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## Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council, Volume 16, Number 1, Spring/Summer 2015 (complete issue)

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# JNCHC

## Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council

Forum on Honors and the Future of the Humanities

Vol. 16, No. 1 | Spring/Summer 2015



# Journal

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OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

## HONORS AND THE FUTURE OF THE HUMANITIES

JOURNAL EDITORS

Ada Long and Dail Mullins

University of Alabama at Birmingham

**The National Collegiate Honors Council** is an association of faculty, students, and others interested in honors education.

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# CALL FOR PAPERS

INCLUDING A CALL TO UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE PRESIDENTS  
FOR FORUM SUBMISSIONS

While the 16.2 issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: September 1, 2015**) invites research essays as usual on any topic of interest to the honors community, it will also include an unusual Forum in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the NCHC.

Rather than asking honors administrators to submit essays to the Forum, we are asking you to ask your college or university president to submit an essay on the theme “The Value of Honors.”

We hope that this special Forum will give you the chance to communicate with your president about what you see as the value of your honors college or program and will give your president a chance to reflect in writing on the value of honors at your institution and/or in the wider context of higher education.

We hope to receive essays of roughly 1000–2000 words in which university and college presidents consider “The Value of Honors” in a practical and/or theoretical context.

The lead essay for the Forum is by James Herbert, who served at the College Board as Director of Academic Relations and then Executive Director of Academic Affairs (1982–1989); at the National Endowment for the Humanities as Director of Education Programs and then Director of Research Programs (1989–2003); and more recently at the National Science Foundation, the European Science Foundation, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK), and the University of Cambridge. James Herbert taught in the general honors program of the University of Maryland from 1970 to 1980.

James Herbert’s essay called “Thinking and Rethinking: The Practical Value of an Honors Education” describes the critical and reflective practices he learned in honors and how these practices benefited his on-the-job experiences at the College Board and NEH. His essay is available on the NCHC website <<http://nchchonors.org/nchc-publications/jnchc-lead-essay-16-2>>.

**The deadline for submissions is September 1, 2015.** We hope you will initiate contact with your president as soon as possible, perhaps just by forwarding this Call with a brief message from you. We expect you to serve as the liaison with your president so that we communicate with you rather than with your president. You might also wish to forewarn your president that we edit all essays according to the journal’s conventions of style, grammar, and punctuation, but all authors have ample opportunity to review and approve edited manuscripts before publication.

Please send all submissions to Ada Long at [adalong@uab.edu](mailto:adalong@uab.edu).

## EDITORIAL POLICY

*Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* is a refereed periodical publishing scholarly articles on honors education. The journal uses a double-blind peer review process. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at [adalong@uab.edu](mailto:adalong@uab.edu).

## DEADLINES

March 1 (for spring/summer issue); September 1 (for fall/winter issue)

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We accept material by email attachment in Word (not pdf). We do not accept material by fax or hard copy.

The documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author's primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation to a list of references (bibliography) is strongly preferred, and the editor will revise all internal citations in accordance with MLA guidelines.

There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.

Accepted essays are edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for infelicities of style or presentation. Authors have ample opportunity to review and approve edited manuscripts before publication.

Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at [adalong@uab.edu](mailto:adalong@uab.edu) or, if necessary, 850.927.3776.



## DEDICATION



**Lydia R. Daniel**

Since every member of the NCHC during this millennium has no doubt met Lydia R. Daniel, she may need no introduction. Between 2002 and 2010, Lydia was on the Executive Committee and then in the full range of officer positions, serving as conference chair for San Antonio in 2008 and as president in 2009. Her involvement in the NCHC, starting in 1997, has extended well beyond her most visible roles as she served on the Publications Board as well as the following committees: Two-Year College; Honors Semesters; Finance; Evaluation; Conference Planning; and External Relations (I may have missed a few). She has also been a Site Visitor and consultant at ten community colleges.

Meanwhile, Lydia has also played an active role at the regional and state levels. She was first a faculty representative and then (2002–2005) the secretary/treasurer of the Southern Regional Honors Council, and she hosted as well as chaired the SRHC annual conference at the turn of the century. At the same time, she was the president of the Florida Collegiate Honors Council, having served in a variety of capacities within that organization starting in 1997.

## DEDICATION

Her day job during all this time was at Hillsborough Community College where, during and after receiving her PhD from the University of South Florida in 1983, she started out as an instructor and then went through the ranks to professor of English and finally to her position as Honors Institute Director from 1996 until last year. She received numerous awards during her career from organizations that included the Center of International Business and Economics Research as well as the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development. She also received the Outstanding Alumna Award from the University of South Florida in 1988. In 2014, Hillsborough Community College renamed the Honors Institute as the Dr. Lydia R. Daniel Honors Program.

Her announcement in 2014 that she was going to retire came as a shock to all who know her since she is surely one of the least retiring people in the NCHC. As she launches her next set of projects and commitments, we wish her well and send along great bouquets of gratitude for her years of service to the NCHC.

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Ada Long

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

A typical issue of *JNCHC* contains a Forum that focuses on a matter of particular significance to honors educators and then presents research essays that are unrelated to the topic of the Forum. This issue, by contrast, has a thematic wholeness. While the first eight essays address specifically the topic of “Honors and the Future of the Humanities,” the two research essays—one of which is a Portz-Award winner—illustrate that the humanities, which all agree play an essential role in honors, are not just alive but robust.

Larry Andrews leads off the Forum with his essay “The Humanities Are Dead! Long Live the Humanities!” A Call for Papers went out on the NCHC website and listserv and in the NCHC E-Newsletter, inviting members to contribute to the Forum. The Call included a list of questions that Forum contributors might consider:

Is the connection of honors to the humanities essential to its basic nature? Is it possible to imagine—or desire—an honors education that is not heavily reliant on the humanities? Would the downfall of the humanities spell the downfall of honors? What changes, if any, need to be made in honors education to secure its future within the current climate? Should honors detach itself from the humanities and, if so, how? Are current data-driven trends in honors education, such as rubrics and outcomes assessment, a move away from the humanities and toward the social sciences, and are these trends beneficial or perilous to honors? Are the humanities a luxury of the past while vocationalism and speed-learning are harbingers of the future, and should honors educators fight or accept a future-oriented stance? Will the humanities become the purview of the privileged while the 99% move further toward technical education, and, if so, what will this mean for the diversity and quality of honors education? Does its connection to the humanities bolster the notion that honors is elitist? Is the critical thinking engendered by honors and the humanities a benefit or a threat to democracy? Is a political agenda at work in the current assault on or neglect of the humanities, and does this agenda imperil honors education as well?

The Forum includes seven responses to the Call for Papers in addition to the lead essay.

In a culture where the humanities are constantly pronounced to be dying, Larry Andrews identifies bad omens—glut of unemployed PhDs, hard turn toward STEM-related curricula, focus on quantitative and measurable outcomes, financial cuts, “info-bits,” social media, degeneration of political discourse—and also significant good omens that, no surprise here, are hard to describe in a simple list. The humanities require nuance and narrative, complexity and eloquence, interpretation and empathy, all of which make them endangered in a simplifying culture and also essential to an honors education. Andrews describes the deep connections of honors to the humanities in its history, values, and purpose, concluding with Cardinal Newman’s statement about the value of a university (in this case, honors) education that it is “as useful as the art of wealth or the art of health, though it is less susceptible of method, and less tangible, less certain, less complete in its result.”

The responses to the Forum topic and to Andrews’s essay emphasize key qualities of the humanities that necessarily tie them to honors education: imagination, creativity, interdisciplinarity, quality of life, nuance, complexity, deep thinking, problem-solving, empathy, and social justice.

We begin with an essay that illustrates the essential creativity and imagination of the humanities. In “Song of The Disrupted,” Frances McCue of the University of Washington says she “sing[s] from a place of vulnerability and rarity. But, sometimes, the stronger the cage, the more robust the song.” Creating “some revelation through splintered vision,” McCue meanders through her experiences teaching in honors and then through traditional defenses of the humanities, snatching a little pollen from each to arrive at a vision of the humanities as a grand concoction that connects and disrupts all else that we do: “Between the digital and the sky, between the poet and the software engineer, between the music from the grand hall and the tweets of a disloyal fan, we live, the disrupted. Join us.”

In “Honors and the Humanities: Necessary as Air and Water,” Angela Marie Salas of Indiana University Southeast reaffirms the close connection of honors to the humanities as well as to all the qualities that Andrews described appreciatively. Salas argues that these qualities are exactly the ones we need to be extending to students who might otherwise be limited to a vocational or technical education. We can accomplish this goal is by assuring a high-quality honors education at two-year colleges and also by establishing strong articulation agreements between two-year and four-year institutions. Honors and

the humanities, Salas argues, are as crucial to a decent life as clean air and clean water, and honors educators need to make them accessible not just to traditional liberal arts students but to all students.

The next three essays describe the worth of the humanities not for their own sake alone but for their essential value to all other disciplines, including and perhaps especially the STEM fields. In “‘The Endless Appetite’: Honors Education and the Spirit of the Humanities,” Andrew Martino of Southern New Hampshire University writes, “Courses in mathematics, economics, science, and engineering, to name just a few, enhance and are enhanced by traditional humanities courses.” Citing as an example Thomas Piketty’s use of literature to explain his economic theory, Martino advocates an “honors curriculum [that] promotes a willingness to push the boundaries of how we think about educational value, moving us beyond use value and toward exploring epistemological questions.” In agreement with Charles Dickens, Northrop Frye, and Martha Nussbaum as well as Larry Andrews, Martino advocates the kind of critical and imaginative thinking that leads to personal wholeness, responsible citizenship, and intellectual integrity.

Amaris Ketcham of the University of New Mexico makes the case in “Homo sapiens, All Too Homo sapiens: Wise Man, All Too Human” that the separation of the humanities from science and technology is based on false assumptions. The sciences like the humanities depend on imagination, language, narrative, context, and overarching concepts. “Where the physical universe collides with the fanciful and flawed human experience of life,” she writes, “there is creative energy, be it in scientific research or creative writing. Both are meant to birth new knowledge, rouse questions, explore our relationship with the world, employ the senses, test ideas, and better our understanding of life and the human experience.” The interdisciplinary tools of the humanities can and should prepare honors students to solve the social and scientific as well as human problems that await us in the future.

Annamarie Guzy makes a different and also compelling connection between the humanities and other disciplines, including the sciences and professional or technical fields, in her essay “Honors Composition: Humanity beyond the Humanities.” Drawing on her own professional background and her current position as a teacher of honors composition at the University of South Alabama, she echoes Ketcham’s argument about the interdisciplinary tools of the humanities, one of the most important being “the humanity within the humanities: the kindness, the sympathy, the compassion; a *good person* speaking well.” When students in technical, professional, and scientific

fields are fast-tracked past the humanities, Guzy argues, they lose “valuable chances to discover the interdisciplinary connection—the human connection—among all majors.”

In “Increased Awareness, Increased Appreciation,” Barbra Nightingale of Broward College argues that awareness and appreciation of other cultures are the key contributions of the humanities to a worthy education and especially to an honors education. In a world where religious, ethnic, national, and political groups seem to be narrowing rather than broadening their awareness of difference, “more exposure to the humanities is essential to the health and well-breeding of the citizens of our world.” In her connections between honors, the humanities, and a just global culture, Nightingale anticipates the next essay’s focus on public service.

Having always wished to “help heal the world,” Joe Kraus describes having felt that the humanities were peripheral to such an effort until, as a graduate student, he became inspired by Salman Rushdie and Václav Havel, whose work he saw as “a kind of applied humanities, the work of the imagination in the world.” Teaching in honors at the University of Scranton has been a lesson for him that honors research in any field is “an expression of the self attempting to understand itself, which, however it manifests itself, is precisely the central subject of the humanities.” In his essay “Imagination and the Humanities in Honors across the Disciplines at a Jesuit University,” Kraus describes the value of the humanities in working with students who strive to do “more . . . just because,” which is the core value of the humanities and also of the Ignatian concept of “the magis,” “the restless desire to hone oneself for the sake of better serving the world.”

Kraus’s assertion of the special connection of the humanities to the Jesuit concept of social justice is a perfect lead-in to the research essay titled “Assessing Social Justice as a Learning Outcome in Honors” by Naomi Yavneh Klos, Kendall J. Eskine, and Michael Pashkevich of Loyola University New Orleans. The authors describe the expansion of the NCHC’s “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” in a document called “Essential Characteristics of a Jesuit Honors Program,” which calls students to “bring their intellectual talents into service of the world’s great needs.” Ignatian Colloquium, a required 1-credit honors course for first-year students, draws on the pedagogy of social justice, nicely summarized by the authors, to teach not just awareness and reflection but action. A post-semester survey of the 83 students in the honors colloquium and of 142 non-honors students registered in two other courses (first-year chemistry and religion) revealed two significant

differences: honors students were more confident that social justice can be put into action and that their own actions could further social justice. The authors suggest that their strategies for encouraging social action in a Jesuit context would work well in any honors program or college.

The Portz-Award-winning essay provides hope for the future and an affirmation of the arguments made by many of the writers in this issue of JNCHC. An accounting student at Eastern Kentucky University, Sam Shearer has produced a well-researched and beautifully written historical study of Truman Smith, thus supporting the views of Guzy and Ketcham, for instance, that the humanities and the professions are as complementary as they are compatible. Shearer combines respect for nuance and complexity with rigorous scholarship to give a fascinating account of the role that Truman Smith played in the lead-up to World War II. As a head military attaché in Berlin, he provided expert intelligence on the Nazi military buildup only to have it ignored at the highest levels, and his association with Lindbergh during this era led to his embroilment in political rivalries that undermined his credibility. The narrative of “political polarization and demonization of ideological opponents” that Shearer presents is interesting in itself, and, as he concludes, it also has “an oddly familiar ring to those of us accustomed to the American news media markets of our own times.” Shearer’s essay presents further hope for the future of the humanities in educating our honors students, interpreting our world, understanding complex ideas, and moving toward a better society.





# Journal

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OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

FORUM ON  
HONORS AND THE FUTURE  
OF THE HUMANITIES



# The Humanities Are Dead! Long Live the Humanities!

LARRY ANDREWS

Kent State University

The humanities have everything to do with the human condition, understanding human nature and human problems.

—NEH *Overview* Fact Sheet

**T**he academic disciplines and values of the humanities in western cultures run from the Greek trivium—grammar, logic, rhetoric—to modern-day studies in history, philosophy, religious studies, literature, languages, art history, and some interdisciplinary studies. What is their future, and what is their relationship to honors education? Are the humanities dying or dead?

Performing a Google search for “Humanities Are Dead” yields a number of arguments on both sides, from a 2010 article series in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* with subsequent blogposts to opinion pieces in the *New York Times* and *Huffington Post*. There is even a high-school senior’s award-winning play of that title performed at the Dobama Theatre in Cleveland this summer in my neck of the woods. My favorite is an online andytown post of June 24, 2013:

Here's an idea: let's put a one year moratorium on any "death of the humanities" articles, either by outsiders or insiders. I want every academic or employee of a university out there to agree not to participate in this seemingly weekly emerging body of texts. I want senior academics to stop telling people that they would never do what they did if they had to do it now. I want newspapers to stop printing them as a way of fueling a flame with questionable statistics and highly generalized hypotheses based on personal experience. And I want the headlines of these articles to be less provocative and more honest; let's stay away from "The Decline and Fall of the English Major." After a year, instead of coming to quick judgments, we'll talk about what we've learned.

Now that this one-year moratorium has expired, of course, I can write this essay and use this title.

## **OBITUARY: THE LAMENT**

Comics on television routinely tell jokes about the epitome of a useless education, namely a major in comparative literature (my field)—substitute English or philosophy. Universities are touting the professional majors and the pragmatic value of a college education. Liberal arts colleges are adding master's programs in professional fields in order to stay afloat. STEM projects, and the dollars to support them, abound. For two decades the glut of PhDs in English in a poor job market has caused some academics to warn that graduating so many is immoral. Higher education is more and more run as a big business, and boards of trustees hiring a president or even a provost look to the CEO as a model. Administrative talk teems with terms such as, pardon the expression, "productivity," "stakeholders," "learning outcomes," and "data-driven decision-making." Meanwhile, public schools are "teaching to the test" more than they are developing critical thinking and creative imagination. Making teachers and administrators, their jobs on the line, responsible for student "success" has even encouraged cheating via changing test results.

Government research funding? The National Science Foundation reports an appropriation of *c.* \$7.2 billion while the National Endowment for the Humanities reports \$146 million, a ratio of nearly 50:1. The NEH funding is the lowest in constant dollars since 1971 (National Alliance for the Humanities), and the National Endowment for the Arts reports that its funding has also remained flat this year at about the same level as the NEH. For FY 2013,

NEH grant applicants requested \$480 million, and only about 30% of this amount could be granted (National Alliance for the Humanities). In contrast to NEH's flat budget again this year, the NSF reports that its appropriation rose by 4.2%, or \$287.8 million.

Outside academia the qualitative signs of humanities life are moribund. The fourth estate has proliferated into increasingly specialized magazine niches, and newspapers have lost readership and funding. Remaining print news sources have descended into "info-bits" and have dumbed down formerly thoughtful and well-researched journalistic essays to a form digestible by readers with a limited attention span. Television news programs suffer the same infection and either repeat the same lead stories and video footage endlessly or muck around in pop-culture trivia. Online blogs and opinion sites cater to the multi-tasking, thumb-numbing habits of smart-phone users.

