class that I realized that far too many genocides have occurred during the course of the 20th century to learn about in only one semester.

This class was not like other classes where you can robotically show up, quietly take notes, and memorize facts to take exams. I found that I had to invest myself emotionally in

every assignment in order to try to understand why and how these genocides happened. At the close of every week, when I would sit down to write my response to our new reading material, I often found myself outraged, disgusted, afraid, and angry to be a part of the same human race as the perpetrators of genocides I read about.

A reading that I found particularly disturbing as a soon-to-be medical student was Otto Friedrich's book, *The Kingdom*

of *Auschwitz*, in which he describes how doctors would actually volunteer to be a part of the life-and-death selection team at the train station where Jews and other "undesirables" would arrive at concentration camps.

As a person who has dreamed of becoming a doctor her entire life, I could not believe that doctors, educated professionals who have sacrificed a significant portion of their life learning how to care for the

well-being of others, would degrade themselves so much by choosing to hum tunes while deciding who was fit to live or die with a mere wave of their hand.

It is quite scary to think that individuals who are amongst the most revered professionals in our society were willing to use their knowledge for such evil.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons I have learned from studying genocides has been that we all have a social responsibility to each other. Throughout

history, countless individuals, particularly Americans who claim to be the defenders of liberty and equality, have consciously stayed in the comfort of their homes as millions of innocent individuals have

been slaughtered by perpetrators who were never stopped. Some of these atrocities were even broadcast on television, and people around the world would sit together, listen to the news while eating their family dinners, and do nothing.

Similarly, politicians who have consciously done nothing to stop these killings have tried to rid themselves of their guilt by falsely claiming to the international community they were unaware of ongoing genocides.

Even if all others look away, we must not. When we allow perpetrators to diminish the worth of just one life, even if that one life is in a remote part of the world, we are giving them the permission to determine the value of our own lives. We owe

it to each other to defend the worth of human life, regardless of the color, faith, ethnicity, nationality, or sex of a person.

Despite our fears, we have to be brave enough to tell our stories of suffering, to speak out about the anguish of those whose voices are not heard, and to oppose courageously oppression in order to educate and inspire our fellow human beings to uphold social justice for all.

—by Melissa Silva





CULTIVATING OUR GARDENS

Voltaire's *Candide*, read again this spring by Human Situation students, ends with the famous declaration that "we must cultivate our garden." Honors took this imperative to heart and began cultivating the Honors Gardens on the ground floor of Moody Towers.

While 212 M.D. Anderson Library remains the College's "mother-ship," our rapid growth in the past few years has necessitated us finding more space on campus for our burgeoning Honors programs and initiatives. The pioneers who moved over to the Gardens early this year included the Honors Program in the Health Professions, the Center for Creative Work, and the Bonner Leaders Program. The space was inaugurated, in true Texan style, with a barbecue on Friday, March 21.

The grillmeister that afternoon was none other than Dr. Andrew Hamilton, Associate

Dean for Student Success and Director of the Bonner Leaders Program. Beginning its second year, Bonner Leaders offers educationally meaningful service opportunities to academically gifted students. Dr. Hamilton loves the Gardens.

"It's a home," Hamilton said, "and it will only become more so as we grow our program." That growth will see the initial cohort of 21 Bonners more than double this fall.

One of those inaugural Bonners is biotechnology major Grace Schwarz, who agrees with Dr. Hamilton's positive assessment of the College's new frontier. "It's given us a sense of unity," Schwarz said. "Having our own space makes us a physical entity that people can come to and ask questions about (the program)."

Last fall, the first semester the Bonners were active on

campus, they had to make do with whatever open room they could find in Honors. Now they have an airy conference room at their disposal for weekly meetings. Bonners also staff the Gardens' student services area, where Associate Director Alison Leland offices. A computer lab and other facilities allow the Bonners to work on web sites, social media, video production, and planning for service-learning trips.

That last activity hints at another difference between Honors and *Candide*: a difference in philosophy. What *Candide* has in mind is making the most out of a modest patch of earth; for Honors, the Gardens is just a starting point, a place where we begin an engagement with the rest of the campus, the city of Houston, and the wider world. The Bonners, for instance — working closely with UH Facilities Management and the Office of Sustainability

— have been cultivating a literal garden by the new Cougar Woods Dining Hall. Some weeks this garden has produced more than 20 pounds of produce for area homeless shelters, such as the Star of Hope.

