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Graduation Date: 05/11/2019  
Honors Courses:

- Survey of World Literature to 1650
- American National Government
- World Civilizations from 1500
- Cultural Anthropology

## I

The Honors Program encourages me to push further from my comfort zone on a daily basis. I'm given the opportunity to have my voice heard in class not only because of the smaller class sizes, but also because of our members' acceptance of different perspectives. In high school, I never willingly spoke in class for fear of saying the "wrong" things. Instead, I feel comfortable in knowing that there aren't any wrong answers. If others feel I'm missing the point of our discussion, they offer opposing statements without making me feel like I don't belong. The Program is a community of individuals who are open to accepting everyone in volunteer work as well as game nights. I've developed close friendships with other Honors students, as well as relationships with professors who I admire for their patience and respect toward students.

Within the two semesters I've been enrolled at NWACC, I've developed a curiosity for subjects I didn't expect to be intrigued by. In high school, I became familiar with taking courses I didn't possess interest in and working on assignments I didn't care for. School was a matter of getting the right grade, without attention to what I actually learned. I'll admit that I've learned more in the two semesters I've been present at NWACC than my entire eight semesters of education in high school. In the Honors Program, I've found that I can be interested in any class I'm in. Through discussion and debate, I'm able to leave class knowing that what I've learned won't be forgotten after I've received my final grade at the end of the semester. Recently, the Honors Program gave me the opportunity to travel to Tyler, Texas to present a research project I used for one of my Honors courses. This presentation was difficult to begin because I found that every assignment I completed for these classes piqued a curiosity I didn't realize I had. I could have discussed a range of topics that were discussed in my Honors classes, from female roles in Hinduism to the history of coffee house culture. Without realizing, I had gained a significant amount of knowledge in these subjects. After speaking at the GPHC and listening



to others' presentations, I've returned to Arkansas with a list of topics I want to learn more about.

I began my education in the Honors Program thinking that my beliefs were set in stone and what I valued could not be changed. However, I was immediately confronted with a variety of other students whose beliefs were a result of differing experiences. I was exposed to a variety of people from a variety of places. The Honors Study Area became a place for the exchange of these experiences, and ideas began trading between students. I became educated in topics that I recently didn't worry about. For example, I hadn't become educated in immigration. Looking back, I came into the Honors Program with the idea that legal immigration was great and illegal immigration was non-excusable. Unfortunately, I was ignorant to the challenges many international students face when coming to college, and members of the Honors program helped educate me on immigration by not only providing facts but also allowing me to empathize with personal experiences.



## II

Through my work with both the Honors Program and the HSA, I feel more prepared for the University of Arkansas than I did before joining. In high school, I found myself straining for motivation. I turned assignments in late and didn't care about anything I was being taught. I struggled in lecture-based classes and often relied on learning the course material at home. However, NWACC's Honors program makes it easier for me to learn without extra hours of coursework. The discussions left a lasting impression on me.

My first Honors class, World Literature to 1600, was an entirely different experience than what high school showed. The course not only taught me about interesting topics, such as Hinduism and Rumi, but also allowed me to experience learning in an engaging group environment. Sabrina Chesne never "taught" us, but cultivated an environment where we taught ourselves. I noticed these recurring discussion-based classes throughout the rest of my Honors career. Sabrina often requests feedback from students on the teaching style of the Honors professors, making it simple to have your voice heard as you critique how each course can be improved. Through this, I've become comfortable being placed with randomized students and engaging in debate, and giving my opinions confidently. This skill has already improved my relationship with coworkers at 7Brew, as I imagine it will in my eventual career.

I've improved my writing significantly since beginning Honors classes. Honors World Literature has given me the opportunity to write about topics I'm interested in, and I found myself working to make each assignment more creative than the last. I can still remember every individual assignment I did for that class, from my analysis of changelings to my essay on why no character in *The Ramayana* can be inherently evil. Honors World Civilizations is currently giving me the opportunity to improve my editing skills. Each week, Sevin Gallo is asked to turn in a précis about our readings. It has been a struggle to condense my writing into a page or less,

but each week it gets easier. I see this being helpful at the University of Arkansas in relation to keeping within word count requirements.

### III

While it's difficult to choose one interaction with another member of the Honors Program, I gravitate to a friendship I've formed with Reece over the past two semesters. We met in Honors U.S. Government and began hanging out in the Honors study area between classes, telling jokes and giving advice. This friendship soon expanded to Olivia and Minoah and we often met up for game nights when I wasn't working.

I believe the most memorable moment between the three of us was the first game night (mixed with "Secret Santa") that the Honors program hosted this past semester. We'd only ever spent time together in the study area whilst working on homework, so it was fun, almost therapeutic, to experience game nights where we didn't have to worry about our assignments. During this game night, after gifts were exchanged and people began filing out, our group stayed. We eventually moved to the study area after the lights in the Student Center went out, but I didn't end up going home



until close to 10pm. We stayed at NWACC playing games, telling stories, and sharing laughs. The trend of staying behind until close to midnight continues with each night I come, and I advise any new members to try and attend at least one!

### IV

I encourage new members to forget everything their schools taught them about honors programs. Honors isn't about harder assignments or extra work. It isn't a program designed to stress you out or keep you at home for hours of homework every night. Honors is about placing curious students in environments where they're equally heard and taught. It's a unique way of learning for those who aim to get more out of college than daily lectures. If you're hesitant about taking one of these "hard" classes, I encourage you to try just one!