Which leads us to social media. How did the pejorative term "computer virus" transmogrify into the celebratory "going viral"? YouTube has created instant pop stars before they have the maturity to handle fame. Texting has replaced talking. We used to worry that the compulsion to photograph one's experiences was replacing the ability to enjoy the experience in the present. Now "selfies" have carried the process one step further. Texting has created more opportunities for bullying and sexual exploitation.

Politics? Thanks to the Supreme Court, money dominates both elections and subsequent legislation. Policy decisions reflect ignorance of history. Party ideology reduces and oversimplifies, refusing to tolerate complexity and compromise. Important issues receive little reasoned debate (remember the importance of rhetoric in the trivium?). Sloganeering substitutes for thought.

The English language shudders before journalistic hyperbole, crude neologisms, textspeak (a crude neologism), and collective amnesia about the difference between "lie" and "lay." Libraries empty their shelves of books and bound periodicals as electronic resources and devices expand. Independent and even big-chain bookstores close shop, and publishing houses are pushed to the wall by the price negotiations of large-scale online distributors.

The litany (not of saints but of sinners) could continue through widening income inequality, racism, consumerist commodification, and reality shows' competition for disgust points. Are all of these the direct results of weakening humanities education? Well, plenty of other causes are available, but more and better humanities education might have prevented some of this decline.

## SUCCESSION: A CELEBRATION

Good news! We humanists are still here. If nothing else, departments of philosophy, English, languages, and history continue to be vital to core liberal education requirements at most institutions. As service departments they still have the opportunity to snag eager students into their majors by inspiration. As a freshman civil engineering student I was thus captured by an exciting freshman-English teacher who opened new perspectives on literature. After committing to English over music, I swallowed the lure of a visiting scholar of comparative literature who fed my hunger for more new perspectives, my xenophilia, and my love of languages, so I prepared for a doctorate in that field. I found that the humanities gave scope to my rational, analytic bent as well as my imagination and empathy. In turn, my colleagues and I have continued to find and nurture such ambitions. Years after my department, with the help of an endowed chair, established a new pragmatic graduate specialty in literacy, rhetoric, and social practice, graduate-student applicants continue to favor literary study. I am not one of those academics who would not choose the same field a second time. I reaffirm my choice.

In the world beyond academia, the qualitative life-pulse flutters and quickens. Journalism and social media also claim some good news. Al-Jazeera America and BBC America News and the PBS News Hour counteract the partisan and sensationalist television news channels. More and more journalists possess the language skills to communicate directly with people in crisis around the world. Social media allow millions of new voices to be heard around the globe. They offer a welcome though often bewildering array of discussions about ideas, events, and public issues. They feed revolutions that depose dictators and generate news coverage through on-the-spot photos and video. They help raise money instantly for worthy causes such as the Boston One Fund following the marathon bombing. They allow parents of a child with a rare terminal disorder to find a life-saving bone-marrow donor halfway around the world.

More good news is that local historical societies are cropping up or expanding their interests and funding base. Book clubs are proliferating, places where human beings discuss real books (in some cases, admittedly, audiobooks). The independent American Booksellers Association reports an increase in membership for the fifth straight year. The English language is rejuvenated and refreshed by the fun of invention, as it always has been. The availability of electronic research materials explains why I could gather

the citations in this essay on my desktop, partially with the remote aid of my university library. Humanities departments are constantly enlivened by new theories, pedagogies, and connections to the world of experience outside the academy.

English, history, philosophy, and language majors are finding all sorts of interesting and useful employment in law, government work, environmental organizations, international business, fundraising, public relations, human resources, and management generally. As CEOs keep telling us, employees with excellent communication skills—including writing—and a good work ethic are in high demand.

Enlightened thinking about the human condition feeds everything from the spread of recycling and organic farming to the celebration of diverse cultures and new forms of architecture and water wells for the poor.

## **HONORS AND THE HUMANITIES: A FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIP**

Honors education grew out of the liberal arts and sciences tradition, from Oxbridge and the Ivies into the 1920s at Swarthmore via its president Frank Aydelotte and thence, through his influence, into state universities in the 1930s. Honors programs continued to thrive under the aegis of colleges of arts and sciences, expanding significantly in the 1950s and developing into colleges of their own in the 1960s and beyond. From early on, student thesis work flourished in the sciences as well as the humanities, and later in the social sciences. Theses and honors courses in professional fields came much later, and coordinating such work continues to challenge honors administrators.

What is striking is how many early honors leaders came from the humanities. Aydelotte himself was an English professor. Of the forty-eight presidents of NCHC, thirty-three, or 69%, have come from the humanities. Of these, twenty came out of English departments, another four came from the closely related fields of comparative literature and languages, and six were historians. Some of the English faculty founded their honors programs—e.g., Dudley Wynn (University of New Mexico), John Portz (University of Maryland), and Ada Long (University of Alabama at Birmingham). Of the fourteen non-humanities presidents, eight were social scientists and one a music faculty member. Data about disciplinary fields of current honors administrators are not readily available, but, in a 1996 article in the *Journal of Higher Education* Gordon and Gary Shepherd reported on a 1991 survey of 173 honors administrators, the large majority of whom were NCHC members. The disciplinary breakdown of these directors was 79% humanities and social sciences (307).

Interestingly, this study, focusing on attitudes about war, found that honors faculty were more opposed to the Vietnam and Gulf wars and more likely to participate in protests than the random sampling of over six hundred other faculty (306). A specific breakdown for and within the humanities occurs in Ada Long's *A Handbook for Honors Administrators*. In her 1992 survey of NCHC-member honors administrators, 131 of the 136 respondents specified their academic disciplines. Sixty-seven, or 51%, came from traditional humanities, with English in the lead at twenty-nine and history second at fourteen. Another five came from arts or interdisciplinary studies (92).

Certainly honors administrators from all fields have served their programs and colleges admirably; my own college has been served well by deans from chemistry, geology, political science, and economics as well as English. Nevertheless, humanities faculty have been particularly drawn to honors work, suggesting a special connection. Honors education and the humanities share core values, including the importance of deep, sustained reading. Students of history, literature, and philosophy confront complex and demanding texts and develop sophisticated methods of analyzing these texts. A hallmark of honors education is that students experience primary materials of study, reading original texts in all sorts of fields. Both humanities and honors value not only high levels of reading skill but thoughtful responses to texts and an ability to integrate them into broader knowledge, reaching toward not just learning but wisdom. Such habits run counter to the mindless consumption of infobits.

Both honors and the humanities value questing and questioning minds and require time for reflection and synthesis. Students of humanities wrestle with universal problems of human experience, and we ask honors students to do the same. Lively in-class discussion and debate characterize the generally small classes in both humanities and honors. Probing issues outside class leads in both cases to essay writing. Testing in class demands thoughtful, synthesizing essay responses rather than multiple-choice check-offs and leads to the good writing that is needed more than ever in the workplace.

Both honors and the humanities nurture a tolerance for ambiguity and a recognition of complexity and context. Understanding global economics and politics requires seeing the big picture, including the historical background behind the current particular. Sorting out moral conflicts, including conflicts between two goods, calls for serious mental energy. Immersion in imaginative literature helps students grow large inside with participation in the boundless range of human characters and human experience. Small wonder that students



in both honors and the humanities are less satisfied by the shallow stream of entertainment media when they have dipped into the Pierian Spring.

Finally, I suspect that humanities faculty bring to honors programs an overweening intellectual ambition. English professors are notorious for dipping into other fields and thinking that their ken stretches over the whole intellectual domain. Expressed in a more kindly fashion, they (we, I) suffer from an endless appetite for exploration. They are less condemned to specialization than many of their colleagues in other fields. Delighting in the fact that they always have more books to read and more ideas to engage, they also seek to reach out to the social sciences, sciences, and even professional studies. Reared in the liberal arts and sciences, they wish to share their own sponge-like absorption of ever wider knowledge with bright students. Where better to do this than in an honors program? In other words, humanities faculty, admittedly less trammled by large grants and labs to maintain than the scientists, seem temperamentally suited to honors work. Their emphasis on the qualitative rather than the quantitative has drawn many of them into the challenging and very human intellectual work of honors administration and pedagogy. Fortunately, the humanities have been, and continue to be, a generous gift to honors education.

With rich Victorian eloquence, Cardinal Newman defined what the humanities have to offer—and perhaps what honors education has to offer—as he defined the aims of a university education (albeit influenced by the cultural ideal of the English gentleman). A university education, he writes,

. . . aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the intercourse of private life. It is the education which gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them. It teaches him to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a skein of thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant. It prepares him to fill any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility. It shows him how to accommodate himself to others, how to throw himself into their state of mind, how to bring before them his own, how to influence them, how to come to an understanding with them, how to bear with them. He is at home in

any society, he has common ground with every class; he knows when to speak and when to be silent; he is able to converse, he is able to listen; he can ask a question pertinently, and gain a lesson seasonably, when he has nothing to impart himself; he is ever ready, yet never in the way; he is a pleasant companion, and a comrade you can depend upon; he knows when to be serious and when to trifle, and he has a sure tact which enables him to trifle with gracefulness and to be serious with effect. He has the repose of a mind which lives in itself, while it lives in the world, and which has resources for its happiness at home when it cannot go abroad. He has a gift which serves him in public, and supports him in retirement, without which good fortune is but vulgar, and with which failure and disappointment have a charm. The art which tends to make a man all this, is in the object which it pursues as useful as the art of wealth or the art of health, though it is less susceptible of method, and less tangible, less certain, less complete in its result. (134–35)

Enough said.

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# Song of The Disrupted

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## 1.

I am, by trade and training, a poet. By day, I serve as Writer in Residence in the university honors program of a flagship state university. My courses are inquiries into literature and culture, and my students and I, collectively, pursue these through writing. In other words, I am a humanities native nestled within the honors world. And, while I write books about poetry, art, and other cultural matters, the honors community that I inhabit, at least in my part of the country, is overwhelmingly populated with young engineers and scientists.

With the corporatization of the American university, a trend in which curriculum is crowd-sourced, where budgets are set according to outside demand rather than to a compass of guiding values, where the sciences reign and “assets are monetized,” I sing from a place of vulnerability and rarity. But, sometimes, the stronger the cage, the more robust the song.

Poets, you see, thrive on that.

## 2.

We've witnessed it before: the ascendance of science, the worship of machinery, the surge of technological innovation. With the trend march our honors students and, in the stampede, lost are the humanists. Sputnik, mainframes, mobile devices—follow that trajectory for half a century and watch the engineers and scientists tinker in the labs; see them looking at screens and moving about in the glimmering online world where “gamification” creates new versions of the factory floor while our humanities fans are still wandering the museums outside.

Around us, culture production is surging. In my field, more venues for publishing fiction and poetry exist now than ever before. MFA creative writing programs are turning out thousands of writers a year while fewer people are buying books. Theaters may be losing audiences, but YouTube has the whole planet watching. Our old institutions are catching on. “Let the young curate their own shows. Let their bands play in the halls,” say the art museums—that way, they'll have something besides the Impressionist exhibits to keep the spaces alive.

While production is rising (see how I'm sucked into using factory terminology?), analysis is dropping off. More people, according to the National Endowment for the Arts, are writing poetry than reading it.

Will honors students be part of inventing and contextualizing our future cultures? Will our students be rolling out those thin fabrics of artistic material only to see others walk over them, onto the next thing? “Tread softly because you tread on my dreams” sounds so feeble right now. Poor Yeats.

## 3.

This little essay-contraption comes to you in thirteen segments, a modest takeoff of Wallace Stevens' great poem “Thirteen Ways of Looking at A Blackbird.” The poem may be better known for the art and arguments created in its wake than for the original. As you see, I am joining the mimeticists in hopes of creating some revelation through splintered vision.

In the poem, Stevens displays a blackbird in a tree, then cuts language to its core, and uses metaphysics to drive the whole situation. The blackbird is a thing and the idea of a thing:

I was of three minds,  
Like a tree  
In which there are three blackbirds.

And the poet/speaker is involved in knowing consciousness and artistic thinking just as he is a part of the known world:

I know noble accents  
 And lucid, inescapable rhythms;  
 But I know, too,  
 That the blackbird is involved  
 In what I know.

The poem pays attention to the glimpse rather than the resolution.

#### 4.

On a typical Wednesday, we read applications for admission to our university's honors program. We look through the stacks until someone says, "A humanities person!" And then we say, "Ah good." These moments are rare. We celebrate the culture aficionado, the philosopher, the poet, the painter, the historian, and the dramatist. When we come across one, we pause as though we have found an honest and holy priest wandering in the conclave.

Oh medievalist in our ear-bud world, from whence have you come? Oh oil painter of portraits, where did you find the hours to pursue such a lost and exquisite craft?

In our ranks, they are elevated.

#### 5.

"Among the Disrupted," a *New York Times Book Review* essay, is Leon Wieseltier's extended howl about the death of the humanities. In business, "disruption" is the latest buzzword. It sounds mischievous, fun, and adventurous. People like to use that word. Wieseltier says that we humanities people, the writers and the documenters of culture, are "the disrupted."

Disruption, in this case, is abusive, full of "theories and practices that flatten and shrink and chill the human subject." To Wieseltier, who sees this phenomenon as a condition in which "the humanities are disparaged as soft and impractical and insufficiently new," the humanist is "the dissenter." All around us the innovators are innovating, clicking together platforms and models and discoveries and cures. To this, he says: "Never mind the platforms. Our solemn responsibility is for the substance."

He means the substance of being alive, of being human.

To the disrupted, the adjunct, the knocked-aside, the forever-renting, the out-of-work bookseller, the broke painters of paintings and spinners of

resonant theories and conjectures and connections, I say this: The sifters and the sorters, our aggregators of bigger and bigger data, need theater to remind them of the parodies in which they live. The flood of images and the reduction of analysis crave philosophy and the arc of historical insight.

Otherwise, we are all activity and no values.

## 6.

My current students are from the Prompt Generation. Trained for the quick response rather than the engaged reflection, prepared to flinch rather than to think through an idea, these students are incredibly efficient producers of the five-paragraph essay and the “Three-reasons-why” PowerPoint deck.

What about writing as method of thinking? And what of the artistry of a mind upon some subject matter? What of the sustained encounter? How might we keep our attention when the machine is dinging with email and links to gifs and Vimeo clips and Facebook updates?

This tribe of responders-to-the-prompt conceives of an argument ahead of time. Writing is a way of packaging what one already knows. Instead of pushing off through the seas of articulation, reconsidering, revising and then moving into action, my students smile, obediently, and say, “A rubric please.”

## 7.

Last Monday, during office hours, I greeted five students who dropped in. At first, things seemed casual. Then, three of them wanted letters of recommendation to medical school. *Is it that time of year again?* One wanted a letter of reference for a position as a researcher in a lab, and the last one was letting me know that he was a business major who found my assignments “pretty out of the box.”

I suggested this to each one of them: “Read *Citizen*, Claudia Rankine’s new book. It claims to be a poetry book, but it’s really a series of tiny essays about living in America.”

## 8.

*The Handmaidens Argument*: In this, we sell the humanities as a group of servants who wander the metallic, shiny showrooms of science and engineering. Humanities handmaidens staff the HR Department or the uncompensated Sales Team of a STEM startup. The skills of the handmaiden



are those of the servant in support of the master. The handmaiden makes the master feel good.

To process the events and history of the world around us—these are crafts of domestication, activities for handmaidens. Handmaidens are female. They have the manners of those seated in beautiful restaurants with pressed linens and endless wine lists, places where the handmaidens’ CEOs wipe their chins and whisper of the city’s latest Impressionist exhibit.

To our honors students, the handmaiden says this: “The humanities teach you to think, to argue, to document, and to articulate. These are softer skills that you use to help with the real work of STEM.”

## 9.

“The contrary insistence that the glories of art and thought are not evolutionary adaptations, or that the mind is not the brain, or that love is not just biology’s bait for sex, now amounts to a kind of heresy,” screams Wieseltier. When I hear the handmaidens singing about STEAM as a revision of STEM, (Science Technology **ARTS** Engineering and Math), I, too, want to scream. STEAM is a lot of hot air.

## 10.

The *For Its Own Sake Argument*: Humanities offers an array of pursuits that are not, on the whole, useful. They do not translate directly into jobs. But we study the humanities because they are beautiful. They have their own merit. Because they are unrewarded by the marketplace, they are intrinsically valuable.

The *For Posterity and Heritage Argument*: We’ve always studied these things; let’s keep studying them. We owe the past something. We are the culture keepers. We will carry this on and embed our own perspectives into culture, layering our human record of experience into the world around us.

## 11.

The *Helen Vendler Argument*: Vendler is a Harvard professor and poetry scholar who served on the Admissions Committee at Harvard. After that experience, she mourned the lack of poets, writers, artists, musicians and other humanities folk admitted to the college. She wrote a *Harvard Magazine* article about this.

In it, Vendler offers the Nationalist Perspective. “Universities are the principal educators, now, of men and women alike, and they produce the makers of culture,” she writes. “Makers of culture last longer in public memory than members of Parliament, representatives, and senators; they modify the mind of their century more, in general, than elected officials. They make the reputation of a country.”

And, as a fan of the Handmaiden, Vendler also claims that “With a larger supply of the sort of creativity that yields books and arts, fellow-students whose creativity leans toward scientific experimentation or mathematical speculation will benefit not only from seeing an alternative style of life and thought but also from the sort of intellectual conversation native to writers, composers, painters.”