PROMOTING HEALTH

Schwarz is one of more than a dozen Bonners taking part in the Summer of Apps, a Gardens-based initiative led by research professors Dr. Dan Price and Dr. Peggy Lindner that involves working closely with community partners such as SHAPE and Urban Harvest to create apps that promote healthy homes, healthy eating, and a healthy appreciation for art.

As second-year Bonners do study/service away, Dr. Hamilton hopes that our growing "expertise using data analytics" will enable our students to be "the tip of the spear of



CAMPUS. COMMUNITY. WORLD.



a project that has Bonners all over the country paying attention to rural/urban divides, to poverty and the way it affects health, and that whole suite of (social) issues we are dealing with.”

The Honors Program in the Health Professions also has a reach far beyond the bricks-and-mortar Gardens. (HP)², as it’s fondly referred to, is the umbrella organization for all pre-health students associated with the Honors College.

“The student life part of it is really expanding nicely,” Director Dr. Simon Bott said. The space and focus provided by the Gardens helps (HP)² build “a fully-fledged network of student organizations” geared toward future health-care professionals, and to work toward Dr. Bott’s ambitious goal of “a thousand health care professionals in the greater Houston area that are tied in to us, providing anything from the occasional shadowing opportunity all the way up to serving on one of our advisory boards.”

Now that it’s putting down roots in the Gardens, Dr. Bott hopes (HP)² “will feel like ... the organization that provides whatever (pre-health students) need, whether it’s advising or an internship opportunity or just a place to come and have a cup of coffee.”

A MOVEABLE FEAST

And rumor is there’s also a pretty darn good cup of coffee (espresso, anyone?) to be had at the Center for Creative Work. But like the other programs flourishing in the Gardens, CCW is a moveable feast.

CCW provided a literal feast to audiences attending this year’s Dionysia, the Greek-inspired

spring arts festival. At performances of *A Cheerful Gathering of All the People*, produced at locations as diverse as the Honors Commons and the Urban Harvest Farmers Market, patrons enjoyed bards and storytellers re-imagining the *Odyssey* (another classic component of the Human Situation) while chowing down on a Homeric catalogue of cuisines.

The icing on the cake of Dionysia 2014 was the fifth annual Ekphrastic Arts Exhibit, where both students and faculty presented art in a variety of media inspired by the Great Books taught in Human Situation or this year’s theme of “Home and Homecoming.”

Honors student Sara Balabanlilar was part of the Ekphrastic Festival committee and considered the event a wonderful experience because it provided a venue for Honors students to submit their work and gain confidence as artists, as well as explore texts in a different manner.

“Because of the distinct focus of the art, the festival allowed me a place to think about two of my passions: curation and English (my major),” Balabanlilar said. “When we can merge fields like this — English literature and art, music, acting, or film — I think a lot of students benefit from thinking about the texts in new ways. I loved being involved with it.”

Helping others; partnering with community organizations; mentoring students; encouraging artists; nurturing mind, body, and spirit — now, that, Dear Reader, is how you cultivate a garden.

—by Robert Cremins



THE WORLD IS YOUR CLASSROOM

FRANCE & SPAIN

BY CAITLIN LOWE

While the high-gloss pages of the travel brochure lure you in and try to give you a sense of the experience you’ll have, it is what isn’t listed on the itinerary that will hook you on traveling abroad. The best travel memories I’ve made have been with friends and travel companions, whether that is standing atop of the Nîmes amphitheatre, walking

single file across Pont du Gard — an old aqueduct, or simply meandering down the streets of Barcelona looking for tapas.

On our trip through France and Spain, we stood where Napoleon Bonaparte, Marie Antoinette, Salvador Dalí, Francisco Goya, and many others once stood. When we were looking for dinner one night

in the south of France, we found an amazing Moroccan restaurant. The owner served us lamb, couscous, and vegetable stew, and then ended the meal with the most amazing ice cream.

