

## Sandy Novotny's Honors Experience

Graduation: May 11, 2019

### Courses Taken:

1. Intro to Theatre with Ashley Edwards
2. World Civilizations from 1500 with Dr. Sevin Gallo
3. Gender Studies with Sharon Fox
4. American Literature to the Civil War with Jim Laughton
5. Cultural Anthropology with Alissa Bandy



*Section 1: In what ways did the Program help you “demonstrate engagement,” “cultivate curiosity,” and “explore perspectives” (community, curiosity, and diversity)?*

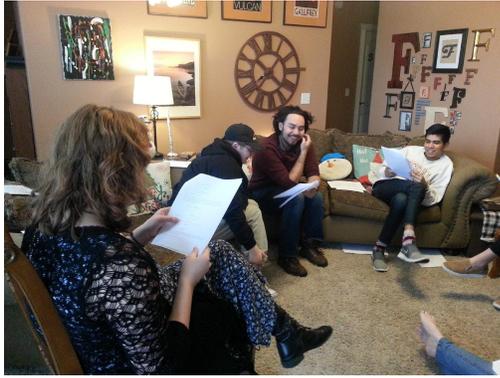
Community, curiosity, and diversity become intertwined as one participates in projects and activities in conjunction with honors classes and professors. As part of the honors program, I found myself taking part in a wide variety of activities and events.



Professor Edwards sent us to see Stephen Karam's Tony Award winning play, *The Humans*, introduced us to a local theatre group, LatinX, and put on a New Play festival at the school where I experienced the first ever staged reading of a play I had written. These activities allowed me to experience theatre from a variety of perspectives; the professional tour, the up-start group, and the writer's seat. I learned a vital purpose of theatre: to generate empathy.



In World Civilizations, Dr. Sevin Gallo connected us to civilizations past through the common language of food. As we explored local restaurants offering a cornucopia of ethnic fare, we considered the history of the respective cultures and the journey from that place in history to our own.



Professor Fox's Introduction to Gender Studies offered an unconventional lens through which to explore gender, race, and class. Through a common television genre, the situational comedy (sitcom), we looked at the affect of media on culture and culture on media. The portrayals of persons of marginalized groups helped to inform our understanding of societal views in previous times and today. This exploration included a trip to the University of Arkansas campus to hear a presentation by Ryan Sallans as he shared his personal transition story. Working individually, each of us chose one sitcom episode to study in-depth and present to the class and then we worked on writing our own sitcom episode as a team. These varying perspectives helped me to be more mindful of what is being portrayed in the media I consume and more sensitive to struggles people may experience as a result of these portrayals.



Professor Laughton's American Literature class was a component class where only a portion of the students were taking it as honors and the rest were not. Rather than feeling like a regular class with honors-only assignments, Professor Laughton raised the bar for the whole class to the point where it didn't feel much different from an honors-only class. He masterfully led discussions that helped the other students and myself understand the development of American history and the evolution of thoughts and attitudes through literature; often first-hand accounts. We were then invited to dive deep into an author

from the semester and the honors students gave individual presentations on their author of choice.



Cultural Anthropology with Professor Bandy was an amazing experience! Despite having spent several of my teen years in an area with a large population of Korean immigrants and U.S.-born Korean-Americans, I didn't know much about the Korean culture. Through a semester-long project on native Korea, through the viewing of a Korean drama (K-drama) and the reading of a nonfiction text on Korean shamans, I was able to acquire a lot of info in a short period of time. More importantly, I formed an emotional connection to the topic through a new-found love for K-dramas. Professor Bandy's excitement and personal curiosity were contagious!

*Section 2: How did this program prepare you for a university (or for a workplace, if you aren't transferring at this point)? What hard or soft skills will you take with you?*

The myriad of projects I produced as part of my honors classes have helped me strengthen my researching and presentation skills. I've practiced opening myself up to combining topics and following rabbit trails to new insights.



In Theatre, I practiced design by generating ideas for a performance using the play *Wit* as a template. Having to create a vision from the work of someone else taught me to think outside of my own creative headspace.

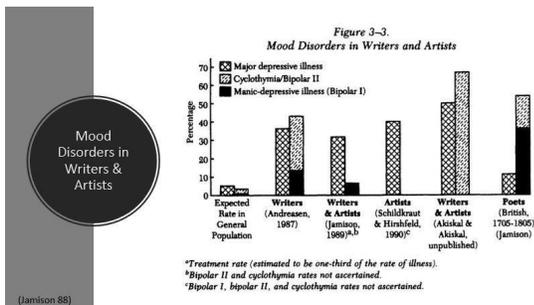


In World Civ, I explored my own connection to food diversity through a presentation on how Chicken Chow Mein varies by region. This taught me to mine my own life for examples that can be used to investigate patterns.

### On the road to the presidency, but then...



I considered the simultaneous portrayal of progress and lack-of-progress though the sitcom *Veep* for Gender Studies. Movies and television shows don't just choose actors and dialogue with purpose, something is being said with every outfit, side glance, cut-away, and location choice. This project taught me to be more attentive to details and use them to extrapolate the message(s) being conveyed.



### My Edgar Allan Poe project in American Literature

allowed me to cross-reference the biographical information of a 19<sup>th</sup> century author with current knowledge of mental health, using modern techniques to evaluate the past. Mental health, though still experiencing a good deal of stigma, is becoming more understood in our current environment. Investigations like this will only increase as we seek to understand our relationships to our own brains of those of the people around us.

### Section 3: What is one experience you had while a member that you'd like to share?

I was able to work under Sabrina Chesne as her work study for 3 semesters (counting summer). Professor Chesne is a hardworking person who is always trying to think of new ways to make honors more fun and more productive. I've watched her support students with kindness, honesty, and personal attention. Working with her has been one of the highlights of my honors experience.

*Section 4: Considering all you have written for the above, what advice do you have for new members? This answer should be "short and sweet."*

Make friends. Be kind to one another. Apply the critical thinking skills you are practicing in class in your "real life," too. Be as involved as you can manage. There is a great big world out there full of amazing people; see it and meet them.