Indeed, Helen Vendler is the Handmaiden Nationalist who believes that, if Harvard admits more poets and composers, America will be indebted to Harvard: “America will, in the end, be grateful to us for giving her original philosophers, critics, and artists; and we can let the world see that just as we prize physicians and scientists and lawyers and judges and economists, we also are proud of our future novelists, poets, composers, and critics, who, although they must follow a rather lonely and highly individual path, are indispensable contributors to our nation’s history and reputation.”

Would it be too presumptuous to substitute “Honors Programs” for the word “Harvard”?

Something feels a bit off about the whole thing.

## 12.

Culture is rooted in stories. Both science and the humanities rely upon narrative arcs: rising action, climaxes, and denouements. In science, we ask, “What’s going on?” Or “Why is that happening?” Then, we conjecture: “This might be what’s going on.” And we test it. At the climax, we find out. Then we state the results.

In the humanities, we follow that arc too: “How did this happen?” “What does it mean?” “How does it guide us to understanding?” “What does it tell us about the human experience?”

Finding out anything is a journey. Being alive is a journey. Everything is enmeshed.

**13.**

If you put a poet in the chair, you will expect to hear singing. But if you are listening closely, you might hear more. Disquiet, truth-telling, off rhymes. Writing does not thrive if it stays dutiful. Poems are neither platform nor data.

Like dialogue, writing is the stuffing between all encounters, present and past. Between the digital and the sky, between the poet and the software engineer, between the music from the grand hall and the tweets of a disloyal fan, we live, the disrupted. Join us.

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## Honors and the Humanities: Necessary as Air and Water

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Larry Andrews' brief but substantive essay covers the waterfront. In it, he ranges from the health of the humanities to Cardinal Newman's inspiring vision of what the humanities do to bring out the best and the most exaltedly human in each of us. The essay renews in me the notion that honors ought to hold steady in its commitment to making sure that students, specifically the increasing number of students for whom college may seem primarily a means of assuring future financial stability, have more than a passing acquaintance with the humanities and the rest of the liberal arts, the competencies they teach, and the questions with which they engage.

The importance of the humanities has come up for debate, as Andrews' summarizes so succinctly. Similarly, honors may seem frivolous, elitist, and rear-guard in a cultural environment that maintains that post-secondary education ought to create job-ready graduates. At the yearly meeting of the National Collegiate honors Council, it is almost a given that at any moment, in some session or in a hallway conversation, people are bemoaning the fact

that their own schools are questioning the expense of honors, the messiness of honors, and even the place of honors within the institution itself.

Further, as someone who attended a quasi-elite college and was told that there was no need for an honors program there because “all our students are honors students” and who is now an honors administrator at a broad-access regional institution where some colleagues wonder aloud about elitism, I know that the question about the place of honors is a vexed one. We may, however, have the collective energy, wisdom, and idealism needed to defend both honors and the humanities and to prepare a compelling case that those least likely to be steered to either “h” are those who might best be served by them. Far from being elitist, both honors and the humanities protect the equalizing function of higher education.

The recent American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) publication *America’s Unmet Promise: the Imperative for Equity in Higher Education* by Keith Witham et al. traces the intersection of class, race, and access to higher education and discusses the directions in which students move (or are moved) once they enter post-secondary education; it notes that simply having access to college enrollment does not mean that each student has an educational experience to that of other students. For example, reporting that in 2012 “70.2 percent of African American community college students were enrolled in a career/technical education program, compared to 67.9 percent of white community college students, 60.7 percent of Asian community college students, and 64.1 percent of Latino college students,” the authors suggest that, despite the fact that such programs may well offer good outcomes in the form of job preparation and employment, “the disproportionate enrollment of historically disadvantaged populations in these programs has the potential to limit opportunities for transfer to four-year institutions, thereby contributing to existing disparities in bachelor’s degree attainment for these groups” (Witham et al. 18–19).

The brief by Witham et al. cites research indicating that individuals with college education “are more likely than those with just a high school diploma to have consistent health insurance coverage and healthy lifestyles that reduce reliance on social and healthcare services” (6). The study also notes that “college graduates are almost twice as likely to vote as those with just a high school diploma, are much more likely to consider themselves informed about current political issues, and are more likely to participate in volunteer activities” (6). Once again, research finds that postsecondary education provides benefits that extend beyond job prospects and implies, at least to me,

that we in higher education are called to assert as persuasively as possible that humanistic study is required for the well-being of a robust democracy and an engaged citizenry.

We in honors need to be making the case for humanities. Given data such as that found in the AAC&U's most recent employer survey, which substantiates the fact that "the types of problem-solving and analytical thinking skills students gain through undergraduate education are more important than the specific major or program in which they earn a degree" (Witham et al. 6), we must convince colleagues, students, and potential students that a curriculum requiring reading, thinking, writing, and arguing about what we might call eternal questions is good not only for the soul but the transcript and the résumé. We should argue as well that students whose coursework might end after two years are more in need than other students of an educational experience that provides them with the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in ways other than those inculcated by their more technical studies. If students are going to complete their higher education with an associate's degree, then that degree should equip them with the competencies and intellectual skills required of citizens, community members, and voters.

I suggest that honors should overreach, as do the English professors of Andrews's article. We should, for example, establish robust articulation agreements between community college honors and the programs of four-year schools to help assure that vocational/technical students in two-year schools have an honors curriculum that prepares them fully for the option of transfer to a four-year school and the positive economic, civic, and social outcomes associated with a baccalaureate degree. Given the finding by Burning Glass that "employers are seeking a bachelor's degree for jobs that formerly required less education, even when the actual skills required haven't changed or when this makes the position harder to fill," students who are currently ending their studies with associates degrees are increasingly likely to find themselves back in the classroom again, strengthening the case for robust linkages between two- and four-year institutions.

Honors programs and colleges seem to me as necessary as clean water and clean air. To function well, individually and as a democracy, we must each have access to questions, competencies, ideas, and experiences beyond the pressing issue of how we will provide a salary to support ourselves. Going beyond our material needs, such questions—and our intersection with others who are asking and answering them—help us understand precisely what we are seeking to preserve and protect with our economic efforts. They help us

to see our mission and to proceed through our lives and our interactions with the world as something other than employees. These endeavors free us while also showing us our shackles and allowing us to ask ourselves how we might pick their lock.

Let us then defang arguments about the irrelevance of the humanities and the elitism of honors by making a concerted effort to convince precisely those students and colleagues who are least likely to be convinced that we are designed for them. Doing so requires outreach and faith. Even my initial efforts at hammering out an articulation agreement with a local community college require a great deal of learning about the real and human effects of educational inequality and inequity. Quite possibly the honors program I direct will need to re-examine some of its own most sacred assumptions about merit and educational attainment in order to keep promises to students whom we hope to serve.

Still, such an effort is worthwhile both practically and ethically. Engaging students who would otherwise not have much access to humanistic study or to honors education broadens our constituency beyond the bounds our critics think we set for ourselves; further, and perhaps most importantly, it helps us fulfill our mandate to liberate minds and cultivate an educated democracy. Answering critics by broadening our scope and showing our centrality allows us to survive and to continue our cultivation of individual lives and a robust society.

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# **“The Endless Appetite”: Honors Education and the Spirit of the Humanities**

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Most thought-provoking for our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking.

—Martin Heidegger

**I**n a world that no longer privileges thinking, we might need to consider what we are asking of our students—and why—when we ask them to think. What follows is a manifesto of how honors education can serve as a resistant force against the increasing encroachment of a wholly utilitarian concept of education. With the costs of higher education on the rise, the call to justify getting a college degree has been indissolubly linked to the ability to obtain a job once the student graduates. What has been lost along the way is the justification of getting an education for the sake of enriching one’s life and one’s community, a model of education that is increasingly available only to the privileged. The humanities have taken the brunt of criticism aimed at such

a justification, but the jobs-based model that so preoccupies social discourse is a misguided objective that will eventually turn our work force into semi-literate specialists whose main task is to keep the economy moving.

In his 1854 novel *Hard Times*, Charles Dickens presents his readers with the figure of Mr. Gradgrind, a man interested in nothing but the facts. “Now what I want is, Facts. Teach these little boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else” (7). Those of us who have read *Hard Times* know that Gradgrind’s educational philosophy and practices have disastrous results for his children, Louisa and Tom, and surely we can assume that contemporary thinking about education, especially with emphasis on the STEM initiative, is a twenty-first-century echo of Gradgrind’s declaration. Mr. Gradgrind is not completely wrong; we need specialists who will be able to contribute to the work force and thus grow our economy. For a democracy to thrive, though, we must invest in a humanities-infused education that will give students a well-rounded, critical education, enabling them to become better, more productive citizens, and this is where honors education can play a vital role.

Honors colleges and programs across the country can pivot the discussion of educational value toward a more encompassing and enriching model by standing behind and reaffirming its core values, values that are firmly staked in interdisciplinary, critical, and reflective thinking practices. One need only attend any of the regional conferences in honors to see our students demonstrate these practices. Honors educators are in the position to move entire institutions in directions that individual departments and institutes cannot. Honors can reframe questions about the humanities through pedagogical theory *and* practices. Simply reframing the questions is not enough, though; we must push against the increasing tide of an educational system based on a business model.

Martha Nussbaum’s recent book *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* is a compelling indictment of the thinking that seeks to privilege a purely techno-scientific, skills-based curriculum at the cost of the humanities. Nussbaum does not single out the education system of the United States but argues that the current crisis felt by the humanities is global:

Thirsty for national profit, nations, and their systems of education, are heedlessly discarding skills that are needed to keep democracies alive. If this trend continues, nations all over the world will soon be producing generations of useful machines, rather than complete citizens

who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person's sufferings and achievements. (2)

Nussbaum's analysis is not hyperbolic hysteria but a no-holds-barred, honest analysis of where we are heading in higher education. The current educational climate does not privilege thinking but instead seeks to populate a workforce with highly skilled and obedient men and women. Nussbaum goes on to add, "The future of the world's democracies hangs in the balance" (2). Her language is strong but again warranted given the current state of higher education and the perilous state of the humanities in particular.

If we continue to equate education with use value, then we are headed toward an intellectual and creative abyss. This new conception of education sacrifices the spirit of the humanities, which, because it cannot be measured, has no value in scientific discourse. Designing rubrics that can measure the spirit of the humanities is a near-impossible task, yet that spirit can and does manifest itself even in courses that reside outside the supposed territory of the humanities. Courses in mathematics, economics, science, and engineering, to name just a few, enhance and are enhanced by traditional humanities courses. Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* is an excellent example of how this type of enhancement occurs. Piketty's analysis of capital and the symptoms of inequality resulting from it draws on his reading of nineteenth-century literature, especially the novels of Jane Austen and Honoré de Balzac. This use of literature as hard data should be cause for celebration in a world where the novel is too often considered an endangered species. Honors education can take the lead in demonstrating precisely how all disciplines are infused by the spirit of the humanities beyond traditional humanities courses.

The question being asked, mostly by the middle class and especially by those who are sending their children off to college when they themselves did not attend, is "What value does the humanities have in an already competitive job market?" This notion of "value" implies a paradigm of exchange. In other words, the student attends college in order to negotiate the value of her degree in the job market. In a market context, the value of the humanities has been called into question of late, especially as the administrative and curricular paradigm for colleges and universities moves closer to a business model. The question becomes one of use-value pure and simple: a degree in the humanities has value only if it can be exchanged for steady employment.

By privileging use value in education, we do grave harm to our students and communities. The time has passed when we consider colleges and

universities, other than a select few, to be centers of thought. The current trend in higher education is turning universities and colleges into skills-based training centers, substituting competencies for knowledge. However, as anyone who teaches in the humanities knows, vital skills are practiced and refined in our courses.

Honors programs are a model of what the humanities can teach us. An honors curriculum promotes a willingness to push the boundaries of how we think about educational value, moving us beyond use value and toward exploring epistemological questions. While an honors credential on a student's transcript can and should be a boon for those entering the work force, this boon does not define us. At the core of an honors education is a solid foundation in the humanities, one that values smaller classes, critical discussion, and close readings of primary texts. C. Grey Austin asserts in his monograph *Honors Programs: Development, Review, and Revitalization* that honors education serves the most curious students. "The intended outcome of an honors education is a knowledgeable *and* effective person" (13). To arrive at such a person, we promote and engage in educational practices that allow students to ask the big questions that confront society writ large, using educational models that, as Austin writes, include the "Socratic dialogue, the Oxford tutorial, the German seminar and the Guild apprenticeship . . ." (10). The exchange of ideas that occurs within such models does more to shape a student's mind than checking off competencies. Reading and analyzing Nabokov may not help students get a job but will almost certainly transform them, making them better people and more critical thinkers about the nature of language.

In his lead essay, Larry Andrews rightly points out the value of careful reading that is crucial to honors and the humanities:

A hallmark of honors education is that students experience primary materials of study, reading original texts in all sorts of fields. Both humanities and honors value not only high levels of reading skill but thoughtful responses to texts and an ability to integrate them into broader knowledge, reaching toward not just learning but wisdom.

Like Austin, Andrews makes the crucial point that the path to wisdom is what we are staking out in honors education. This path does not cancel out a competency-based education but should allow for an errancy, a wandering into thought. Andrews concludes, "Both honors and the humanities nurture a tolerance for ambiguity and a recognition of complexity and context." If we continue on our current business-model path, we will eventually arrive at a

system that is not only devoid of wisdom or the capacity to achieve it but that dismisses its importance. Waiting to meet us at the gates of this educational model will be the ghost of Mr. Gradgrind.

With the value of wisdom foremost in our minds, honors can be a celebration of the imagination and of what it means to be human. We can achieve this value in collaboration with other STEM-based disciplines by cultivating an omnivorous quest or, as Andrews phrases it, "an endless appetite for exploration." Honors students have the best chance at becoming critical and thoughtful citizens in the contemporary world precisely because honors allows them to learn through close reading and rigorous discussion in an interdisciplinary milieu that draws on a wide range of institutional resources.

In *The Educated Imagination*, Northrop Frye makes the following declaration: "The fundamental job of the imagination in ordinary life, then, is to produce, out of the society we have to live in, a vision of the society we want to live in" (140). The essential task of educators is to cultivate the imagination in profound ways that travel far beyond that of simple job training. While higher education should provide skills that will be useful in the workplace, it should not sacrifice careful study in the humanities and thus foreclose on the future of democracy. If the United States is to compete with the rest of the world in education, then we must move beyond the mentality of education as only a means to a better job. We get the society we deserve, and, if we have a society filled with nothing more than skilled workers and middle-managers, then no one will be able to lead us into the future in meaningful and thought-provoking ways.

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## Homo sapiens, All Too Homo sapiens: Wise Man, All Too Human

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Outside of Carlsbad, New Mexico, a mere three hundred miles from the University of New Mexico where I teach, is the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). This deep, geologic storehouse will entomb nuclear weapons waste for the next 10,000 years. The transuranic elements—elements with an atomic number of 92, uranium, or higher—are unstable and radioactive, and they decay at a half-life rate that makes them dangerous environmental contaminants. During the planning phase of the WIPP's construction, the Department of Energy hired archaeologists, historians, linguists, materials scientists, and science fiction writers to address questions such as the one paraphrased here: How should we communicate radioactive danger to Earth-dwellers after five hundred generations of linguistic variation? (Piller). How can we communicate that this repository is not a monument filled with treasure to the Cyborg Indiana Jones who may come a thousand years hence?

They drew plans for a field of twenty-five-foot tall granite pillars surrounding a roofless granite room positioned above the waste site. At the heart of this ominous landscape, a wanderer would find warnings and more information.

A section of it reads: “We considered ourselves to be a powerful culture. This is not a place of honor. . . . Nothing valued is here. . . . The danger is still present in your time, as it was in ours. . . . This place is best shunned and uninhabited” (Trauth, Hera, and Guzowsti, 139).

I mention the WIPP because, essentially, this government team was collaboratively writing a speculative fiction; to do so, they had to perform research, create elaborate scenarios of events that may or may not happen, and then develop strategies to cope with them. They brought together a team of experts from different fields to consider human curiosity and cross-cultural and -temporal communication. This team might sound a lot like the students in your honors seminar, and the project requires the kind of creative, interdisciplinary thinking that is present in a humanities-based honors education. This kind of education is what students need to begin solving the many serious problems we face today, including climate change, Ebola, and of course, the half-life of transuranic waste.

The emphasis on STEM education should not be interpreted as an omen of the death of humanities; art, literature, history, and philosophy can inform and enlighten STEM studies if the walls of academic silos are broken down and taught in combination. As the famous essayist and humanist Michel de Montaigne said:

A tutor must demand an account not just of the words of his lesson, but of their meaning and substance, and must judge of its benefit to his pupil by the evidence not of the lad’s memory but of his life. He must make him consider what he has just learnt from a hundred points of view and apply it to as many different subjects. . . . (55)

Where the physical universe collides with the fanciful and flawed human experience of life, there is creative energy, be it in scientific research or creative writing. Both are meant to birth new knowledge, rouse questions, explore our relationship with the world, employ the senses, test ideas, and better our understanding of life and the human experience. The humanities can easily combine with other disciplines through applied speculation.

A strategy to combine might be, for instance, to adapt the writing core to an interdisciplinary, experiential course that uses science as the lens through which students analyze and apply literary devices. Many fine examples of creative writing use science as a way to access the personal, bizarre, and blemished experience of living. For instance, Lydia Millet’s *Love in Infant Monkeys* is a collection of short stories that investigate the connection between the human



and animal worlds, often through famous researchers and their encounters with laboratory animals.