My favorite part of our trip was the markets our tour guide, Sam, lead us through in France and Spain. The varied

smells and noises cannot compare to where we buy our food here. We also took a bike ride through the streets and along the beaches of Barcelona. It was a great day with just the right amount of sea breeze to give the air a taste of salt. Each day brought us a new adventure and a new wave of culture and fun. I am counting the days until my next trip!



FEET SCHOLARSHIP

BY MICHIKO MCMAHON

Every year the Honors College awards two students a paid trip to Europe — complete with stipend and Eurorail pass — via the Faber-Economon European Travel Scholarship. This past summer, Michiko McMahon and Audrey Cox explored Paris, got lost in Amsterdam, toured Florence and Venice, and surveyed Roman ruins. Not only is the FEET Scholarship an incredible travel opportunity, it can also be inspiring and life changing, as McMahon attests:

I've never felt much of anything when looking at great works of art. The breathtaking experience so many poets and

writers and even my friends describe when seeing their favorite piece always befuddled me. Being somewhat an artist myself, I felt left out. How could a painting make you feel so much? How can you connect with an object that's in no way related to you? I just didn't get it. I often get called Michi "the Machine" by one of my friends, so I attributed my cold attitude as to why I didn't feel anything toward artwork. So, when Audrey planned for us to spend much of our trip in museums, I wasn't excited.

Our first museum trip to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam

was overwhelming. The artwork was beautiful and well known, but I felt little to no connection with it. The Van Gogh Museum was the second museum on the trip. Van Gogh's work was fantastic, but it only gave me a spark of inspiration and nothing more. I expected a man who was so emotional and energetic in his paintings to inspire something in me.

After spending two hours looking at his works, I was visually exhausted and planned to rush through the visiting exhibit, "Fire Beneath the Ice," featuring artist Felix Vallotton. However, when I entered the hallway

filled with his black-and-white woodcuts, I experienced the breathtaking moment that had eluded me for so long. I couldn't pull myself away from his works.

When I finally finished my self-tour of the exhibit, I found my travel partner waiting in the bookstore. As I frantically searched for copies of Vallotton's works in the bookstore, I realized then that having your breath taken away by a painting is much like falling in love. It is an individualized experience that is irrational and unexplainable.

ISRAEL & TURKEY

BY ARIANA PERUZZI

This summer a lucky group of students, faculty, and friends of the Honors College got the chance to spend two weeks exploring Israel and Istanbul as part of the Honors Study Abroad program. I was fortunate enough to be part of this group, and I can only describe it as a surreal experience. We spent the majority of our time at historical and religious sites — ancient Tels (mounds) and Roman ruins, the Temple Mount and the Wailing Wall, churches with fantastic and elaborate

background stories — all under the tutelage of our expert guide Steve Langfur, who can only be described as a tour guide, professor, and top-notch mouse impersonator rolled into one.

But not all our activities were focused on sightseeing. Our group took advantage of the natural beauty of Israel to hike down mountains, up to waterfalls, and through tropical forests. We swam in the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean and had what turned out to be a

hilariously violent rafting race down the Jordan River.

Each place we visited was so preposterously gorgeous and different from anything I'm used to seeing that I began to suspect I was wandering through a dreamscape. But even with all of these planned activities, the best parts of the trip, and the ones in which I learned the most, were the spontaneous events. These in-between moments — waking at dawn to swim with friends in

the Sea of Galilee, Frisbee and soccer in the biggest park in Israel, and walking Jerusalem looking for nightlife — these were the times we really got to know each other better. In these new and surprising situations we surprised ourselves.

In retrospect, I think what I really learned from this trip is that those whom I thought were familiar, those friends who had come with me, are stranger and maybe more beautiful than anything I had come to see.





FROM UH TO MEDICAL SCHOOL SHASTA JONES TAKES AN UNUSUAL PATH

Shasta Jones never expected to return to the University of Houston — or to Texas for that matter.

But after a research career that took her to several countries, Jones found herself back at Honors — teaching sociology and leading a service learning study abroad trip to Haiti — and on her way to medical school, two career paths she had never dreamed of for herself.

INITIAL PATH

Jones set out on her initial path studying urban sociology, which looks at under-served populations and tries to understand what keeps people trapped in the cycle of poverty.

Jones, who grew up a child of a single mom who dropped out of high school, identified with the under-served population because of her own experiences.

