



by Maria Zilberman
Second-year journalism major
Honors Humanities student

For the second year, Honors Humanities is offering a thematically linked series of co-curricular events that allow students to engage with classroom concepts such as race, gender and class outside of the traditional academic environment.

This year's series, "justpolitik," focuses on the role of politics in daily life and aims to broaden the definition of politics to include the politics of identity and activism.

"It has been a little tough to sell that politics is more than your personal political perspective. So, I really wanted to be able to talk about multiple views and get beyond Democrat and Republican," said Justin Maher, Honors Humanities instructor and program coordinator who largely designed the series.

The series kicked-off in September with a trip to the Newseum in Washington, D.C. Led by Maher and Patrick Grzanka, assistant director of Honors Humanities, students spent the day touring the Newseum and wrapped up with ice cream from Maggie Moo's.

"The Newseum definitely delivered a contemporary view on the news system. In class, we learn how to be active in the humanities and the social system. The trip definitely added a layer onto that," said Sam Nassau, a freshman English major and first-year Honors Humanities student who found the museum trip apt to what he is studying in his Honors Humanities colloquium, ARHU105.

Other fall events in the justpolitik series included a group viewing and discussion of the second presidential debate on Oct. 7 and a trip to American University on Nov. 13 for a screening of Spike Lee's documentary about post-Katrina New Orleans, "When the Levees Broke," followed by a discussion with the film's editor, Sam Pollard.

"Not only did I get a different perspective on such a huge event, I got to hear about the creation of the documentary," said Ber-An Pan, a sophomore sociology major and second-year Honors Humanities student who attended the screening at American University.

Pan, who described the documentary as a "huge racial discourse," said he enjoys the justpolitik programming and believes that "getting students to get involved in the concepts outside of class is a legitimately great idea."

"There's all these issues that we deal with, and a focus of the program is to have a public outreach component," said Maher, who emphasized that the discussions that follow the events are crucial to the events' success.

justpolitik*

The December justpolitik event is a viewing of Stanley Kubrik's landmark geopolitical satire "Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Bomb," followed by a discussion of activism and the role of social satire in culture.

"No matter how great a classroom discussion is, the point of a classroom discussion is for students to then go out into the world and parlay their knowledge. The series will hopefully allow students to get out there and talk about their ideas," said Maher.

Students are welcome to suggest events to add to the justpolitik programming, or to make suggestions about the kinds of events they would like to see in the future, said Maher. Though Honors Humanities sponsors the series, events are open to the entire university community.

"justpolitik was designed to get the university community involved. We've encouraged university-wide people to come. You really see that with the symposium. It's a way to get Honors Humanities students and other students doing work in the humanities involved together," said Maher.

The second annual Honors Humanities research symposium is planned for April and is a day for undergraduates to present their work in the humanities in a public forum. The symposium is open to University of Maryland students and students from the D.C. metropolitan area.

justpolitik upcoming events...

acting up: a workshop examining student activism

critical lens: the politics of documentary filmmaking

2nd annual undergraduate research symposium

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Keystone: a journey

by Justin Cousson
Second-year journalism major, Honors Humanities student

As every Honors Humanities student knows, the Keystone Project is the program's curricular core, with each student working on her undertaking over multiple semesters. Here, we spotlight three notable projects.

First-year biology major Joseph Jaffe's project grew straight out the ARHU105 course readings when the class tackled Plato's "The Republic" and he was less than impressed. "I thought Plato was utterly wrong about most things," Jaffe said, "but I think he did that deliberately...after all, he was writing from the perspective of Socrates." Jaffe was nonetheless inspired by Plato and felt that the classic was ripe for re-invention. "I seek to rewrite 'The Republic': 'The ReRepublic,' if you must. Times change, and as beings evolve — genetically, I mean — so do ideas, precepts and ideologies."

Second-year environmental science and policy major Mike Warley's project draws from his own experience as a high school debater. "I could speak at over 700 words per minute and used all kinds of techniques to gain a competitive edge over my opponents. But I often felt, or knew, that we were glossing over things or misrepresenting things in order to construct the most effective argument and to beat other teams." Warley took those concerns and constructed his project around them. "I'm looking to explore the connection between competition and education in policy debate," he said.