Emulating these works, students communicate information, conflict, and awe of scientific endeavors. They learn to understand the diction of science, integrate concepts and theories as metaphors, and recreate the conflict and climactic potential in the research process. Students unfamiliar with scientific research can realize that it is more than Bunsen burners and bubbling flasks, swiveling CGI DNA on computer monitors, or fruit flies mutating in swarms. They also learn that the settings of research may include archaeological sites, microwave laboratories, or JAMA's archives, but more often than not the setting is a computer program logging and crunching data. Creating short stories based on scientific articles, they practice reading and understanding articles, conveying complex ideas, building conclusions in a way similar to a literature review, and extrapolating information to imagine implications.

Just as young humanists can benefit from developing a greater understanding of science, so too can young scientists benefit from applying communications to science. The former honors student Carl Sagan once said, "Science is much more than a body of knowledge. It is a way of thinking." Typically, underclassmen have not yet been presented with the opportunity to explore science as a way of thinking. When students are only used to the generalization of knowledge—to broad theories and scaffolds of equations without the humanistic foundation of science education—the idea of specializing in the sexual selection of wild radishes is perplexing and exasperating. They have had neither the opportunity to embrace the scientific mysticism that we associate with gaining new knowledge—"Eureka!" cried Archimedes—nor the daily toil of observation, entering data, computing, or cleaning the laboratory; instead, their courses at the lower levels have focused on memorization of facts, solving known problems, and stratified, sequential rehearsal. At the same time underclassmen are being introduced to the terms, conventions, and methods that they will apply during the course of their study, they should be introduced to science as a process of inquiry, couched in uncertainty, where unknowns exist.

At a writing conference last year, the poet H. L. Hix gave a presentation on Einstein's thought experiments as a kind of flash fiction. Hix asserted that Einstein was able to get colleagues and the general population to accept and understand aspects of theoretical physics by tapping into the power of narrative. Einstein gave examples such as this one: if you're riding in the dining car of a train going the speed of light, and you drop a matchbook with a phone

number on it, then it falls to Earth in a parabolic curve. Hix points out that Einstein's situation is fictional; these fictions illuminate assumptions that may be contrary to our lived experience. He uses narrative to unfurl his argument: because we are trained to understand how narrative consequences work, we understand how the science works. Something false has demonstrated something true. The laboratory is similar to, not identical with, the world we live in, so step into the laboratory, sterilize your hands, suspend your disbelief, and create the narrative necessities (controlled conditions, intracellular conflicts) that will allow us to view out existence with greater clarity.

One of the goals of an undergraduate education is to learn a discipline well enough to develop an educated worldview. A student should graduate with a way of understanding and analyzing the phenomena in their life and greater, global habitat. Different disciplines emphasize different ways of looking at the world: as an organism of power relationships, a set of outcomes dependent on historical precedence, a complex of interdependent systems, or the control of information through presentation. The transformation of a student's worldview, however, is difficult to assess. Far easier is checking bubbles on a Scantron sheet, but asking a student to achieve a predetermined correct answer is not the same as asking a student to understand, evaluate, or create something new in this world. I quote Montaigne again:

The bees steal from this flower and that, but afterwards turn their pilferings into honey, which is their own; it is thyme and marjoram no longer. So the pupil will transform and fuse together the passages that he borrows from others, to make of them something entirely his own; that is to say, his own judgment. His education, his labor, and his study have no other aim than to form this.

If we really want our students to be free thinkers instead of just BuzzFeed consumers, we need to continue giving them the interdisciplinary tools associated with the humanities: to be critical and speculative; to know historical connections to the present; to respect cultural differences; to consider the human condition. We need to teach them to develop both the questions and the answers. Soon they will have to be comfortable depositing our transuranic waste in a way that will protect our future selves from untold "what ifs."

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## Honors Composition: Humanity beyond the Humanities

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CHEMICAL ENGINEERING PROFESSOR: Writing is the most important skill that students can have.

ME: Then why do I work in the lowest-paid department on campus?

CHEMICAL ENGINEERING PROFESSOR: Even lower than art?

ME: Yes, even lower than art.

—a recent exchange during a break in interviewing prospective honors students

In “The Humanities Are Dead! Long Live the Humanities!” Larry Andrews argues that the humanities are essential to the core purpose and nature of honors education in promoting the foundations of academic curiosity and intellectual rigor. When he discusses the breadth and depth of contributions that humanities faculty have made to NCHC as an organization and to honors education in general, he states:

English professors are notorious for dipping into other fields and thinking that their ken stretches over the whole intellectual domain. Expressed in a more kindly fashion, they (we, I) suffer from an endless appetite for exploration. They are less condemned to specialization than many of their colleagues in other fields. Delighting in the fact that they always have more books to read and more ideas to engage, they also seek to reach out to the social sciences, sciences, and even professional studies. . . . Where better to do this than in an honors program?

As a professor of composition and technical communication, I have found that “dipping into other fields” is neither a form of disciplinary overreach nor a dilettante diversion but rather an integral part of my job. In a traditional English department, what I do is considered service teaching, providing a service to other departments and colleges rather than teaching English majors. Occasionally, I see an English, history, or philosophy major on my roster, with a smattering from the natural and social sciences, but I spend the majority of my instructional time working with students from pre-professional programs such as engineering, computer science, biomedical sciences, health care management and informatics, graphic design, and secondary education. My working with so many students, honors and non-honors alike, from a range of professional disciplines provides a unique perspective on the interdisciplinarity of college studies.

During application interviews and orientation activities, honors students learn that I am an English professor and inevitably begin to discuss their favorite canonical works, most in an honest effort to make a connection with their new teacher but some with a bent toward impressing or challenging me. When I politely reply that I do not teach literature classes, they are taken aback, usually uttering a brief, stunned “Oh” as if to say, “What is English if not literature?” In fact, I have no degrees in literature: I earned my bachelor’s degree in mass communications, my master’s degree in composition pedagogy, and my doctorate in rhetoric and professional communication. In my department, I am the only tenured faculty member with no literature degrees; even the outgoing writing program administrator and another colleague who specializes in technical writing have literature degrees in their backgrounds. When Andrews summarizes American culture’s current derision of careers in the humanities, he observes, “For two decades the glut of PhDs in English in a poor job market has caused some academics to warn that graduating so many is immoral.” Unlike some of my literature colleagues, I did not have a horrific

experience on the job market. I did not have to go through the interminable, intolerable MLA job search process more than once, nor did I have to accept non-tenure or part-time positions at multiple schools before landing a coveted tenure-track position. During my first, last, and only trip to MLA (in the pre-Skype era), I had nine hour-long interviews in two days, resulting in five campus visits and a choice of job offers. The pool of literature positions may have contracted appreciably during the last two decades, but I secured a writing position on my first venture into the marketplace.

I believe that my employability was founded in part on the interdisciplinary nature of my work, with technical writing in one hand and honors composition in the other. The first course I taught as a master's-level teaching assistant was honors composition; with help from the writing program administrator, I revived a moribund honors course that was on the books but had not been taught for years. As a doctoral candidate, I began teaching technical writing, which introduced me to a variety of majors from engineering and computing to animal science and pre-health career tracks of every stripe. In turn, I steered the focus of my honors composition course away from the stereotypical gun control/abortion/euthanasia style of generalized, topical writing toward more discipline-specific research and argumentation projects, which noticeably increased not only student engagement in the course but also subsequent completion of the research-based senior honors thesis project. With this desire to focus on quality undergraduate education, I was never interested in competing for a slot as a two-books-for-tenure superstar in a rhet/comp doctoral program. I wanted to work at a regional public institution with an honors program, such as the one I had attended, because I was confident in my ability to make a difference as a teacher while continuing to do honors composition research that might not have merited tenure at a traditional R1.

I also brought nonacademic writing experience to the table, and that work was interdisciplinary in nature as well. For my undergraduate internship in communications, I worked in the new business department of an advertising agency. My main responsibility was to write background reports on companies that the executives were interested in developing as clients. If they were making a pitch to The Medicine Shoppe, I would gather research on the pharmaceutical industry; if they were pitching a local Taco Bell franchiser, I would research the fast-food industry. Realizing that advertising was not the career track for me, I left that position after graduation, but when the agency asked me to stay a day to teach the two new interns how to write (as if one could

accomplish this feat in a single day), I decided to apply to graduate school in English with an eye toward consulting. While working on my doctorate, I took a consulting job with Sandia National Laboratories, where a partner and I worked on writing the manual for a software program entitled Explosive Release Atmospheric Dispersion; in the event that government and military officials could not prevent a device from detonating, they could use this software to predict where the fallout would go in the air, on land, and in the water. Although the pay for government contract work was obscenely high, I quickly grew weary of lying awake at night worrying about bombs exploding and wondering whether the nuclear physicists and HAZMAT-trained firefighters using the software would be able to decipher the help manual, so I decided to remain in the relatively safe confines of the classroom.

As an English teacher, I do not “suffer from an endless appetite for exploration”—I revel in it. I love to teach because I love to learn, whether it is LEED certification, ethical hacking, HIPAA regulations, or Adobe Creative Suite. When teachers say that they learn a great deal from their students, they are often met with eye rolling, sighs of disbelief, and a declaration that their job is to teach students, not be taught by them. I heartily disagree. My technical writing students must make the transition from academic writing for a grade to workplace writing in which they have to convey field-specific information effectively so that a real audience can make a decision or take a course of action. Similarly, my honors freshmen are building the writing skills that they will need to navigate writing and research projects in any discipline. Therefore, when my students can successfully explain their discipline-specific work to me and to classmates from different majors, when they have learned enough to have thoughtful discussions about topics from everyone’s majors, then I have achieved one of my main pedagogical objectives.

My favorite classical definition of rhetoric is Quintilian’s *vir bonus, dicendi peritus*, or “the good man speaking well.” I require the dreaded oral presentation in all of my classes in one form or another, whether individual or group, typically PowerPoint-based, to prepare for future presentations in the workplace or at professional conferences. I am also a proponent of the desks-in-a-circle, seminar-style format; for my honors composition classes, this takes the form of weekly discussions of short articles related to students’ research paper topics. As the weeks go by, students not only learn about each other’s majors, but they also get to know each other better as people, which in turn builds a strong honors community. Years later, students tell me how much they valued the discussions, that no one had asked for their opinions before or had encouraged them to explore so many different topics.



Occasionally, if the class proceeds with care, the discussion of an article will herald a life-altering event. Students have approached me, with trembling hands or with strong voices, stating that they need to change their majors; others have sat in my office in tears, worried about family pressures to follow or avoid particular career paths. Some discussions have led to extremely personal breakthroughs. Students have come out to the class, discussed their alcohol and drug addictions, and detailed their childhood cancer treatments. An article for Banned Books Week about parents wanting to remove a sex education book from a library prompted one especially brave young woman to share her story that she had given birth in high school but that her baby had died, a revelation that altered the barometric pressure in the classroom and forged a closer bond among the students, promoting more honest discussion and, I suspect, allowing the student a much-needed catharsis. At the end of the class period, I made sure to acknowledge the student's willingness to share her story before I beat a hasty retreat to my office, closed the door, and burst into tears. During these moments, I sometimes grumble to myself, "Math teachers don't have to deal with this," which is untrue to a certain extent. A compassionate teacher in any discipline can nurture students through times of crisis. The difference is that discussing the crisis is not an inherent part of the work in those classes: it is not solving a differential equation or titrating a sample or coding in C++.

Therein lies the humanity within the humanities: the kindness, the sympathy, the compassion; a *good person* speaking well.

Rhetoricians teach the Aristotelian triad of modes in appealing to an audience: *logos*, logic and reasoning; *pathos*, the emotions of the audience; and *ethos*, the character and credibility of the speaker. In my writing classes, I caution my students not to focus solely on facts to the exclusion of responsible appeals to emotion and ethics. Pre-medical students should, for example, take the time to listen carefully to their patients, a concept promoted by Columbia University's graduate program in Narrative Medicine. Similarly, engineers should think about the people who will be drinking their treated wastewater or driving on their bridges or living in their hurricane-zone buildings. Honors administrators and faculty consider students to be the leaders of the future in their disciplines of choice and strive to give them the tools to be responsible, ethical citizens. Fast-tracking students past their humanities courses deprives them of opportunities to develop their critical thinking and writing skills beyond those of an eighteen-year-old high school senior before they have to complete advanced projects in their majors, and it also limits them to trade-school coursework in increasingly narrow disciplinary specializations without

ANNMARIE GUZY

giving them valuable chances to discover the interdisciplinary connection—the human connection—among all majors. Development of mature critical thinking and writing skills takes both time and experience, and it should not be reduced to a checkmark on a graduation sheet.

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## Increased Awareness, Increased Appreciation

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Larry Andrews's article "The Humanities Are Dead! Long Live the Humanities!" addresses and solidifies the notion that, at least from the standpoint of academicians, the humanities are alive and well. We need to approach the matter from a student's viewpoint, however. Every university and community college that I know of requires some humanities study at least in the first two years, but it often ends with two courses for a two-year school and maybe three at a four-year institution. The claim by the Stanford Humanities Center that "The humanities can be described as the study of how people process and document the human experience" points to the necessity for awareness of other cultures and other people's experiences in a world of diverse populations. The lack of this awareness may be partly responsible for the ever increasing rate of terrorism and hate crimes. Certainly, those perpetrators seem to lack an awareness and appreciation of cultures other than their own.

What the world needs is more exposure to the humanities, which should be required at an earlier stage than high school or college. Some progress has been made in this direction, as noted by the DC Arts and Humanities Education Collective:

In 1998, representatives from DC Public Schools (DCPS), arts organizations, and charitable enterprises recognized a void and embraced a common goal: They wanted Washington's rich cultural resources to be accessible to all of the District's teachers and students, especially those in low-income neighborhoods.

Such a step in the right direction is feasible in a major city like Washington, D.C., which provides a vast and free wealth of access to cultural institutions, and all cities across the world should follow suit. However, the key problem is our grasp of the phrase "cultural awareness" with its assumption that all cultures feel the same as we do. As we are becoming more and more painfully (and fatally) aware, many countries have an avid desire to keep their cultures as insular as possible. They actively do not want exposure or understanding to anything that is "other." Our focus, then, not only in the U.S. but world-wide, should be creating discussions and pedagogies geared toward opening dialogues and engendering an understanding of the differences in our cultures. Often we are too centered on diversity as a buzzword, and, rather than just tolerance, we should be discussing acceptance and appreciation.

One of the most interesting components of this lack of cultural awareness was the subject of a recent *Morning Edition* on National Public Radio about the Charlie Hebdo incident. David Folkenflik pointed out that mockeries of religious figures or belief systems are often made out of ignorance and are a cultural insult to other groups of people. He argued that, if people were more culturally aware of what they are doing, international incidents could be avoided. He also pointed out that—because America has a more diverse population than, say, France—American publishers might be a bit more hesitant to publish material that is outright insulting to a religious or cultural community (*South Park* notwithstanding).

I believe that a broader base of learning, an increased awareness of diverse beliefs, or, in other words, more exposure to the humanities is essential to the health and well-breeding of the citizens of our world. Schools should not be reducing the required humanities credits but increasing them, and at earlier and earlier junctures. Only then might we have a hope of growing into a civilized populace.

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## Imagination and the Humanities in Honors across the Disciplines at a Jesuit University

JOE KRAUS

The University of Scranton

In 1988, I was a graduate student in English in New York City, and I found myself despairing of the field. I had always imagined that I would find a way to “make the world a better place,” to “heal” it in one translation of the Hebrew *tikkun ha’olam*. Instead, or so it seemed in my darker reflections, I was busy trying to parse what French theorists were saying in essays that seemed to make little sense in either the original or the translation. My college classmates, off to careers in law, medicine and business, seemed poised to make differences I never could.

Then I picked up a copy of *The New York Times* that day, and I was struck by what two of the lead stories had in common. The notorious *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie was still in its early days, and there was unprecedented unrest in Czechoslovakia around the continued imprisonment of playwright Václav Havel. Both were writers, humanists by design or default, and each was shaking the world, challenging a totalitarian mood by the simple act of unleashing his imagination in directions he could not have anticipated.

These two stories were all I needed to get me through that particular period of doubting the value of work in the humanities. They inspired me to see the extent of a single human experience and helped me imagine I could still make the difference I wanted if I went to the classroom and worked on my own writing. I saw in these stories a kind of applied humanities, the work of the imagination in the world.

As Larry Andrews's essay reminds us, the humanities again—or still—seem under assault. When our graduates leave us with an average student loan debt of more than \$50,000, we can easily see why we face so much pressure to measure the value of a degree by the concrete opportunities it opens up. Reading a poem or arguing about what Plato means is all well and good, but, if it doesn't help our graduates find work (so the implicit argument goes), it is not valuable enough. The translation of "not valuable" in that context might be "insufficiently practical" or simply "too imaginative."

In my literature classes, I find myself extolling the importance of critical thinking all the more. Yes, I still believe in the intrinsic value of reading literature, but now I make a point of reminding my students that the work of that reading prepares them for the professional world. When they read carefully, they train themselves to be better corporate contributors. When they write well, they put themselves forward as more capable participants in professional exchange. I have sacrificed nothing in the work of the class, at least I hope not, but I find I have to justify it in these new ways because too many of our students understandably carry an implicit question wherever they go: Is this worth what I'm paying for it? That is, I feel pressure to underscore the humanities by showing that they are worth the price in some currency other than their own.