“We always had what we needed: food, some clothing,” Jones said. “The electricity was off sometimes, but there were always people around to help.”

After graduating from UH and the Honors College in 1998 with degrees in History and Sociology, she was off to the University of Pennsylvania for a Ph.D. in demography.

An undergraduate study abroad trip to France made her realize travel needed to be part of her career, so Jones worked on projects that allowed her to go overseas. As a Ph.D.

student, Jones’s research took her all over the globe, including Brazil, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa. While in Ghana, she briefly considered getting a nursing degree but decided to stick with demography.

After completing her doctorate in 2004, Jones moved to South Africa to work as a senior research associate for UPenn. While there, she worked in the country’s second-largest township and focused on HIV/AIDS prevention in adult males and adolescents.

The adult project went well and, after two years, was seeing hopeful results. The adolescent project was discouraging.

“It began to make me question my work and the effectiveness of my work,” Jones said. “I knew I needed to resign; research didn’t seem like enough.”

‘I DON’T WANT TO GO TO MEDICAL SCHOOL’

In 2010, Jones moved back to the Houston area and began to reconsider nursing school. She started taking nursing prerequisites at a local community college but still felt unsettled about her decision.

So, Jones fasted and prayed for several weeks about nursing school until one morning she woke up talking in her sleep. “I remember saying ‘God, I don’t want to go to medical school, so forget it,’” Jones said.

Later that same day she met a stranger who told her she



needed to go to medical school. That was the sign Jones needed, and she began to take the steps to put herself on that career path.

Jones shadowed doctors at hospitals, which shattered her stereotype that doctors “just” treat and nurses provide care. She also continued taking pre-req courses.

Jones said she sometimes felt discouraged during her coursework and wondered if she was “too old.” But every med school interviewer said it was “refreshing” to talk to an older and more experienced applicant.

“They could see the continuity in my life that I couldn’t initially see,” Jones said.

The med school application process also helped her reflect on what had led her to medicine.

Key moments in her life, such as handling her own illnesses and educating her father about his lung cancer, helped her realize she had always been pointed towards medicine, even if she didn’t realize it.

Jones was accepted to the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston in February and will spend the next four years in med school, focusing on women’s health and infectious disease.

“My responsibility is to educate my patients about their health; that’s what I want to do,” Jones said.

RETURN TO HONORS

While Jones’s career path was taking an unexpected turn towards medicine, it was also

turning towards something else: education.

In 2011, Jones was visiting Honors when she was approached by Dean Monroe to teach sociology. She agreed and began teaching a general introduction to sociology course. She now teaches the Sociology of Global Health and co-sponsors the popular Human Rights and Social Justice Speaker Series with fellow Honors professor Irene Guenther.

Jones, who had told herself she would never teach again after graduate school, loves the Honors College environment and especially enjoys teaching freshmen.

“They have so many misconceptions about the world,”

Jones said. “It’s wonderful to see an awakening in them.”

To help broaden students’ global awareness, Jones led a two-week study abroad trip to Haiti in May. Students on the trip helped set up Survivor 2 Survivor, a therapeutic oral history project for disaster victims coordinated by UH’s Carl Lindahl, and spent a week in a medical clinic taking patient histories and basic vital signs.

“I want students to see this,” Jones said of the poverty and displaced population in Haiti. “Poverty in the U.S. doesn’t compare to what’s in other countries. I also want to broaden their understanding of the global community and the impact of America’s decisions on foreign nations.”

Jones plans to continue teaching at Honors while she’s in

med school and after she becomes a doctor. She enjoys the academic environment but more so the chance to teach students to be leaders and to understand their impact.

“I hope to inspire compassion and a sense of responsibility towards these very impoverished populations, so (students will) ultimately use their knowledge and skills in the future to help them,” Jones said.

Because of Jones’s winding and surprising career path,

she doesn’t advocate students “over-planning” their lives.

“Which career you choose doesn’t matter. It’s what you do with your time and that you’re doing something meaningful to you and others that matters,” Jones said.

“Keep moving to where your interests are. Looking back, I never could have planned such a good (med school) application.”

— by Sarah Tucker

FUN SHASTA FACTS

Shasta learned Xhosa, the “clicking language,” while living in South Africa. Spoken by more than 8 million people, Xhosa is one of 11 official languages in South Africa.

