



MARIA TAPIA

Graduating Class of 2023
Associate of Arts

Honors Courses:

Composition II
Cultural Anthropology
Survey of World Literature to 1650
World Civilization from 1500

I began my college journey as a non-traditional student in 2016; ten years after graduating high school. I navigated all the aspects of enrolling and registering at NWACC by myself and to say that it was terrifying is quite an understatement. Having a full-time job and only being able to take a few courses at a time definitely made me afraid of failing, and so taking on the challenge of Honors courses was out of the question. It took a few semesters for me to be able to say, "I got this" and finally register for an Honors course.

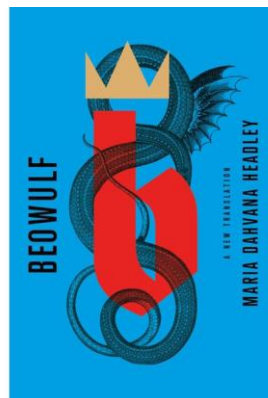
Section I and II (Community, curiosity, diversity and skills gained as Honor student)

My first Honors course was Composition II. It proved to be as difficult as I imagined it would for someone who had not written a paper in years. It was during this class that I learned about engagement and how academics truly connect to many other aspects of life. It was also during this class that I decided to join in creating the Butterfly Garden as part of my Service Learning project. For our class project we were to connect the butterfly garden with mental health and write an essay on the topic. For this, I became acquainted with an Iraq War veteran whom was using Northwest Arkansas' natural spaces to help with his anxiety and depression. In our conversation, he stated that resources for veterans were so limited around here that he resorted to nature to cope with his mental health struggles. He was excited that this project was in the works, as it would be near the bike trail behind NWACC, which would be easy access to anyone wanting a moment to sit, relax and enjoy a small piece of nature. This project

included many concepts but engagement most definitely stood out. I learned that Honors courses can prepare you to look at the larger picture where engagement, in all aspects, is easy to do.



The Honors program helped me refresh and expand skills such as my vocabulary and language skills. After being out of school for ten years I had a hard time putting my thoughts down in writing or speaking in large groups. I loved my World Literature course as it helped me very much with this. Every book we read in class was in a different style, and so I learned many new words and forms of expression. One book in particular that kept my mind going throughout the semester was *Beowulf*. It was a new translation by Maria Dahvana Headley. Now, most of us have read *Beowulf* at some point in our lives but this version was written by a woman, so it sparked curiosity in me for sure! This book was not only fascinating to read, it was also somewhat inspiring. It made me seek more female authors and truly question why so many stories throughout history never have a female front and center. Women almost always contributed, shaped, or influenced the main character, men, in one way or another, so why not focus on them for a change. Through my curiosity I discovered *The Heroine with 1001 Faces* by Maria Tatar, (coincidence that all good books are written by a Maria). This book details all heroines through-out time that we forget were just as strong and courageous as some of our favorite male characters. Through reading, this class opened by mind about expressing myself as a reader, writer and speaker.



Overall, I believe that the Honors program is built on perspectives. All students who join Honors might be pursuing different degrees but at the end of the day, they all share the same goal: learning, graduating, and building a career! Honors courses are great because though you connect with your peers as students, you also get to experience different thoughts and ideas. Perspectives in the classroom create open discussions and them along become great lessons. Perspective allowed me to view a different side of our world, especially in my Cultural Anthropology course, as most students were fresh out of highschool and I am closer to my forty's. It was quite interesting and even fun to discuss how others, specifically this younger crowd views politics, religion, finances, culture, etc. Sharing perspectives is a powerful thing and learning from them has the possibility to make us better people.

Section III (Experience)



A memorable experience as an Honor student was attending the Great Plains Honors Council Conference in Wichita, Kansas. During the World Literature course, I created a poster as part of our final assignment. My poster was selected to enter in the Great Plains Conference in the Humanities category where I received an award! To be completely honest, I was hesitant in submitting my poster and attending the conference, but Sabrina

convinced me. I'm glad she did! I, along with fellow Honor students, Taurun Eisen and Connor Odom all received awards representing NWACC. I was able to meet and interact with Honors students from other colleges and share experiences. This was the first event I attended as an NWACC student and it was the beginning of my involvement in Honors. Attending this conference was rewarding and proof that hard work pays off. It was a wonderful reminder that we can certainly do and achieve more than we think we can.



Section IV (My advice to future Honors students)

To future students, my advice is to give Honors a try! Jump right in-accept the challenge and surprise yourself! Honors courses might seem intimidating, but they are so rewarding. All Honors professors are extremely knowledgeable and resourceful in a wide range of things and

topics. Plus, Honors is not just all work, there is plenty of fun. There are many fun activities going on throughout the year like game nights, movie nights, community events, conferences. Oh and can't forget the Honors Hub! A room exclusively for Honors students with food, lounge area, free printing and much more! Courses are really fun as well, like Sevin Gallo's World Civilization from 1500 which included food studies. It was history class with a different food and restaurant field trip every week! Honors offers so much that you just CAN'T pass up all the perks! In taking Honors courses you gain more than just a good note on your transcript; you gain an enormous amount of knowledge and experience!