The story is different in my honors classes, however. At the University of Scranton, we do not tie scholarships to participation in the honors program. Our students are already high-achievers, so they tend already to receive our more substantial merit packages. The one financial benefit we do offer is to raise the number of credits they can take at the flat rate from eighteen to twenty-one. In other words, we try to give them their honors classes for free, charging them the same for an experience that requires more institutional resources than the norm.

We do not, though, spell out this honors advantage in financial terms; we assume that our honors students pursue honors for what feels like a purer motive. Our implicit message to students is that you do honors work here because you want to do it; it costs only your effort and your inspiration. The



work is its own reward whether it is something you pursue in a lab, a library, a clinic, or the field. Appreciate it for its own sake, or you will have to endure a grueling five-semester sequence.

Some who consider starting the program ask whether completing it will help them get into graduate or professional school, but I discourage crediting that kind of value to the program. I tell them “maybe,” but then I point out that any driven and talented student will likely stand out just as much without it. Yes, I justify the program to my administration in part by citing our placement numbers, but I think of them as correlated rather than causal. The best students choose honors and then go on to good post-graduate opportunities. Honors does not necessarily make them better students, but it gives them a focused opportunity to make themselves better.

This element of choice, of a student’s asking for “more . . . just because,” in the end inspires me and recalls the central value of the humanities in what we do. Such striving is, in itself, a core Jesuit concept. St. Ignatius called it “the magis,” the restless desire to hone oneself for the sake of better serving the world.

I am suggesting, then, that the humanities are an essential feature of honors education—certainly in the way we conduct honors at Scranton—in whatever field our students choose for their research. Our chemists and biologists, as much as our theologians and historians, do what they do in a spirit of human endeavor. Maybe they could do similar work with similar excellence elsewhere, but I believe that our context, the call to do something more than what they are otherwise required to do, fundamentally proposes a human value coloring that work.

We admit students to our program during the first semester of their sophomore year, and they do not begin until the following spring, so they have only two and a half years to complete the program. For our orientation experience, we offer a one-credit academic retreat called Ideamaking in which we read Thomas Kuhn and other thinkers about the sources of new ideas. We try, sometimes succeeding, to turn research into a philosophical problem, to make it in part a humanities project whatever its field. I insist on the centrality of imagination in any sustained work. I tell them that, even if they do not yet know what they will do in the next couple of years, they need to measure the “imaginative space” it will take up in their lives and in their studies.

We do go on to include humanities in direct ways as well, largely through ever-changing cross-disciplinary courses and a junior seminar calling on students to reflect on contemporary social and cultural issues. In addition, all our

students are required to take five classes in philosophy and theology, so they come to their honors work with a vocabulary of inquiry that colors their full educational experience.

For me, though, the part of directing the program that most restores my faith—the part that plays the same role in challenging my recurrent doubts about the potential of the humanities that reading about Rushdie and Havel did years ago—comes when I get to hear students present their final research projects in our Senior Capstone Seminar. Each student who explains her or his work before the others in the program does so as the culmination of an intellectual and personal experience. In that light, I have settled on a format for our senior banquet that consists largely of my reading tributes to each one of them. I do my best to reflect the personal, imaginative story of each student.

Not every student has done honors work in the humanities, but all experience research at a human level that necessarily recalls the work of the humanities. Each has asked for more, has taken on work that may have no value in the corporate sense we too often invoke. I originally turned to literature because I thought it might help heal the world. Now, as someone who teaches at least half-time in honors, I get the privilege of seeing some of the ways our students do this deeper work themselves. Our scientists and our pre-professional students pursue their studies in different ways, but they frame them with philosophy, literature, and personal experience. Honors research in that light is an expression of the self attempting to understand itself, which, however it manifests itself, is precisely the central subject of the humanities.

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# Journal

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OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

**RESEARCH ESSAY**



# Assessing Social Justice as a Learning Outcome in Honors

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## INTRODUCTION

Whether at public or private, secular or faith-based institutions, questions of social justice and civic engagement are an increasing focus of attention in honors education. The emphasis on modes of learning that are, in the terms of the National Collegiate Honors Council's 2014 "Definition of Honors Education," "measurably broader, deeper, or more complex" has encouraged the enhancement of experiential opportunities, including the exploration of "enduring questions" through service-learning, immersion experiences, and community-engaged research. Such opportunities play an important role in the holistic view of student development that is a general hallmark of honors education. If honors is, in part, about enriching a student's worldview by providing a unique educational experience, then understanding the "self" as an inhabitant of larger social institutions should be a significant part of that education.

Honors should be about more than the “self,” though, also guiding students to understand societal structures, the forces that govern them, and the possibilities for both inequity and social change. As defined in the AACU’s VALUE rubric, civic engagement is “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference.” In other words, while students should be educated to approach big questions with an open mind, we don’t want our best and brightest to be walking away with a neutral stance. Even the most ivory-tower university does not exist in a bubble; every institution, to some degree, relies on public funding and is affected by the challenges facing the most vulnerable in its community. Accordingly, honors programs need to teach high-ability scholars to use their vaunted critical-thinking skills to understand the world and its complexities. As graduates and future leaders, they will need the intellectual skills to find solutions, the listening skills to engage divergent opinions and effect workable compromises, and a moral compass to evaluate the ethical implications of situations and actions.

We designed a one-credit colloquium at Loyola University New Orleans to teach the skills that are necessary in considerations of social justice. The social pedagogy of the course is embedded in the mission of an honors program at a Jesuit institution, and assessment of the pedagogy took place in this context. At the same time, the study was based on several premises that are applicable to honors programs and colleges at a broad spectrum of institutions.

The first premise is that honors education should be grounded in an approach to knowledge that values education for its own sake and also calls students to bring their talents into the service of the world’s great needs, i.e., to relate intellectual concerns to the goals of service, wisdom, and compassion.

The second premise is that we cannot expect students to acquire the requisite skills to understand and grapple with questions of justice through a one-off service requirement any more than we can expect first-semester students to write a thesis. Just as we break undergraduate research into scaffolded skills—how to read texts, how to find and analyze sources, how to develop an original hypothesis that draws from and responds to received opinion—so we need to provide incremental and ongoing training in the historical understanding of justice, in the embrace of diverse cultures and traditions, and in the experience of others.

Finally, we cannot expect such understanding to develop exclusively in the classroom. To understand a community, students need to be part of it. They need to go out into the larger community not just to serve or give back but to comprehend their similarity and solidarity with others whose lives on

the surface may seem disparate from their own. In the words of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, “Students . . . must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering, and engage in it constructively. They should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose, and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and the oppressed.”

Jesuit and non-Jesuit honors programs alike can benefit from incorporating these premises of social justice into their pedagogy. Going beyond the individual benefits students might receive in an honors curriculum and connecting them to their local and global communities helps situate their learning in a meaningful context that can potentially enrich their understanding of complex social issues ranging from economic and health disparities to LGBT rights and cultural sensitivity. In this way, education is a vehicle for promoting the public good, a cause that requires no justification. We attempt such an effort by framing social justice within the diverse and unique culture of New Orleans.

## INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAMMATIC CONTEXT

Loyola University New Orleans, as its name suggests, is a predominately undergraduate Jesuit university in uptown New Orleans. Although a dedication to excellence in academics, engagement, and community-building is not unique to Jesuit programs, what distinguishes honors at the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) member-institutions is the mindful basis of these dedications in association with what is termed our “Ignatian” identity, named for the founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius of Loyola. Jesuit institutions are not just Catholic schools but are rooted in a rigorous intellectual and spiritual praxis that has its foundation in Renaissance humanism and a 480-year-old mission of interdisciplinarity that embraces diversity and sees God in all things while fostering reflection and discernment, commitment to social justice, preferential care for the poor and vulnerable, and *cura personalis*, care of the whole person.

As a member of the National Collegiate Honors Council, the University Honors Program at Loyola University New Orleans (UHP) strives to conform to the National Collegiate Honors Council’s “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program.” Jesuit honors programs have also articulated the “Essential Characteristics of a Jesuit Honors Program” (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities Honors Consortium) that reflect our specific tenets. These essential characteristics affirm the importance of a liberal arts education

and a “concern for knowledge in its own right” and also privilege a “harmony . . . between the thirst for knowledge and wisdom and initiatives for peace and justice,” calling students to “bring their intellectual talents into service of the world’s great needs.”

Thus, although the dedication to the liberal arts is shared with multiple honors programs both public and private, the explicit mission of the UHP, grounded in Jesuit characteristics, is to educate high-ability students to use their gifts to be “for and with others” (Arrupe). Consequently, in addition to “critical thinking” and “effective and articulate communication,” the third over-arching learning outcome of the honors curriculum at Loyola University New Orleans is a set of objectives termed “Ignatian values”: learning outcomes that should, in fact, prove useful to other programs (Jesuit or otherwise) concerned with justice education. These objectives call for graduating honors students to be able to:

- Explain root causes of injustice;
- Discuss effective methods for preventing and responding to injustice;
- Evaluate the implications of different ethical perspectives;
- Evaluate their own attitudes and beliefs based on experiences with diversity; and
- Have a record of contributing to a social justice effort as part of their UHP experience.

The UHP’s curriculum is scaffolded to introduce, enhance, and develop students’ understanding and mastery of these learning outcomes over the course of several years through three required courses and additional opportunities for community-engaged activities and research. The required one-credit “Ignatian Colloquium” offers first-semester honors students an explicit introduction to our program and community as well as to social justice issues; in the second and third years, students are required to enroll in a community-engaged honors research seminar on a selected social justice topic as well as a required honors seminar focused on ethics.

However, assessing a curriculum’s intended goals requires more than a checklist of courses. For example, quantifying that a hundred percent of first-year honors students participated in at least one community engagement activity can affirm that students at least participated in, if not “contributed to,” a social justice effort, but it provides no information about what lessons students took from the experience or whether they learned what we hoped and expected they might. Rather than relying on our assumptions about what we



believed students experienced in their community-engagement activities, we explicitly assessed outcomes that required students to evaluate “implications” and “their own attitudes and beliefs.”

The inaugural iteration of Loyola UHP’s introductory 1-credit Ignatian Colloquium was designed to introduce first-year honors students to Judaeo-Christian, classical, and other historical formulations of justice; to explore the transition from service to action (sometimes termed the “two feet of social justice”); and to encourage consideration of what justice issues were of particular concern to them individually and how they might respond to this concern. Although the course also included ten written critical-reflection assignments, our assessment study focuses on a short survey that was administered in the final week of the semester to determine attitudinal differences regarding social justice issues between the 83 first-year honors students who had completed the Ignatian Colloquium and a comparable cohort of first-year non-honors students (63 enrolled in General Chemistry and 79 enrolled in Introduction to World Religions). The areas of similarity and difference identified not only are important to our understanding of this particular seminar but have implications for how we can best introduce and develop concepts of social justice and social action to students in both faith-based and secular honors programs and institutions.

## **PEDAGOGY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Before examining the assessment and its results, it will be helpful to consider briefly the pedagogy of social justice. Regardless of an instructor’s personal approach to such pedagogy, the objective is to develop undergraduates’ perceptions of and attitudes toward their own current realities and their personal and social identities before moving to an analysis of deeper social structures. This student-centered approach requires learners to understand concepts of social justice theory before committing to social justice activities, yet even high-ability undergraduates often have no familiarity with such theories prior to enrolling in social justice courses. Hence, a curriculum that foregrounds social justice as a learning outcome should begin by introducing theoretical concepts in the first semester, starting with the idea of social justice itself. Authors including Schulz as well as Chope and Toporek recommend that students and instructors evaluate each other’s understandings of social justice at a course’s onset and then co-author a shared and mutually accepted definition of the term. This process, according to Souza, necessitates that students recognize their own “societal positionality” (20); that is, they must identify

and recognize the social privileges and/or suppressions bestowed on them by socially constructed systems. By acknowledging differing perceptions of social justice at a course's start, educators are better equipped to monitor and direct undergraduates' progressions both in individual courses and throughout a social-justice-based curriculum.

An ongoing social justice curriculum recognizes students as continuously developing individuals, who must navigate their growing awareness of both social positionality in general and their own long-term and emergent social identities. Faculty should work consciously with students to ensure that this self-realization process does not have a detrimental effect on students' developing social identities by inducing feelings of guilt or jealousy and thus potential resentment toward society and the self.

The Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire terms this process of personal examination *conscientização*, which Oldenski translates as "the process by which human beings participate critically in a transforming action" and recognize that their realities can be determined by personal action (65). Freire's innovative educational style of critical pedagogy seeks to promote critical analysis of three essential questions: whom knowledge serves, why knowledge is developed, and how one might pursue more socially just realities (Oldenski, 86). This emphasis on student self-empowerment makes critical pedagogy an important contribution to social justice pedagogy. Other contributing frameworks include laboratory and intergroup education, experiential education, feminist pedagogies, liberatory education, and social and cognitive developmental models (Adams, 31–39, *passim*).

As Freire underscores, developing undergraduates' personal efficacies is a primary end of social justice curricula (Oldenski, 83). Frequent attempts are made to integrate social justice pedagogy within curricula through service learning courses, which may range from projects focused on what is sometimes termed "charity" (technical concern or direct action) to projects addressing "social change" (political activism) (Cuban and Anderson, 145). Ideally, social justice pedagogy encourages undergraduates to pursue projects of social change, allowing them to produce long-lasting effects at their service learning sites so that, rather than organizing a food drive for an inner-city community, social justice pedagogy favors the installation of an urban farm to produce ongoing sustenance.

Because action and reflection cyclically influence one another, students participating in service learning courses with mandatory reflections witnessed improved and more effective service learning experiences (Cuban and Anderson). Reflection writings also promote undergraduates' understandings of the

unique role global solidarity fulfills in attaining social change (Popok). Pable notes that reflections increase students' appreciations of shared humanity and humility with service learning collaborators, change students' mindsets concerning certain social injustices, and enable students to better comprehend the relationship between oppressed peoples and societal elites within current social systems (134–35).

Religions and spiritualities generally encourage reflection practices, often in the form of prayer. Ignatian spirituality, the belief system at the heart of the Jesuit tradition of education, places particular value on reflection techniques, most obviously through Ignatius's *Examen*, which requires a daily review of one's actions and emotions:

- Become aware of God's presence.
- Review the day with gratitude.
- Pay attention to your emotions.
- Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
- Look toward tomorrow. (Loyola Press)

Despite (or, indeed, because of) this reflective stance, Ignatian spirituality is fundamentally one of action; as Coghlan notes, "The Ignatian God is busy, and is to be found not, or not only, in some static bliss but rather in acting in the world" (93). Those invested in Ignatian spirituality thus comprehend their personal efficacies and agencies, an idea articulated to students in the Jesuit tradition as a call to "set the world on fire." As part of spiritual praxis, the Ignatian God invites humanity to seek and find God in personal and worldly experiences and then actively respond to these occurrences; in other words, this God is a deified embodiment of social justice pursuits. Despite its Catholic origins, however, properly conducted Ignatian pedagogy is nonspecific to any religious or spiritual subscription, emphasizing the "importance of respecting the unique ways of diverse cultures, even as they share and promote a core belief," a concept referred to as "inculturation" (Georgetown). Such inclusivity promotes global solidarity and the pursuit of social justice (Kammer).

## **THE GOALS AND STRUCTURE OF THE IGNATIAN COLLOQUIUM**

Addressing social justice from the Ignatian perspective of a specifically Jesuit honors program requires explicit discussion, both in the classroom and

in the larger honors community, of what “Jesuit” does and does not mean. For example, it does not mean that students are expected to be Catholic or even to believe in God. It does mean that our university’s honors program strives to be a community that cares for the whole person; that embraces interdisciplinarity, experiential learning, and diversity; and that encourages its students to have special concern for the poor and oppressed, heeding the call to make the world more just. Accordingly, the UHP’s 1-credit “Ignatian Colloquium” is designed to offer incoming honors scholars an explicit introduction to what it means to be part of a Jesuit honors program and to create a shared community through interactions with each other, with peer mentors from the honors program, with faculty mentors, with the honors director and Jesuit Honors Fellow, with members of Loyola’s Jesuit Social Research Institute, and with the Loyola University and New Orleans communities.

The pilot semester in fall 2013 began with a four-hour retreat that included community-building icebreaker activities and story circles. The Colloquium met weekly thereafter for an hour and fifteen minutes for fifteen weeks, including presentations on and discussions of the Jesuit tradition, historical concepts of justice, and Catholic social teaching. Students met in mentoring groups (eight students with a student mentor and a faculty mentor) several times a month outside of class and were required to engage in several group activities, including the design of a short-term community engagement project based on a group reflection exercise on the question “What issue of social justice is important to you and what personal gifts might you draw upon to address it?” Students also completed individually ten written reflections, considering such activities as a “friend date” and attendance at a religious service not in their tradition as well as their personal beliefs. For example, students were asked to review the walkway of pavers outside of the university library listing such Jesuit values as “Finding God in all things” or “Learning from experience.” The required reflection asked, “Which paver speaks to you and why?”