She’s visited 16 countries. Her first international trip was to France for an Honors study abroad in 1997.

Jones competed in bodybuilding while a graduate student. She won the title of Ms. Penn in 2002.

While on the Haiti trip, Jones baptized an Honors student.



HOPE IN HAITI

While volunteering at a clinic and with an oral history project on Dr. Jones’s study abroad trip, Honors students saw firsthand the devastation the 2010 Haiti earthquake left behind.

Elise Waldron-Young remembers the man with breast cancer whom they couldn’t treat because there is no chemotherapy in Haiti.

Sarah Dyer remembers one man breaking into tears during the oral history project as he recalled looking for his daughter after the earthquake and never finding her body.

But the students also saw the ever-hopeful attitudes of Haitians making the best of their situations. Waldron-Young

remembers the little girl who would stop everything to play with her during breaks at the clinic. And the man Dyer interviewed said he felt called to help others, opening his home and resources to those affected.

“Instead of losing himself in his own grief, he made that experience his primary motivation for

doing good in the world,” Dyer said.

For Dyer, Waldron-Young, and others, Haiti has left an indelible impression, one they will take with them as they return to Honors and the United States and determine their own career and academic paths.

— by Sarah Tucker



FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT: SAFA ANSARI-BAYEGAN

LONDON— Immediately after graduating from the Honors College in May 2013, I packed my bags for a European adventure involving an internship in The Hague, followed by graduate school in London. My summer in the Netherlands was incredible. I spent my days working at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and my weekends exploring the country. Highlights included a bike ride through the Hoge Veluwe national park in Otterlo, appropriately known as the Dutch savannah; and a trip up to the very north of the country, Friesland, with a native tour guide many of you will know: the one and only Mient Jan Faber (Honors Visiting Scholar, Human Security in War Situations).

September rolled around quickly, which meant it was time to move into my dorm in Covent Garden, just around the corner from the London School of Economics, where I'd be spending the next year studying at the Centre for the Study of Human Rights. The work has been demanding, but my courses have given me a critical lens through which to examine the human rights framework, which will be an asset to my future work in this field.

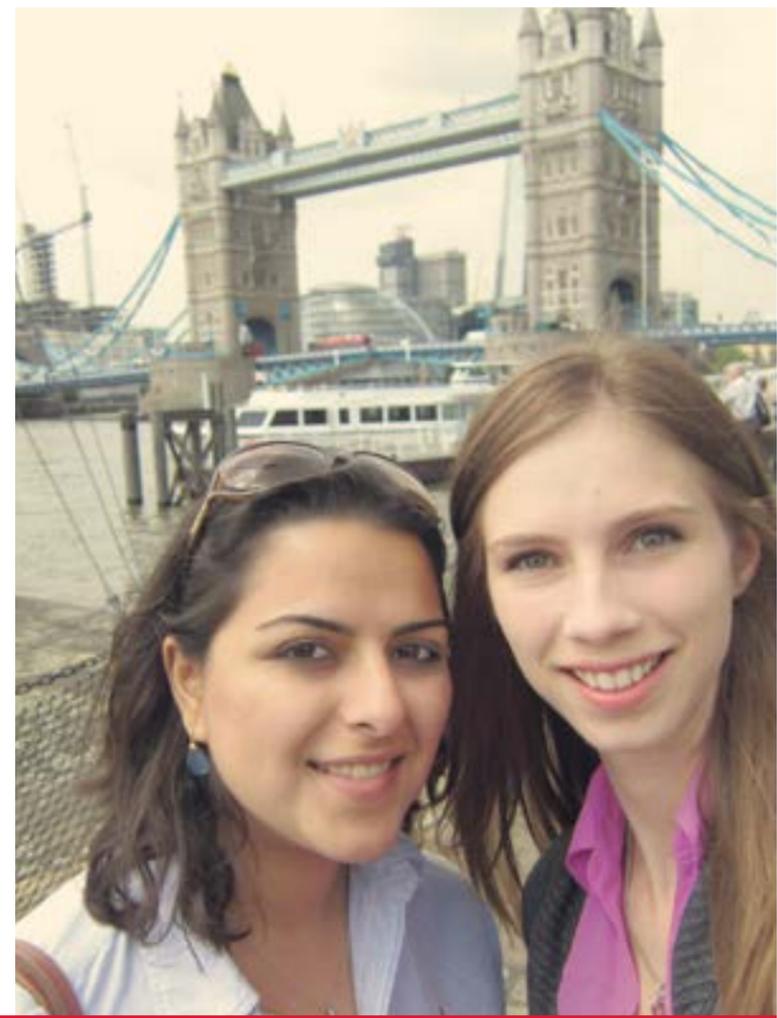
While in London, I also interned part-time at Reprieve, a charity organization that works to ensure each person's right to a fair trial. My studies have kept me very busy, but I took much-needed breaks, usually involving short trips to visit friends across Europe. I managed to visit cities in 10 different countries, including just recently meeting up with the Honors College study abroad group in Istanbul.