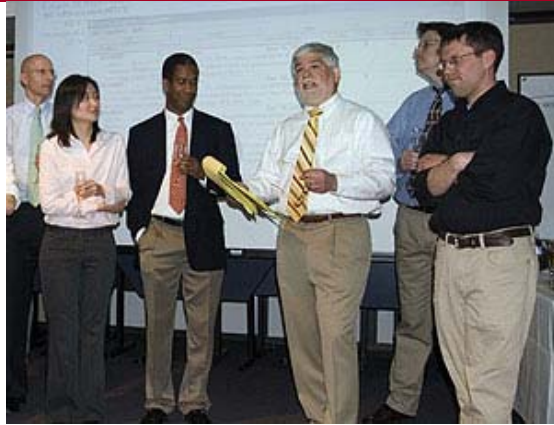
"I want to look at how our competitive side affects what we communicate. I wonder if my experience could, or would have been better or how it would have been different with the desire to win a championship being so prominent," said Warley.

Third-year sociology major Amanda Shirazi developed a pilot program at Sunrise Assisted Living center in Washington, D.C., where she invited various ethnic, cultural and religious UMD student groups to present something to the residents and hold discussions with them. Among those invited were Jewish and Indian a capella groups and American Indian performers. Shirazi is turning her experience into a 30-page research paper entitled "Creating Moments and Striving for Growth with Older Adults: The Use of Diversity Education as a Starting Point for Improved Perception of Race, Prejudice, and Privilege in America." Shirazi was pleased with the results of her project, saying "The residents loved the students' performances and really appreciated the individual interactions and conversations with them. They enjoyed hearing about the students experiences and were eager to share their own stories."

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Elizabeth Suh: Honors Humanities alumna and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist



by Julia Russell

Third-year journalism major
Honors Humanities alumna

In December of 2004, Elizabeth Suh graduated from the University of Maryland with a Bachelor's degree in journalism and an Honors Humanities citation. Three years later, she had a Pulitzer.

Suh, a reporter for the Oregonian, was sent on her birthday to help cover the search and rescue of James Kim and his family. She said her role in the coverage was to talk to the Kims' friends and family, which was given to her because of her ability to speak Korean.

"It was really hard on me and very emotional," she said. "Everyone was glued to that story and wishing for a happy outcome."

At the time, Suh was still only an intern for the paper and she said she does not like to take credit for the award. She said she the situation was a stressful and overwhelming one.

"I was so stressed for six months," she said. "It took a while for me to recover [after it was all over]."

Despite the Pulitzer that came out of that situation, Suh said that her proudest moments as a journalist have been "in the smaller things," specifically, the situations when she feels she brings truth and fairness to a situation.

She said she likes to report on diversity issues, because she enjoys covering communities and groups who are often misrepresented in the media.

According to Suh, many of these issues do not receive the coverage they deserve due to the drastic changes the field of journalism is currently going through. She said now is the "craziest time to be in journalism."

"People are not focused on diversity in the newsroom, and other things have fallen to the side," she said.

Despite the instability of journalism, Suh said she is still excited to do her job. She said the education she received at the University of Maryland has helped her get ahead in her field, especially in terms of her writing style.

"There are certain morsels from certain teachers that help me be a better journalist than those that maybe didn't have a journalism education," she said.

Suh said she loved her time as a student at Maryland and that she "had an awesome time" during her education.

That education included participating in Honors Humanities. According to Suh, the classes she got to take as a student in the program were "awesome," and her favorite was a class about the history of music. The best part about the program for her, though, was the people, she said.

"I'm most grateful for the students I met through [Honors Humanities]," she said. "They are still some of my best friends."

Suh said her advice to students going through the program now is to stay as positive as possible and to call on other students for advice and support.

"With a challenge there is always some level of reward," she said.

Current Student Accomplishments

Second-year student Sara Rothman was admitted to the dual bachelor's/master's of public policy program in the School of Public Policy. Sara is currently taking graduate courses and plans to graduate with both degrees by spring 2010. In spring 2008, she was named the sole winner of the Heyward G. Hill Memorial Scholarship of the DACOR Bacon House Foundation from the College of Arts and Humanities.