Introducing honors students to concepts of justice and injustice includes relating theory to students’ lived experience and perceptions. To this end, each justice-focused learning goal for the colloquium was articulated to include both an informational or conceptual component and an applied one:

- To develop an introductory understanding of Jewish, Catholic and classical texts and teachings on justice and the basics of Catholic Social Thought; and to relate these teachings to their own understanding of justice issues;

- To develop students' understandings of several justice issues important to our community (New Orleans); and to guide students in reflecting upon what justice issue is particularly significant for each of them and why;
- To enable students to distinguish between "community service" and "community engagement" through the concept of the "Social Change Wheel" (Appendix A), which presents models of community involvement (direct service, socially responsible daily behaviour, community education, voting, etc.) as spokes on a wheel moving from charity to social action; and to encourage students to visualize and actualize what such a transition might look like in their own actions.

The third goal—distinguishing between "community service" and "community engagement"—is especially important for first-year college students in a program that encourages students to "bring their intellectual talents into service of the world's great needs" (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities Honors Consortium). Whether due to high school or scholarship requirements, participation in faith-based activities, or personal motivation, most students arrive at college (public or private) having already participated in community service, sometimes quite extensively. These previous experiences, however, are highly variable in quality and pedagogical efficacy. Some students perceive these experiences as life-changing while others find them a bothersome college-application or service-hour check-off, to be gotten out of the way as painlessly as possible. At either end of this spectrum, most community engagement opportunities for high school students lack a reflection component to help students process their experiences, and the activities (building houses, serving in a soup kitchen, tutoring at-risk children) involve direct service almost exclusively.

Direct service can be a compelling, accessible, and developmentally appropriate form of community engagement, particularly for a young or inexperienced learner. In discussing the "pastoral circle" (a tool initially conceived within the framework of Catholic social teachings but highly applicable to justice education in a variety of contexts; see Appendix B), Fred Kammer has mapped how the first step in action toward justice is experience, i.e., questioning and then understanding "what is going on" in the life of someone experiencing oppression (5–7). In order to move toward justice, students must take the lessons from that experience and begin to explore and understand the societal and cultural situation underpinning inequity; they also must recognize that charity (direct service) alone will not change the status quo. At

this point, students are introduced to, and begin to conceptualize for themselves, other kinds of actions they might take in order to effect social change and move toward justice. In such conversations, the Social Change Wheel (Appendix A) is an effective tool in diagramming clear and comprehensible examples. The classic “feed a man a fish” adage is a propos here: to feed a man a fish is “direct action.” Offering a workshop on fishing is “community education.” Lobbying congress to pass a clean water act so that fish can thrive in the river is “political advocacy.” Being able to conceptualize such options is an important first step even if, developmentally, most social justice novices will still opt for direct service.

Such was the case in the Ignatian colloquium. Mentoring groups were asked in an in-class reflection activity to “think around the Social Change Wheel” regarding a justice issue of their choice; preparatory to designing and implementing a short-term engagement project and after considering such options as political advocacy (letter writing, for example) or community education (posters or a presentation on campus), seven out of eight groups elected to do a one-day, direct-service activity. The eighth group worked with a local charter school to develop a literacy project that is now in its third semester. This program, “Mission Imprint,” has proven sustainable and engaging for both sides of the partnership, with several honors student tutors choosing to enter Loyola’s teacher education program based in part on their experiences at the charter school. Still, the tutoring offered through “Mission Imprint” is a direct service activity open to all honors students, providing opportunities for the more experiential interactions that, according to the model of social justice pedagogy presented in the pastoral circle, encourage students to explore the societal bases of inequity. More significant to the present study, however, is whether the required engagement activities and the colloquium as a whole affected student attitudes to and interest in both general and specific social justice issues.

## **THE ASSESSMENT SURVEY AND ITS ANALYSIS**

Drawing upon Paolo Freire’s concept of education as continuous development, perhaps our biggest question was the impact of the Ignatian colloquium on shaping student attitudes toward social justice. In order to explore how the experience of students in the Ignatian colloquium might or might not have affected attitudes, in the final week of the semester the same survey was administered to the 83 students in the colloquium as well as to 63 non-honors students enrolled in General Chemistry I and 79 non-honors students

enrolled in Introduction to World Religions. While first-year students enrolled in the chemistry course are required to have the same minimum SAT or ACT math score as entering honors students, the large majority of the 63 chemistry students surveyed did not have the required composite SAT/ACT scores to qualify for invitation to the UHP. (An additional 17 members of the two general chemistry sections who participated in the survey were members of the UHP; these honors students completed the survey as part of the Ignatian colloquium cohort rather than the chemistry cohort.) Introduction to World Religions, in turn, is a requirement for non-honors students, who generally (although not exclusively) take it in their first year at Loyola; students in the UHP are not permitted to enroll in this course.

The survey consisted of eight items on a 7-point Likert scale, with higher numbers indicating stronger endorsement of the statement. Included were general statements such as “There are few issues that are as important as social justice” and “Generally speaking, people should be more concerned about the welfare of others.” Also included were statements with a political bent (“I believe more governmental funding should be dedicated towards social justice”) and some relating to personal priorities among issues (“*Local* social justice issues that impact us directly [e.g., neighborhood crime] are more important than *global* social justice issues that do not [e.g., world hunger]”). Two statements addressed personal agency: “Social justice is a nice idea, but I don’t think you can really put it into practice” and “What I do every day has the potential to play an important role in social justice.”

To determine the effects of the Ignatian colloquium training on students’ social justice attitudes, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with course type (Ignatian Colloquium, Introduction to World Religions, and General Chemistry) treated as a between-subjects factor. Since the eight social justice items assessed different parts of the construct, it is unsurprising that a factor analysis revealed several distinct loadings in this measure. Hence, we instead used separate ANOVAs to explore the items individually, which enabled us to better observe any subtle differences in student attitudes across these items. Only two items revealed significant differences. For one item, “Social justice is a nice idea, but I don’t think you can really put it into practice,” colloquium participants were reliably more likely to disagree with the statement ( $M = 2.31, SD = 1.28$ ) than the students in chemistry ( $M = 2.88, SD = 1.48$ ) and religion ( $M = 3.06, SD = 1.66$ ) courses,  $F(2, 157) = 4.196, p < .05$ , and post-hoc LSD tests confirmed that the colloquium condition significantly differed from the two control conditions. For the other item, “What I do every day has the potential to play an important role in social justice,” similar patterns were

observed such that the colloquium students were more likely to endorse the statement ( $M = 5.10, SD = 1.34$ ) compared to the chemistry ( $M = 4.79, SD = 1.28$ ) and religion ( $M = 4.44, SD = 1.37$ ) students,  $F(2, 157) = 3.556, p < .05$ .

Rephrased, in analysing the data we conducted separate ANOVAs to explore subtle differences in student attitudes across eight questions. Two items revealed significant differences: for the statement, "Social justice is a nice idea, but I don't think you can really put it into practice," Ignatian Colloquium participants were reliably more likely to disagree while the honors students were *far more likely* to endorse the statement "What I do every day has the potential to play an important role in social justice."

Because we might expect differences in critical thinking and problem-solving skills in responses from honors and non-honors cohorts, the distinctions revealed in this study may at first appear unremarkable. What we find noteworthy, though, is that we found no statistical differences in responses to the other items (e.g., "There are few issues as important as social justice" and "I believe more government funding should be dedicated towards social justice"). The results, then, point to a potentially important difference between the Ignatian colloquium students and the non-honors students surveyed. Unlike the latter group, the honors cohort's attitudes support the notion that one's daily actions and engagement with others constitute a critical component of social justice.

The study had several limitations. The assessment was only a post-test; accordingly, although we can determine that attitudes toward agency and self-efficacy in social justice differed between the honors and non-honors cohorts, we can only infer that the difference resulted from the experience of the honors colloquium. Students may have entered the UHP with a stronger sense of agency, and some may have specifically elected to participate in honors because of a concern for justice. Moreover, in the first-year class included in this study, almost every student with honors credentials accepted the invitation to participate in the UHP, so their superior academic success and stronger academic abilities in high school might have shaped their responses in some way.

Secondly, although we strove to identify a control group against which we might compare the results of Ignatian Colloquium participants, the two cohorts were not directly parallel. All first-year honors students were enrolled in the colloquium as a core requirement for the UHP. The first-year interdisciplinary humanities seminar requirement for honors students, which is a distinct course from the colloquium (and in which all colloquium students were simultaneously enrolled) requires and develops more complex critical thinking skills than the non-honors first-year seminar. Perhaps the attitudes



of agency and self-efficacy are in some way reflective of more mature critical thinking skills as well as the experience in the colloquium.

Despite these limitations, the data indicate a definite distinction between honors and non-honors responses, with honors students clearly evincing a belief in their own power to effect change. Moreover, honors students may have internalized the lessons of the Social Change Wheel, which presents “socially responsible daily behaviour” as a form of social action. Within the developmental aspect of social justice pedagogy, students’ ability not just to recognize injustice but to perceive themselves as actors for justice is an important step in preparing them both for the next requirement in the program—an honors seminar requiring community-engaged research on a social justice issue—and for the ultimate goal of using their intellectual gifts in the service of the world’s needs. Our study is relevant to honors generally, not just at Loyola New Orleans; even without a specific mission to awaken students to be “for and with others,” honors programs can and usually do seek to have a meaningful impact on improving and humanizing their community, whether local or global. The first step in making strides toward social justice is to recognize our own capability to take such steps. We believe an honors curriculum represents an ideal venue for introducing complex conversations that, over time, can transform classroom discussions into active social change. Educating students to think critically about how they themselves might act justly can be an important first step in the education of honors graduates who will lead their communities in navigating the path to a more just world.

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## APPENDIX A

### Social Change Wheel

#### *Models of Community Involvement*

##### SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE DAILY BEHAVIOR

Activities that help make the world a little brighter for everyone

- Biking, taking public transportation, or carpooling to work
- Shopping at stores which give back to the communities they are located in directly
- Recycling, composting, etc.

##### ADVOCACY THROUGH COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Activities which raise awareness and/or change people's actions or attitudes

- Speaking to community groups about homelessness, crime, or recycling in their local community
- Developing workshops for groups to increase multicultural understanding

##### COMMUNITY BUILDING

Activities that build trusting relationships among individuals and groups around issues of common concern

- Participating in March of Dimes
- Community clean-up efforts after a flood, earthquake, tornado or hurricane
- Planting a community garden as part of neighborhood revitalization efforts

##### DIRECT

Activities which address immediate needs and always the conditions from which they arise

- Serving food at a soup kitchen
- Improving literacy skills
- Doing household projects

##### GRASSROOTS POLITICAL PUBLIC POLICY

Activities that identify allies and implement strategies for change

- Door-to-door campaigning
- Lobbying for additional affordable housing
- Organizing a Congressional delegation

**SERVICE**  
mediate needs but not  
which needs emerge  
itchen  
for adults and children  
ts for the elderly

**COMMUNITY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
Activities that identify human/economic assets of a neighborhood or community

- Completing a neighborhood assets inventory
- Offering leadership classes to local residents
- Working to educate a community about public health issues

**VOTING/FORMAL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**  
Activities that mobilize people to influence public policies through formal political channels

- Organizing voter registration drives
- Working for a political campaign

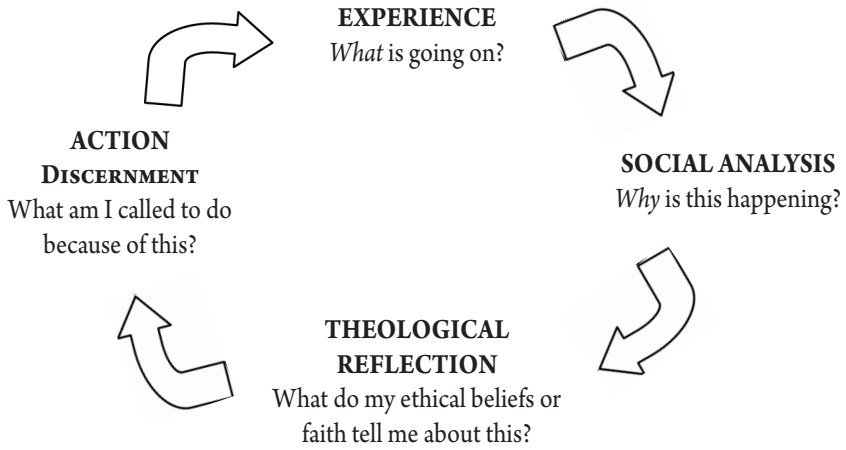
**POLITICAL ACTIVITY/  
POLICY WORK**  
s, build common ground,  
or changing public policy  
ing for clean water action  
funding for affordable  
onal letter writing campaign

**DIRECT ACTION STRATEGIES**  
Activities that use confrontation or public disobedience as a strategy for raising awareness of an issue

- Picketing or holding a candlelight vigil at the capitol
- Participating or organizing rallies and marches

## APPENDIX B

### Engaging the Pastoral Circle



# Journal

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OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

**PORTZ-PRIZE-WINNING  
ESSAY, 2014**





# Truman Smith's Reports on Nazi Militarism: Domestic Political Priorities and U.S. Foreign Policy-Making in Franklin Roosevelt's First and Second Terms

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Appointed head military attaché in Hitler's Berlin in 1935, career U.S. Army officer Truman Smith harbored no illusions about the challenges he faced. As he recalled later in his memoirs: "I saw at firsthand how inadequately organized, staffed, and financed the Military Intelligence Division was. It became clear to me also that Military Intelligence was the orphan branch of the General Staff and the army as a whole and that military attachés lacked prestige and were little regarded or listened to" (26). Despite inadequate support and seemingly insurmountable obstacles to access, Smith produced over the next three years a series of startling yet remarkably accurate reports on the Nazi military buildup that held the potential to influence deeply the course of American military and diplomatic policy. Far from achieving their intended influence, however, Smith's reports drew the otherwise obscure

military attaché into a political maelstrom not of his own making—a tempest that owed much to Smith's association with famed but increasingly controversial American aviator Charles Lindbergh, whose celebrity Smith exploited to gain critical access to *Luftwaffe* airfields. Amid the heated polemic that swirled about him, the stunningly accurate intelligence information contained in Smith's reports languished in obscurity. On detailed examination, the case of Truman Smith demonstrates in a profound manner the ways that domestic political agendas and controversies clouded U.S. foreign policy-making in the years leading up to the Second World War. Although the international order today is fundamentally different from that of the 1930s, Smith's case may also hold important lessons for the early twenty-first-century United States concerning the unforeseen costs of polarization and a political culture in which opposing parties often dismiss even simple factual information put forward by their supposed political enemies.

After an accomplished military career leading up to and during World War II, Truman Smith (1893–1970) was seemingly forgotten. His name was seldom mentioned after the war until his memoirs were published posthumously in 1984. Since then, intrigued historians and journalists have sporadically examined his strange story. History shows Smith to be an astoundingly successful figure in military intelligence. Though hampered by his lack of rank, Smith first submitted intelligence reports from Germany on the nascent Nazi movement while he was assigned to Berlin as an assistant military attaché in 1920–24. From 1935 to 1938, Smith returned to Germany to serve as head military attaché. Part of the reason Smith's intelligence efforts were exceptionally insightful and accurate in this vital period was his summer 1936 decision to take advantage of Charles Lindbergh's fame to gain better access to German air facilities. Despite Smith's efforts and his warnings about the German military build-up, his reports were mostly dismissed by the Roosevelt administration. For his efforts, Smith was labeled first an alarmist and later a Nazi sympathizer.

After serving in combat during World War I, Smith served as a military observer and assistant attaché in Berlin from June 1920 to April 1924. In November of 1922, Smith became the first American official to interview Adolf Hitler and subsequently submitted reports on Nazi aims and ambitions that were nearly prophetic, even though he lacked rank and his reports were mostly ignored. He did, however, manage through his 1920–1924 stint in Berlin to forge relationships with German military figures that proved to be invaluable contacts when he returned as head military attaché later in his

career. His warnings in these early years came, moreover, nearly a decade before other more prominent voices began warning the rest of the world about Hitler's intentions.

In the years between 1924 and 1935, Smith held various posts. Most notably, from 1928 to 1932 he served as an instructor at the Fort Benning Infantry School, where General George Marshall was in command. During this time, Smith formed a close professional relationship with Marshall, and the general subsequently acted as Smith's patron for the remainder of his career.

Smith's second posting in Berlin from 1935 to 1938 as head military attaché, which was the most interesting and historically significant of his career, can be divided into two sections. From 1935 through the first half of 1936, he struggled as his reports were widely dismissed by both the military and the Roosevelt administration. In November of 1936, however, Smith took a trip to Washington at his own expense to impress upon his military superiors the seriousness of events in Berlin. This trip was quite successful, and Smith received considerable support from the military going forward. In addition, Smith began making use of Lindbergh in his air intelligence in the summer of 1936. In combination with his newly acquired military backing and the support of Lindbergh, Smith's reports received considerable circulation in the highest level of United States government in 1937–1938. These reports, most notably the General Air Estimate of 1937, contained powerful language that vividly described the rapid expansion of the German military.

After Smith was diagnosed with diabetes and subsequently exited his post in Berlin in December of 1938, he proceeded to work as a military adviser in Washington. During this time, 1939–1941, he came under fire from various figures in the Roosevelt administration. A diverse range of factors, most notably his history with Lindbergh, contributed to the attacks he received. Smith entered retirement in 1941, but returned to active duty after the attack on Pearl Harbor at the request of General Marshall. During the war, Smith served as a military advisor to General Marshall, and he retired with the rank of colonel in 1946.