Before I left Houston, Dr. Tamler Sommers said he would be mad if I hadn't seen at least 10 plays, preferably 20, by the time I got back from London. I made it to seven, falling just a few short of Dr. Sommers' (rather high) expectations. Students get absolute steals on tickets in this city — sometimes the best seats for less than eight dollars. My latest trip to the theater involved front row seats to Kevin Spacey's unforgettable performance of Clarence Darrow at the Old Vic Theatre. All you *House of Cards* fans will understand my elation. I've probably also disappointed Dr. Iain Morrison by never making it to a football match, but I swear that tickets were impossible to get: they involve club memberships, no

friendly student deals, and a lot of aggression.

I will miss the bustle and vibrancy of London but look forward to returning to Houston in preparation for my next big

step: writing my master's dissertation on the ongoing lethal injection drug shortage in the U.S. and tackling law school applications.



Safa Ansari-Bayegan with fellow 2013 Honors alum Sarah Beasley

FROM THE CREATOR

"There was no agenda in pairing up the writers for the First Thursday series, other than availability. That said, Kim Meyers had early on made the suggestion that we ask the writers reading together to come up with a theme. This meant that a whole lot of thought and preparation went into the readings long before the events took place. Even when the theme was "There will be no theme" (Peter Hyland and John Harvey's reading), the result was better than anything I could have scripted or hoped for. This was the case for every reading. To be honest, whatever the pairings — and whatever they may be in the future — we can't go wrong. As faculty and staff of the Honors College, we come together all the time, putting our imaginations to work in order to create worthwhile things. Sometimes that kind of creative energy is focused on a course like the Human Situation; sometimes, it happens when two writers share their work with us."

—Hayan Charara



FIRST THURSDAY LINEUP

JANUARY 16
RICARDO NUILA & GABRIELA MAYA

FEBRUARY 6
ROBERT LIDDELL & LAURIE LAMBETH

MARCH 6
ROBERT CREMINS & KIMBERLY MEYER

APRIL 3
PETER HYLAND & JOHN HARVEY

HONORS TALENT SHINES IN MONTHLY READING SERIES

On the first Thursday of every month, during the fall and spring semesters, the Honors College offers an event called "First Thursday Readings." At each reading, two professors — who are also writers — present excerpts from books they have written. It can be poetry, fiction, or nonfiction, allowing the audience to enjoy different writing genres. Some of the books have been published, and some are in the process of being published.

The first time I attended a First Thursday Reading, my reason was simple: my Human Situation discussion professor offered extra credit to any student who attended. Hearing the words "extra credit" made me decide right then that I would go. Thinking I needed support at an event that I was certain would be boring, I asked my father and my best friend to accompany me.

Being an engineering major who never counted reading as an exciting activity, and being a commuter who had her first class at 8:30 in the morning, I was ready to go home but really wanted that extra credit. How much I enjoyed listening to professors and learning more about their work and their lives was a complete surprise for me.

The First Thursday Readings allow us, the students, to know our professors better. While

they talk about their books and read to us, a window is opened and we are able to see their souls. I felt as if I were seeing a different side of the professors — a side that I had not seen before.

For the second and third readings I attended, the extra credit was twice again offered. Of course I was glad to be able to raise my grade, but that was not so important anymore. I wanted to attend the readings because I really enjoyed the first one, and these times I did not have to invite my father — he invited himself, and so did my best friend.