Second-year student Josef Parker was awarded the Catherine P. Mackin Scholarship from the College of Arts and Humanities.

Second-year students Barbara Cole, Chelsea Kerl and Josef Parker were all named Arts and Humanities Freshman Scholars for achieving 4.0 GPAs in their first years on campus.

First-year student Michael Casiano was awarded a Dean's Freshman Scholarship from the College of Arts and Humanities.

Second-year student Bob Hayes served as co-lead organizer for the Students for a Democratic Society National Convention, which was hosted at the University of Maryland during summer 2008. Honors Humanities students Anne Price, Josef Parker and Emily Kloc all participated in the convention.

Wicomico Hall: The life of living-learning



by Chiara Tanzi

First-year Letters & Science (undecided) major
Honors Humanities student

Honors Humanities, like other programs across campus, is defined as a "living-learning community," a somewhat nebulous concept for many.

The importance of the "living" side of things and its connections to learning can be hard to define. For Honors Humanities, the "living" piece officially centers around field trips, on-campus events and, most vitally, Wicomico Hall.

While initially some complain about small rooms, the temperamental hot water taps, and the fact that it's not shiny and newly renovated like Queen Anne's, the advantages of the Honors Humanities' host building, Wicomico Hall, quickly become apparent.

As first-year resident Molly Crenshaw put it, "the small size makes it easier to meet people—if you sit in the lobby for long enough, you'll meet everyone." Because part of the program's mission is to create a small college feel in a large university, "high-rise living does not say 'Honors Humanities,'" said sophomore Max Emmerling. Moreover, South Campus has a more intimate feel than neighboring communities on the far side of campus. "North Campus is not more social, it's just louder, and all those freshmen in one place can be annoying even if you are a freshman," insisted Emmerling.

Even the less endearing peculiarities of the physical space have had their advantages for residents. At the start of the school year, residents came together in the air-conditioned lounges to take refuge from the heat, while the lack of elevators encourages cross-floor friendships thanks to traffic back and forth from the lobby, the laundry room and the lounge.

Living in an Honors Humanities environment, common interest and common experience provide an immediate connection among students from major disciplines as disparate as elementary education, computer science, art studio and finance. And as Emmerling noted, in all modesty, "Honors Humanities people are generally pretty awesome, so shoving them all together means that there will be at least some cool people around."

Residents have also found that the living experience reflects positively back into learning. Unlike the random shuffle that defines the composition of most classes, the students sitting next to each other in the Honors Humanities seminars are also friends and floor-mates. "I feel much more comfortable in the [ARHU 105] discussion; it's just easier to talk to people you know," claimed first-year Sarah Gallagher. Crenshaw echoed her sentiments: "You know these people, so you can just talk and not have to worry as much about explaining where you're coming from or being misunderstood," she said.

On a very pragmatic level, the community of Wicomico Hall provides the simple convenience of being able to walk down the hall, or even just turn to a roommate, to talk over the readings, ask for help with the homework, or, as Crenshaw added, "get a common base of Keystone support."

In the end, the "life" of this "living-learning" program, that comes out of Wicomico makes Honors Humanities more than just another sequence of requirements. The "life" part is made of shared experience, dialogue, occasional hardships, lucky revelations, and, yes, learning.



Sarah Kimmet: new program advisor

Honors Humanities has added a program advisor to its staff this year, a position that is being filled by Sarah Kimmet, an doctoral candidate in the Department of English. The position has been created to provide students with hands-on guidance and mentoring on issues concerning their Keystone projects, their HH lives and course work, and their career, educational and even personal goals.

Sarah was an academic and career advisor in the English department for two years before she migrated to Honors Humanities, and she is looking forward to continuing to build relationships with both the first- and second-year cohorts.

Sarah is available during specified office hours but also encourages students to drop in and see her as concerns arise when she's in the office on Wednesday afternoons.

Students can contact Sarah via email at shamilto@umd.edu.

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