Though Smith's reports on Hitler from the early 1920s are certainly historically significant, his reports from the late 1930s are even more so. Not only is the content of the reports militarily important, but the reception of the reports holds complicated lessons concerning the nature of U.S. political culture in the years leading up to World War II. Ultimately, the question remains: Why were Smith's reports mostly ignored within U.S. policymaking circles? The answer to this question is complex, and contributing factors

varied according to changing viewpoints and priorities within the Roosevelt administration itself from 1935 to 1940.

## 1935–1936: OPPOSING VOICES

In 1935 and 1936, Smith faced several obstacles in impressing the developments of the German military on American leadership. One explanation for Smith's reports being undervalued involves his position. In the 1930s, the Military Intelligence Division of the Army (G-2) was little respected, and the position of military attaché was far from prestigious. These factors gain little mention in contemporary sources because allegations of Smith's Nazi sympathy generally take the spotlight, but the lack of respect held for the post of military attaché was a pressing issue for Smith in 1935 and 1936.

The lack of respect for military attachés is well-documented and was matched by the inadequacies of the Military Intelligence Division. Smith details his thoughts on G-2 and his initial training for his 1935 Berlin post in his memoir *Berlin Alert*. Of his instruction, Smith notes it to have been "cursory and quite inadequate," to the extent that Smith felt he had gained nearly nothing from his training (26). The struggles within G-2 were well known. Among military officers, the post of military attaché was considered a career dead end. The record of its predecessor agencies provided by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) states that, on the surface, Military Intelligence presented the post of attaché as highly respected, claiming that attachés received top-notch training before being sent to their assignments. This image, however, was far from the reality. The reputation of posts in Military Intelligence was so poor that the most qualified officers could seldom be recruited for them. In addition, the training in G-2 was so inadequate that attachés were often thrown into their posts so unprepared that they could not even develop sensible reports (CIA).

Military attachés were also severely underfunded. The job of attachés was far from easy: "Operating against odds, only too often in periods of tension, they must exercise discretion in all their procedures: they must refrain from spying or other conspiratorial activities, and contacts likely to disturb regular 'harmonious,' peace-conductive diplomatic relations between states" (Vagts ix). Within the tight pressures of not upsetting international politics, attachés often gained the bulk of their information from social events. Accordingly, the CIA website details the struggle the attaché corps faced in obtaining funding:

The United States was in a serious economic depression, and Congress was not about to increase MID's budget so that a few attachés could host cocktail parties in Paris, Berlin, Rome, London, Moscow, and Tokyo. Unfortunately, the annual appropriations battle reinforced the perception in the Army at large that the attaché corps was nothing more than a well-heeled country club.

As Smith proved however, much could be gained from "cocktail parties."

Smith recalled that his department's lack of funding limited his movements in Germany considerably, especially in terms of travel around the country (164). In addition, Smith felt that the U.S. needed an espionage presence in Berlin that was separate from the attaché corps, and, as Smith noted in his memoirs, "not a penny for espionage was available" (164). Overall, G-2 and the post of military attaché were neither respected nor funded sufficiently.

A problem Smith faced specifically concerning his post was his responsibility to report not only on the development of German ground forces but also on their rapidly expanding air force. Referring to himself in the third-person, Smith detailed the difficulty he faced in reporting on German air development: "The military attaché possessed as much, but no more, knowledge of air corps organization and tactics than did the average American infantry officer who had been trained in the army school system. This was small. His technical knowledge of air matters was negligible" (75-76). His wife, Katharine (Kay) Smith, wrote in her unpublished autobiography that her husband's lack of aeronautical expertise weighed on him heavily because, even with his limited knowledge of air science, he knew something huge was occurring in Germany (90).

Smith believed that the lack of respect for his knowledge and the bad reputation of his title were responsible for his reports not being taken seriously in the General Staff or the Army Air Corps (84). The growing strength of the German *Luftwaffe* impressed Smith to the extent that he returned to the States at his own expense in November 1936 in an attempt to convince his superiors of the seriousness of events in Germany. Smith's wife records that this trip was successful and that he did succeed in swaying much of the military leadership he encountered of the growing threat in Germany (Katharine Smith xviii).

By the end of 1936, Smith had gained considerable support in the military. This support would ultimately save his career when the political firestorm approached in 1940. Since the lack of respect for attachés and G-2 was substantial, the backing Smith received within the military provided much-

needed support. Smith's supporters at this time included not only his former boss, General George Marshall, but also a close advisor to Roosevelt, Bernard Baruch. These two men in particular were responsible for Smith's reports being not only circulated in "the highest military circles" in the late 1930s but becoming known to influential figures in the Roosevelt administration and even the president himself (Truman Smith xvii).

General Marshall, who became the Chief of Staff of the Army, operated as Smith's patron from when Smith first served under Marshall as an instructor at Fort Benning in 1928 to when Smith retired in 1946. Marshall sent Smith's General Air Estimate from November 1937 to the President as "an example of outstanding military intelligence" (Lindbergh 872). Marshall went on to battle the President over military appropriations, and in this combat he relied heavily on Smith's reports.

Bernard Baruch was a chief economic advisor to the President and was widely known for having Roosevelt's ear. One of the only real middlemen in the politics surrounding Smith's story, Baruch was well-liked by the Roosevelt administration as well as the administration's isolationist opponents (Baruch 307). Baruch described himself as somewhat "obsessed with the subject of preparedness" (276). The reports Smith was submitting were not only being circulated widely enough that they reached Baruch, an economic consultant to the President, but Baruch actively used Smith's reports in some of what he calls the "many occasions I was pressing him [FDR] to take more decisive preparedness measures" from 1936 through 1940 (276-79).

Despite the invaluable support from Marshall and Baruch, one of the chief criticisms of Smith prior to 1937 was that "some of his reports had exaggerated the strength of German forces, especially the air force, in comparison with the reports of the British and French" (Truman Smith x). The perceived reliability of foreign attachés was about as tenuous as that of American attachés. Vincent Orange writes in the *Journal of Military History* that "British intelligence departments in the 1930s were short of staff, funds, equipment, and prestige. There were far too many of them, they refused to cooperate with one another, and they had little influence on decision makers, civilian or military" (1015). This low status was similar to that of the American attaché corps although the British attachés in Berlin handled their lack of prestige differently than Smith did.

Colonel Andrew Thorne assumed his post as head British military attaché in Berlin in 1932. In 1934 and 1935, Thorne reached much different conclusions concerning the state of German affairs than Smith would

eventually report in 1935 and 1936. Thorne reported that he felt the German army operated separately from Hitler's rule. He went on to conclude that military leaders in Germany were not particularly loyal to Hitler and could put a stop to Hitler's regime at any moment (Wark 592). Smith could not have disagreed more. In his memoirs, Smith incredulously recalled a conversation he had with the Supreme Commander of the German *Luftwaffe*, Hermann Goering: "With moist eyes and a voice tinged with emotion, he turned to the attaché [Smith] and said, 'Smith, there are only three truly great characters in all history: Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Adolf Hitler'" (100). Smith was immediately struck by the fanatical devotion and support Hitler elicited. As early as 1922, Smith had noted about Hitler: "So intense and dramatic were the times, and so well did Hitler understand how to play on the emotions of his audiences, that the lack of logic in his message was often entirely overlooked" (70). Though they were proven false not long after they were submitted, Thorne's reports of divided German leadership did damage the influence of Smith's early reports from Berlin in 1935 and 1936.

In addition, when Colonel F. E. Hotblack took over Thorne's post in Berlin in 1935, he entered with the expectation that Thorne had left for him. From 1935 through early 1937, Hotblack's reports became less and less consistent with Thorne's. By late 1937, when Smith submitted his most meaningful report, "The General Air Estimate of November 1, 1937," Hotblack's intelligence was in complete support of Smith. At the time Smith submitted his General Air Estimate in 1937, Hotblack was submitting reports to British Intelligence claiming that Germany would be prepared for an all-out offensive against Europe within two years (Wark 599).

By 1937, contradictory foreign intelligence was no longer an obstacle for Smith to overcome. Prior to 1937, however, contradictory reports influenced the reception of Smith's reports in a major way. Thorne's reports fueled an already raging problem in the perception of Germany held by the United States as well as Great Britain from 1933 to 1937, thus greatly impeding the impact of Smith's reports. The idea that the Nazi state was deeply divided was one of the worst assumptions made prior to World War II. In seemingly wishful thinking, much of the world's leadership became convinced that "a policy of negotiated and limited readjustment to the international *status quo* would be welcomed within the Third Reich" (Wark 593). This act of self-deception proved to be extremely harmful.

Smith faced another problem in Berlin at the hands of the United States ambassador, Dr. William Dodd, who was well known to be a pacifist who had

a “marked distaste for military matters” (Smith 76). He did not like to associate himself with the military attaché office, but he did enjoy the company of professors in Germany. He had no confidence in Army and Navy attachés in Berlin, which he said “here, and I think all over Europe, are utterly unequal to their supposed functions” (Vagts 71). While Dodd was instrumental in making President Roosevelt aware of the offenses against Jews in pre-war Germany, he consistently battled the idea that Germany was militarizing in the early 1930s. Even when the military attaché preceding Smith, Colonel Jacob Wuest, raised the alarm and tried to alert the United States that Germany was mobilizing for war, Dodd insisted that Wuest was overly excited (Vagts 71). While Dodd asserted that both Wuest and Smith were alarmist, he was proven wrong when the Germans took over the Rhineland in 1936. This risky act from Hitler, which Smith reported would happen a few days beforehand, completely shocked Dodd (Katharine Smith 83–85). The well-educated ambassador had long been a critic of Hitler, but he completely underestimated the fiery dictator.

Dodd’s underestimation of Hitler represents a much wider feeling within the United States government in the 1930s. The impact of Smith’s reports was compromised not only by Dodd but also by the general lack of concern in the United States about German military build-up. When Smith began his post in 1935 in Berlin, global politics were in a complicated stage during which all military intelligence needed to be carefully weighed and considered. Instead, as Smith recalls, at no point during his time in Berlin did Dodd ever ask any information from Smith on German developments (Truman Smith 77). Dodd’s attitude explains much of why Smith’s reports from 1935 and 1936 were ignored.

Although Smith consistently reported on German mobilization during his entire service in Berlin, his reports in 1937 and 1938 offer the most insight into the vicissitudes of United States policymaking at the time. Several barriers stood in the way of Smith’s reports in 1935 and 1936, but by 1937 these obstacles had been conquered. In 1937, Dodd had lost credibility, Smith had gained immense support from his military superiors, foreign intelligence was lining up with his own reports, and Smith gained a new assistant air attaché, Major Albert Vanaman, who possessed top-of-the-line aeronautical expertise (Smith 106). Because of these factors, along with the support he received from Baruch and Marshall, Smith’s most important report of his service in Berlin—his “General Air Estimate of November 1, 1937”—effectively had a direct path to the highest levels of the Roosevelt administration. Yet at the



same time, other factors remained in play to continue to prevent Smith's reports from exerting much influence on U.S. policy—specifically a wide array of domestic political priorities in the 1930s.

## 1937–1938: DOMESTIC PRIORITIES

Hitler's rise to power in Germany stands as one of the most gravely underestimated events in history. Across the globe, Hitler was regarded by many world leaders as little more than a dupe. Even in Germany, Franz Von Papen, who convinced President Paul von Hindenburg to appoint Hitler as chancellor, was so confident that Hitler was weak and could easily be controlled that he boldly claimed, "Within two months we will have pushed Hitler so far into the corner that he'll squeak!" (Craig 570). While Hitler was being underestimated in Germany, a comical image was simultaneously being created of him in the United States.

One of the sources of Hitler's image in the U.S. as "outrageous" was Dorothy Thompson's book *I Saw Hitler*, which stemmed from her 1931 interview with the soon-to-be leader of Germany and in which she clearly and colorfully described Hitler as feminine, socially backward, and mentally fragile (14, 16). Thompson also openly questioned Hitler's ability to lead; she states in her writing that, entering her interview, "I was convinced that I was meeting the future dictator of Germany. In something less than fifty seconds I was quite sure that I was not" (13). *Time* magazine also reported on Hitler as a silly figure, making light of his appearance as a "pudgy, stoop-shouldered man" and highlighting anything strange about him ("Hitler into Chancellor" 22). *Time* also went on to fuel an unfortunate and common misconception that the Nazi party was "pledged to so many things that it is pledged to nothing" (22). This perception of Hitler was common in the United States in the mid-1930s, ultimately reducing the impact of Smith's reports and detracting from the plight of Jews in America and in Germany.

This common doubt about the seriousness of Hitler's regime was a major detriment to Smith and his reports. With the exception of Jews, the majority of Americans were unconcerned with Hitler. In addition, the concerns and protests voiced by Jews in America ultimately did as much harm to their own cause as it helped. Rabbis openly criticized Hitler and predicted that he would lead the world to another world war ("Rabbis" 28). On May 11, 1933, fifty thousand Jews gathered in Chicago to protest the oppression against Jews in Germany ("50,000" 10). Though this protest did not have a huge effect on the public, it did touch Edith Rodgers, a Massachusetts Republican in the U.S.

House of Representatives. On May 13, two days after the protest, Rodgers voiced in the House her feeling that the United States should intervene in Germany to aid the suffering Jews there (“Scores” 7). Directly after Rodgers addressed the House, however, the President released a statement emphasizing that any actions by the Nazis were strictly European affairs (“U.S.” 4).

The public was generally in favor of this isolationist policy. Anti-Jewish sentiments were extremely common in the United States in the pre-World War II era, combining with a Nazi propaganda barrage to eliminate much of the sympathy Americans had for German Jews (Elson and Levy 83). Truman Smith recalls in his memoirs that Hitler was outspoken in his speeches against the Jews, but the common belief was that his violent rhetoric was exclusively for propaganda purposes and that he would never become too abusive to Jews (55).

Jewish businessmen also had their own scheme turned against them by the Nazis when they attempted to boycott German goods on a global scale (“Boycott”). Before Jews began implementing this boycott, the Nazis had already begun issuing “warnings” to Jews in general, stating that if they kept up their “treachery,” there would be major ramifications (“Hitler Warns Jews”). After the boycott was implemented, the Nazis launched their counter-attack, claiming that, by boycotting German goods, the Jews were extending their treachery. The Nazis reciprocated by boycotting Jewish goods and services and began removing more Jews from positions of importance (“More” 4).

While the nation was being influenced by German propaganda, President Roosevelt was aware of the true story in Germany. Dodd reported to the President on the abuses that German Jews were experiencing, but Roosevelt’s lack of concerted response further solidified the impression that, as far as the United States government was concerned, Germany’s Jews were essentially on their own (Duffy 68–69). While much of the public simply was not sure what to think about Nazi Germany, the President was aware of the situation but placed his New Deal programs far above international matters as the main priority of the U.S. government at least through late 1937.

To those whom history remembers as the “New Dealers,” the New Deal represented much more than the social reform it literally entailed; it represented hope that democracy was still a viable system of government. In the midst of dictatorships and communism on the rise, Roosevelt wanted to turn his New Deal into a “shining light” for democracy (Schwarz xvi–xvii). Roosevelt wanted his program to rise above the attacks from his opponents, who called the New Deal the “Jew Deal” and questioned Roosevelt’s motives

(Schwarz 129). In hopes of preventing his New Deal's funding from being spent elsewhere in response to escalated arms concerns, the President put much of his faith in global disarmament as a foreign policy strategy.

Those who advocated for military preparedness, many of whom were isolationists, did not agree with Roosevelt on global disarmament (Doenecke). Bernard Baruch is recorded as saying: "Peace does not follow disarmament; disarmament follows peace" (266). Roosevelt's plan did what he wanted it to do, however, because it allowed him to justify postponing military funding and slashing military appropriations to create funds for the New Deal.

The President's handling of Smith's reports evoked some criticism in the late 1930s. Smith described the press coverage of his activities with Lindbergh in Berlin as highly inaccurate. He believed that the press simplified German affairs and contributed to the misconception that Germany was weak and divided. Despite what Smith saw as faulty reporting, the fact remains that he and Lindbergh did receive substantial exposure in the press because of Lindbergh's presence in Berlin, but this media coverage did not keep the Roosevelt administration from consistently downplaying Smith's reports. The Roosevelt administration's dismissal of Smith's intelligence did not sit well with General Marshall, however, who went so far as to submit Smith's reports to the President's political opponents to keep them from being buried (Truman Smith, 117-18).

Almost entirely because of Marshall's activities, accusations developed that the President had purposefully withheld Smith's reports from Congress in order to remove them as a barrier to slashing the military appropriations (Vagts 71). These accusations climaxed when Representative Albert Engel, a Michigan Republican, provided well-documented evidence that showed how the President cut the annual military appropriations by forty million dollars, despite having been aware of Smith's reports ("Charges"). Though Smith recalls Engel's attack on the President as being of a completely partisan nature, the fact remains that Roosevelt was adamant that the New Deal needed to take priority, even when it meant setting aside Smith's unprecedented but unpalatable reports (Truman Smith 117).

Events surrounding Smith's reports offer insight into the Roosevelt administration and the battle for military appropriations that raged through the mid-1930s. The President opposed heavy military spending up until 1938 when the Sudeten crisis and Kristallnacht began to impact the views of American citizens as well as the administration itself. As Nazi aggression became to be more apparent, and as Nazis attacked Jewish businesses and abused

their owners, American public opinion began to see beyond the propaganda war Germany had launched against the Jews. Public opinion obviously then shifted even further against the Nazis when in 1939 the Germans overran Poland, Denmark, and Norway (Leuchtenburg 299). Only in the summer of 1940, though—when Germany invaded France—did General Marshall successfully acquire sufficient funding for the military to begin preparing for the clear probability of impending conflict (Cray 152–53).