I learned so much during the First Thursday Readings: to enjoy poetry and to listen to fiction and non-fiction books with interest and excitement, that an engineer only has to gain by becoming an avid reader, and to admire my professors even more as writers. But the most important lesson I learned is that books can transform minds. I have a new appreciation for writers and their work, and I find myself reading all the time.

The power of books is indeed extraordinary, and I'm looking forward to the First Thursday Readings when the next semester begins.

—by Christiana Chamon



BONNER SCHOLARS CLEAN UP THE BEACH

Texas boasts the world's longest undeveloped barrier island, Padre Island. A sensitive and important coastal habitat in its own right, Padre Island also protects marshes and coastal estuaries. However, the island's position relative to wind and currents makes it the final destination for the staggering amounts of trash dumped into the Gulf.

Over spring break, Team Bonner joined a group organized by longtime Honors friend Kathie Bassler for a truly ambitious beach cleanup project centered on the Mansfield Cut near Port Mansfield, Texas. The trip was a highlight of the Bonners' first year of service learning, and the work resulted in the removal of more than 28 tons of trash from the beach and jetty.

You can read more about the trip at the Bonner Blog: innovate.uh.edu/beach

—by Andrew Hamilton

STUDENTS EXPLORE HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

These days, building smart means building green, as a team of students in the Introduction to Energy & Sustainability class has discovered. They have taken a close look at acclaimed non-profit organization Habitat for Humanity's involvement with environmentally savvy approaches to house construction.

One of the team members is Honors student Asit Shah. He took the class as the foundation course for the Energy & Sustainability minor. The interdisciplinary nature of that program is evidenced by the pairing of a historian, Dr. Joe Pratt, and a chemist, Dr. Ognjen Miljanic, to teach the class. Shah has been impressed with this dynamic duo's instruction: "(They) have taught and led us towards developing practical solutions ... that balance economy, energy, and our environment (the three E's) — a challenge that we have faced in the past, are facing now, and will continue to face in the future."

A challenge for the class itself was to form into teams and carry out a case study. The team Shah was part of also included Caroline Denigri, Brandon Ray, Ryan Ackley, and Thomas Stacey. All five are in the Bauer College of Business' Global Energy Management track. Shah was delighted that they got to work with Habitat, as he has volunteered for the organization since high school.

According to the team, the goal of their project was "to survey Habitat's sustainable practices



Habitat for Humanity community partners celebrate the completion of their green superhouse.

and their involvement in equipping low-income affordable homes with solar energy." There was plenty to survey, given "the expansive role that Habitat takes in being one of the world's most energy efficient residential builders."

In all, the team examined the "sustainable portfolio" of six U.S. and international Habitat affiliates, including Houston, which has been a green trailblazer. Our hometown affiliate, according to its Development Manager Stephen Sye, "has successfully been recognized as an Energy Star® Building National Leader since 1997, and is a four-time recipient of the National Energy Star Award-winning house design."

Sye impressed the team with his enthusiasm for solar energy, emphasizing that "solar panels

constitute a 'win-win' scenario for Habitat Homeowner families as the panels are sturdy — (they) can withstand (winds) up to 130 mph — are hail resistant, produce an economic benefit, and uphold Habitat's mission."

Sye certainly made believers out of the Energy and Sustainability team. "More than anything," the team said on their web site, "we hope to enlighten critics of solar energy in residential housing with the possibility that (it) can be made economical."

And the class has made Shah into a believer in Energy & Sustainability: "Now that I have taken (Intro), I can confidently state that any student interested in pursuing an

energy-related career should start their journey with this course."

As he moves on to the minor's capstone course, Shah will get a chance to do more of the research he and his teammates enjoyed doing in relation to Habitat for Humanity: Dr. Pratt, who is also director of the minor, points out that students in the capstone class "are required to complete a more ambitious, semester-long interdisciplinary group project."

That component gets a thumbs-up (or, should we say, a green light) from Shah, as he also believes that "universities are a natural incubator for experimenting with ideas of our energy future."

—by Robert Cremins

FACULTY & STAFF BUILDING ON STRENGTHS

SCHOLARSHIP & PUBLICATIONS

JONATHAN ZECHER

Publishing his new book *The Role Of Death In The Ladder Of Divine Ascent And The Greek Ascetic Tradition*

IAIN MORRISON

Published an article with a fresh way to read Nietzsche's *On The Genealogy Of Morality*

ROBERT ZARETSKY

Published *A Life Worth Living: Albert Camus and the Quest for Meaning*

DAVID MIKICS

On NPR for his book *Slow Reading In A Hurried Age*

ANDREW HAMILTON

Published his book *The Evolution of Phylogenetic Systematics*

JEREMY BAILEY

Co-authored *The Contested Removal Power, 1789-2010*

TAMLER SOMMERS

Presented his paper "Moral Responsibility And Human Diversity" in Kyoto, Japan

CYNTHIA FREELAND

Working on a year-long project on "Plato And Poetry" at The University Of Bergen

RICHARD ARMSTRONG

Working on his books *Theory And Theatricality* and a reader's guide to Freud's *Interpretation Of Dreams*

KAREN WEBER

Presented on ePortfolios at the University of Michigan

TED ESTESS

Published *Fishing Spirit Lake*, a collection of personal narratives.

LAURIE LAMBETH

Working on a hybrid graphic memoir and lyric essays

CYNTHIA FREELAND

Presented on "Reading Character Through Faces: A Philosophy Of Portraits" in Norway

LAURIE LAMBETH

Won the Bellevue Literary Review's Poetry Prize



Jeremy Bailey won a 2014 Teaching Excellence Award in the Provost's Core category. This award is given to faculty in recognition of outstanding teaching in the Core Curriculum, a vital component of the Honors College mission.

Fritz Claydon and Stuart Long won a UH Group Teaching Excellence Award; these awards "recognize groups of faculty in both formal and informal programs who demonstrate a strong commitment to teaching and student success."

Brenda Rhoden won a 2014 Staff Excellence Award, one of only eight staff members across campus to do so. Brenda was recognized in the "Effective Leader" category for her dedication, service, and efficiency.

Terry Hallmark and Sarah Bhojani won 2014's Distinguished Service Awards. These awards are given to faculty and staff members who have gone above and beyond in their work with Honors students.



Irene Guenther's exhibit "Postcards from the Trenches," commemorating the centennial of World War I, features artists that provide a different perspective on WWI through their telling and emotional artworks. The exhibit opens this fall in Houston at the Museum of Printing History and runs from Oct. 23 to Feb. 14 and in Washington D.C. at the Pepco-Edison Place Gallery from Aug. 19 to Sept. 19.

The Honors College has a new podcast: "The Honors Forecast." This occasional podcast provides insights into exciting developments and events happening in the Honors College; it also showcases unique Honors courses and outstanding students and their work. thehonorscollege.com/podcast

Tamler Sommers runs a successful podcast series, Very Bad Wizards, that has more than 11,000 weekly subscribers and more than 120,000 downloads in the past six months.



HONORS IN ACTION



1. Dr. Paul Cantor, 2014 Ross M. Lence Master Teacher, lectures on *Hamlet* during Human Situation in February. 2. Chloe Stowell represents UH on the Model Arab League trip in Washington, D.C. 3. Honors students listen to a violin solo at Jodie Kosziegi's going away party in December 2013. 4. Kimberly Lenmark and Kevin Cho perform a duet during the biannual Honors Coffeehouse. 5. Andy Little and Madison West ('14) attend the Lence Master Teacher Dinner by Dr. Paul Cantor on "The Economics of Apocalypse: Flying Saucers, Alien Invasions, and the Walking Dead in American Pop Culture." 6. This year's *Great Conversation* Decorations Committee's hard work and creativity really showed — and stole the show! 7. Anjay Ajodha gives Nathaniel Stich ('14) a piggy-back ride down the National Mall in Washington, D.C. 8. Honorary Bonner Casey Hall ('14) hauls trash during a spring break service trip to Port Mansfield, Texas, and Padre Island National Seashore. 9. Natalie Nassif cheers up a child during a clinic visit on the Haiti service-learning trip. 10. Dean Bill Monroe presents founding dean Ted Estess an Honors Medallion during Fall Convocation 2013. 11. Dana Haffar and Nick Fox take in the beauty of the French countryside.



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