Indeed, the military suffered mightily at the hands of domestic politics. General Marshall thought the narrow-mindedness of politicians was handicapping the military and felt it was important for the United States to be ready for war (Cray 126–27, 151). Similarly to Marshall's feelings concerning the military, Bernard Baruch wrote that he was quite concerned with the inadequacy of the American military (177–79). Baruch also mentioned, however, that the President was also quite aware and concerned about how unprepared the United States would be if attacked (177–79). This presents an interesting quandary: The President slashed military budgets to create more funds for his New Deal, but he also harbored concerns of preparedness, and wanted to “shake Americans from their isolationist delusions before it was too late” (179). If Roosevelt was concerned with military preparedness, and wanted to act against isolationism, why would he and his administration have covered up Truman Smith's reports? If anything, one would think Roosevelt could have used Smith's reports as evidence to support military buildup.

The largest reason for Roosevelt's action concerning Smith's reports came down to the same factor that many of the President's decisions hinged on: timing. Exactly at what point the Roosevelt administration's agenda changed from an isolationist one to an interventionist one is a topic for additional research, but one point is clear, and that is the President was extremely mindful of timing in relation to where public opinion rested at a particular moment. In the mid-1930s, regardless of how concerned Roosevelt was with the military, the New Deal received “top legislative priority” over foreign policy decisions and “the outside world would have to fend for itself” (McJimsey 191–92). This attitude is consistent with how the President responded to the fifty-thousand Jews that protested against the Nazis in Chicago in 1933. The President had certainly shifted gears, however, by the late 1930s, when he began his attempt to sway public opinion in favor of war (McJimsey 194).

If Smith's timing in Berlin had been slightly different, his story would be remembered in a much different way and may have changed the course of world history in a different way. Instead, Smith's reports were consistently at

odds with the President's agenda. In 1935 and 1936, Smith's reports contradicted the cuts Roosevelt wanted to implement to military funding, and in 1937 through 1938, Smith's reports did not line up with the complex plan Roosevelt put in place to systematically shift public opinion in a gradual rather than sudden manner. Smith's reports came across as abrupt and startling, and the President was against shocking the public.

A major problem Smith saw in military intelligence was the robotic nature of aeronautical reports. In his memoirs Smith described air reports as "so bulky, statistical, and technical that anyone who read them needed both leisure and training in all branches of aeronautical knowledge to absorb their information" (111). In his "General Air Estimate of November 1, 1937," Smith aimed to create a "brief, all inclusive, and couched in dramatic rather than technical terms" summary of Germany air progress (111). Smith certainly succeeded in this effort, providing the War Department with a relatively brief but detailed overview of the German *Luftwaffe* and its immense development. Lindbergh was a vital part in the preparation of this report, and his influence is clear when reading it. The language is dramatic, to the point and would be understandable to nearly any reader. Dramatic reports on German might, however, were the last things Roosevelt wanted to reach the public.

Indeed, alarming reports of the huge air power in Germany could incite panic in the United States. The political weight of air superiority at the time cannot be underestimated as well. Just before World War II, the world was transitioning into a time when, as Lindbergh stated: "We can no longer protect our families with an army. Our libraries, our museums, every institution we value most, are laid bare to bombardment" (92–94). Considering the vast concern and fear surrounding air power, the President did not want any shocking news to develop and panic the public.

A prime goal of the President was to keep the public calm. He "deliberately sought, with the collaboration of the mass media, to avoid controversy and to stifle national debate" (Steele 69). Roosevelt ultimately wanted to stifle any shocking news, and he pushed propaganda that tried to illustrate that the government leaders in America were more than capable of handling any complex foreign policy decisions that came their way. Rather than pushing the public into anxiety over the unsettling events of the world, Roosevelt succeeded in producing a "dull, steady, pervasive drum of preparedness information emanating from every popular source of public education" (Steele 71). Roosevelt manipulated the press in order to essentially "sell" his administration.

Roosevelt's interference in the media went as far as to force the removal of press figures that were critical of his administration's foreign policy stances. One of the most notable instances of the President's influence on the media was when the White House caused the removal of one of CBS's most popular news commentators, Boake Carter, for being critical of the Roosevelt administration. In contrast, figures that were far more derogatory towards the President's rivals than Carter was against the administration, like the extremely popular radio commentator Walter Winchell, were praised (Steele 83). Ultimately, the President saw foreign policy issues leading up to World War II to be too serious to be up for debate. Roosevelt thought he knew what was best for the United States and aimed to influence the public into offering the least amount of resistance to his agenda as possible (Steele 92). Considering the President's attitude, the motive for obscuring Smith's reports is clear. In his effort to impress German buildup on American leadership, Smith actually doomed his own reports, because they were too alarming and unpalatable to be utilized in the Roosevelt administration's agenda, even as the administration gradually turned the ship of state towards a war that it increasingly saw as inevitable.

Smith ultimately found himself at constant odds with the Roosevelt administration. As if his reports being contrary to the agenda of the administration were not enough, Smith's association with Lindbergh ultimately caused him to be dragged into a fierce political battle. The rivalry between Lindbergh and Roosevelt had a deeply polarizing impact across the country. The rhetoric on both sides was often radically misrepresentative of the other side, and Smith was regularly targeted because of his relationship with Lindbergh.

## **1939–1940: POLITICAL STRIFE**

Starting heavily in the summer of 1940, Smith received repeated attacks from several members of the Roosevelt administration as a Nazi sympathizer. The attacks were fueled less by suspicions of Nazi sympathy than by a political grudge resulting from Smith's relationship with Lindbergh. Smith was dragged into a confrontation that had started as early as 1934 when, after an investigation into corruption in commercial air lines, Roosevelt ordered an immediate halt to all commercial airmail. He handed the task of transporting airmail entirely to the Army. This order turned out to be a tremendous mistake, and Lindbergh quickly became a vocal opponent. Lindbergh, who at the time possessed fame and influence not matched by even the most famous

celebrities today, immediately spoke out against the President's painting of all commercial airlines with the same brush. He warned against the policy and predicted that Roosevelt's hasty action would compromise the safety of untrained Army airmen who were being volunteered for the airmail service (Davis 357-60).

Between February 1934, when Roosevelt instituted his ban on commercial airmail, and April 1934, twelve airmen were killed due to their lack of training. By the summer, Roosevelt's ban on commercial airmail was effectively lifted, and the entire situation "constituted a personal defeat for Roosevelt in the court of public opinion" (Davis 361). This interaction between Lindbergh and Roosevelt proved to be the beginning of a conflict that soon tore much of the country apart.

Roosevelt generally discredited any of his opposition as either ignorant or unpatriotic. Lindbergh certainly received this treatment. The President's priority through it all was to eliminate forces that would undermine his sway on public opinion, and he was concerned about "not getting ahead" of public thought. In general, the President's agendas were fairly open-ended (McJimsy 191); rather than push detailed plans, Roosevelt tried to steer public opinion to where he thought it should be. This typical political strategy was not compatible with conflicting viewpoints. Alarming forces that could disrupt his efforts were either covered up, like Smith's reports, or combatted, like Lindbergh's rhetoric. When Lindbergh began giving his isolationist speeches, he was approached with a bribe from the President: if Lindbergh halted his speeches, the President would create a new Cabinet position for him (Lindberg 257). Whether through bribery or smear campaigns, Roosevelt's administration did everything it could to silence or discredit opposition, and the methods aimed at Lindbergh ultimately spilled over onto Smith.

In his memoirs, Smith lists influential gossip columnist and radio broadcaster Walter Winchell among his principal antagonists (30). Winchell was opposed to everything isolationist. He accused Lindbergh, whom he nicknamed the "Lone Ostrich" (playing on Lindbergh's traditional "Lone Eagle" moniker), of being a Nazi and also sent messages to Roosevelt claiming that Smith was an "advisor on the Lindbergh speeches," calling Smith a "terrific Pro-Nazi" ("Rose Bigman"). Famous broadcaster and journalist Dorothy Thompson, who like Smith was one of the earliest voices to speak out against Hitler, was openly skeptical of Smith as well (Duffy 190). The popular columnist and critic of public figures Drew Pearson was also outspoken about the questions surrounding Smith's allegiances (Truman Smith 30).

Smith was effectively lumped into the isolationist group which was being blasted in the media. Though some columnists directly attacked Smith, he also felt the pressure of the polarized media war occurring across the United States. From gossip columnists to news broadcasters to cartoonists, the toxic climate was compromising objectivity in many media outlets. Even Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel) took merciless shots at Lindbergh, repeatedly portraying isolationists and in particular Lindbergh as ostriches with their heads in the sand. Further, Seuss published multiple images portraying Lindbergh in league with Nazi Germany (Minear 28–34).

These influential members of the press also openly doubted Smith's patriotism, and many more columnists simply lumped Smith in with their criticisms of Lindbergh. Shortly after Smith returned to the United States, Lindbergh began a long pro-isolationist campaign in which he delivered speeches that were broadcast across the nation and internationally in many instances. These opinionated broadcasts quickly became controversial as the nation split down the middle between isolationism and interventionism. Many columnists, particularly ones who had more liberal stances, were quick to point out how fond the Germans were of Lindbergh and how all of his speeches were broadcast and cheered by Nazis ("Within" 193–94). The extensive smearing of Lindbergh eventually created a perception of Smith that essentially made him "guilty by association" and made him receive most of the "echoed accusations that were hurled at Lindbergh" (Duffy 190).

Smith was similarly associated with Lindbergh by prominent members of the Roosevelt administration. Among those whom Smith called the "New Dealers who wanted his scalp" were figures like Supreme Court Justice and personal friend of Roosevelt, Felix Frankfurter, who Smith claimed was fueling some of the press attacks (31, 34). White House Press Secretary under Roosevelt, Stephen Early, also spoke out against Smith (Duffy 190). Secretary of the Treasury and another critic, Henry Morgenthau, approached General George Marshall to request that Smith be discharged from the Army (Lindbergh 352).

Likely the most vocal opponent of Smith from the Roosevelt administration, however, was Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes. Smith recalls an instance in 1940 when Ickes, along with Justice Frankfurter, suggested to the President that Smith should be court-martialed (31). Ickes helped to lead a unit in the Roosevelt administration that tracked the President's rivals (Duffy 182). Lindbergh described Ickes as "spreading misinformation" in the "cheapest and most inexcusable sort of way" (518). The pressure put on Smith was



intense enough that he and his wife, Kay, became convinced they were being spied on and having their phones tapped (Lindbergh 405–06).

The 1940 press attacks on Smith did not end until Bernard Baruch, in league with General Marshall, convinced the President to order a halt on the smear campaign (Truman Smith 32). Ickes did not give up, though; shortly after the President ordered members of the administration to halt fueling press attacks on Smith, Ickes orchestrated a new attack. Smith soon found himself the subject of an investigation after it was reported that Smith insulted and questioned the intelligence of the President at a cocktail party. This fabrication was later discovered to have been devised by Ickes and was utterly disproven (Truman Smith 33).

The heightened aggressiveness of Ickes was largely a result of his staunch opposition to racism. Ickes was a vocal opponent of racial discrimination of all kinds, and as history has documented well, much of Lindbergh's rhetoric was racially charged (Ickes III 641). Lindbergh was quite vocal in blaming Jews for trying to agitate the American public into moving toward war (Lindbergh 538). Ickes made it a priority to try to disrupt and nullify anything that had to do with Lindbergh. In his diary, Ickes expressed jubilation when his smear campaign began to crawl under Lindbergh's skin (581). In correspondence between Ickes and Roosevelt, Ickes described Lindbergh as a "ruthless and conscious fascist, motivated by a hatred for you personally and a contempt for democracy in general," to which the President responded: "What you say about Lindbergh and the potential danger of the man, I agree with wholeheartedly" (Duffy 211). The seriousness of these feelings toward Lindbergh deeply influenced the perception of Smith in the Roosevelt administration. The FBI even kept a record of Smith in their file on Charles Lindbergh, in which they listed Smith among potential threats as allegedly being "strangely pro-Nazi" (FBI). Ickes and his fellow critics felt they were doing their country a service by exposing those who, in their minds, were Nazi sympathizers (Ickes 581).

The overall theme of Smith's career tends to be that an outstanding military man was dragged into politics against his will. Much like his patron General Marshall, who tried diligently to remain apart from partisan politics, Smith maintained a marked aloofness to politics (Cray 9–10). Even when he found himself being ridiculed and smeared, Smith generally kept his cool. During the attacks on him, Smith never once responded. Throughout the attacks, Smith kept his head down and did his duty, trusting General Marshall to take care of the attacks (Truman Smith 33–35). Though much of the

small amount of history that includes Smith will present him as “that guy” who brought Lindbergh to Germany, Smith’s career offers a variety of learning opportunities.

## CONCLUSION

While contemporary sources try to isolate reasons that Smith’s reports were covered up, the reality remains that the poor reception of his reports resulted from a diverse collection of domestic political factors. Smith was swept into political rivalries that diminished the value of his intelligence efforts. Smith’s case and the fate of his reports remind us that the polarized nature of politics in the early twenty-first century is hardly unique in the annals of U.S. history.

Even today, opinions vary concerning the events surrounding Smith’s career. Many of these differences relate directly to the diversity in views on the rivalry between Roosevelt and Lindbergh. The majority of research conducted specifically on Smith’s career tells a story of a dutiful officer who was treated unfairly by the Roosevelt administration; however, not all contemporary sources agree. Though the research focused on Smith is limited, examinations of the rivalry between Lindbergh and Roosevelt are not. In these works, Smith is often mentioned in passing, but these brief glimpses of his career are skewed according to the biases of the author. In the majority of contemporary work, Smith is paired with Lindbergh; thus, the perception of Lindbergh is key in the portrayal of Smith. Some authors praise Lindbergh’s contributions to Smith’s intelligence effort and subsequently admire Smith’s performance. Others label Lindbergh a Nazi sympathizer, as the Roosevelt administration did, and include Smith in their accusations.

Charles Lindbergh stands as one of the most polarizing public figures in American history. Historians still bicker about whether he contributed to the United States or was little more than a traitor. These issues were magnified in the years leading up to World War II and ultimately caused Smith’s intelligence work to be pushed aside in the midst of debates about matters other than the substance of his reports.

Looking back, Smith was not shy about admitting his shortcomings. In his memoirs, Smith described how his intelligence office completely overlooked the development of German missile technology. In addition, Smith recalled that, through much of the early stages of German military buildup, the nature of German air tactics escaped him. Air forces had never before been employed to support ground forces, and Smith did not realize that the

Nazi regime planned to use their mighty *Luftwaffe* in this way until late 1937. Smith's memoirs clearly indicate that he considered these oversights to be massive blunders on his part (164–65).

Despite these failures, the successes of Smith's intelligence efforts should not be underestimated. Though his work on the German *Luftwaffe* is generally the primary focus of research because of Lindbergh's involvement, Smith also reported with startling accuracy on German ground forces. In addition, the work Smith accomplished on German air developments, with the help of Lindbergh, remained unprecedented. Smith was not faultless during his service, but his relationship with Lindbergh led him to produce more meaningful intelligence than his foreign counterparts in Berlin. Despite the stellar content of Smith's reports, the United States government remained aloof to the gravity of Germany's military expansion.

Scholars in the early twenty-first century are likely to prove more interested than their early post-war predecessors in the winds of controversy that swirled about the formerly obscure military attaché Truman Smith, especially through 1939 and 1940. Clearly the world order of 2015 is vastly different than the one that made possible Hitler's rapid rise in the 1930s, but the sort of political polarization and demonization of ideological opponents examined in this study have an oddly familiar ring to those of us accustomed to the American news media markets of our own times. For us, perhaps the most pressing lesson of Truman Smith's case lies in its function as a cautionary tale about the importance of listening to opposing viewpoints. What, ultimately, might we be missing when we dismiss out-of-hand the arguments of those whom we believe to be political opponents?

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***Setting the Table for Diversity*** edited by Lisa L. Coleman and Jonathan D. Kotinek (2010, 288pp). This collection of essays provides definitions of diversity in honors, explores the challenges and opportunities diversity brings to honors education, and depicts the transformative nature of diversity when coupled with equity and inclusion. These essays discuss African American, Latina/o, international, and first-generation students as well as students with disabilities. Other issues include experiential and service learning, the politics of diversity, and the psychological resistance to it. Appendices relating to NCHC member institutions contain diversity statements and a structural diversity survey.

***Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education*** edited by Peter A. Machonis (2008, 160pp). A companion piece to *Place as Text*, focusing on recent, innovative applications of City as Text™ teaching strategies. Chapters on campus as text, local neighborhoods, study abroad, science courses, writing exercises, and philosophical considerations, with practical materials for instituting this pedagogy.

***Teaching and Learning in Honors*** edited by Cheryl L. Fuiks and Larry Clark (2000, 128pp). Presents a variety of perspectives on teaching and learning useful to anyone developing new or renovating established honors curricula.

***Writing on Your Feet: Reflective Practices in City as Text™*** edited by Ada Long (2014, 160pp). A sequel to the NCHC monographs *Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning* and *Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education*, this volume explores the role of reflective writing in the process of active learning while also paying homage to the City as Text™ approach to experiential education that has been pioneered by Bernice Braid and sponsored by NCHC during the past four decades.

***Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC)*** is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education.

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