

Jose Rivas

Honors Reflection

Graduation: May 2026

Honors Courses:

General Sociology - - - - - **SOCI2013H-1**

Survey of World Literature to 1650 - - **ENGL2213-3**



## Section 1- How honors helped me broaden my perspectives

Joining honors gave me the opportunity to try many things that I would consider the “full college experience”. I got to meet great people, go to fun events, put my skills to the test, and do something for others. One of the last classes I took in NWACC was World Literature with Professor Chesne. She encouraged me to take the Honors Version of the class, and since I had always wanted to take one, I agreed. We read many books and explored the cultures they came from, but what I liked the most were the discussions we had about them. Based on our personal experiences, we had different perspectives on the stories and what they tried to convey which led to very interesting conversations. When we read metamorphoses by Ovid, we discuss the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. A man goes to the underworld to bring his wife back to life. Hades allows him to, but only if he never turns back to look at her while they leave. He unfortunately doesn't trust Hades and turns back, only to see her disappear back into the underworld. While I don't blame him, since he already took the effort to go to the literal underworld for her and only looked at her because he was worried, other classmates believe he was incompetent and blamed him for failing. We also made visual projects where we integrated what we learned from the readings as fun illustrations. Honors classes expand what we do in a class, from fun and simple projects to entire excursions and presentations.



The second honors class I took was Sociology. This class helped me see aspects of normal life in a completely different way. The things we discussed ranged between historical facts to modern politics and even pop culture. The class covered how many rights we take for granted have only existed for a short time, and how some laws don't completely guarantee equality due to factors I had never thought would be related.



I had the opportunity to go to the biannual J street cleanup. In April 2026, we went to J street and spent a couple hours walking along the road picking up trash. I got to meet other members of the honors community, and we had a great time helping the road look great. I even found a Pokémon card! I attended a couple game nights, and seeing people from all sorts of backgrounds and different ideologies have fun together was amazing. Being part of the honors program helped me understand different perspectives and forced me to push myself in ways I hadn't before.

## Section 2- How honors prepared me for the future

Honors classes presented me with challenges that pushed me but always with the confidence that I had someone I could go to for guidance. In my sociology class, we were encouraged to come up with a research topic ourselves and then go and look for articles that collaborate or refute our initial thesis. This class gave me the freedom to learn outside of a structured lecture, something that sounds surprisingly normal but very few classes ever encourage. My research project proposal is on fitness companies' marketing and if it influences how people perceive masculinity or merely mirrors popular notions. I found studies that analyzed ads from magazines aimed to men and clothes companies and how they market to men. While I can't form a conclusion from these, I speculated that these companies likely influence popular notions of masculinity over time by appealing to men's insecurities and marketing their products as solutions or markers of "masculine capital". I then proposed a way that we could prove this through interviews and collection of data. Interviews would focus on asking men what they believe constitutes masculinity and where they got these notions. The goal would be to get a significant number of answers to agree that companies influence what they believe. The other method would be to look at companies' marketing strategies announced to investors through official sources (annual reports, interviews, etc.) and unofficial statements by people close to their leadership (social media posts). Similarly, my world literature class had me research deeper into topics and then come back into class and explain to the rest of the students what I took from it. While



bouncing around different countries and their famous literature, we explored their religion and ways of life. A project I made was a play of Beowulf between two characters who I would have liked to see interact. I discovered that putting information in a way that's simple to explain to others also helps me retain it better. These assignments were both challenging but really fun, since you're not just memorizing information and spitting it back out for a test, but doing something with it.

Outside of classes, the honors program encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone. I got to meet a lot of interesting people. During the Great Plains Honors Council, I got to speak with the writers of the book *Hacking College*. They gave me some advice on my major and some good tips for college. They argued that picking a minor in a seemingly unrelated field could help you land your dream job. For example, my major is marketing, but I've always been interested in nuclear energy. They suggested I could get a minor in engineering to make landing a job marketing at a nuclear firm more likely.

### Section 3- An experience I would like to share

My favorite memory from being in honors was going to the Great Plains Honor Council. I did a team presentation on Maria Headley's translation of Beowulf. We drove to Kansas City and got to see other amazing presentations and cheer for those our friends made. Presenting was nerve-wracking, but after having crammed the whole night before the day of the presentation, I was confident our presentation was worth being shared. After that, we went to museums we picked, and we had an amazing time at the Nelson-Atkins



Museum of art. We even got to see figures of characters we read about in our honors world literature class. I think it was a great chance to meet new people from different schools and a chance to get to know better people here at NWACC. We got to hear an author talk and a presentation on environmentalism by the hosting school. The book was called "Hacking college". Ned Scott and Scott Carlson gave us a rundown on their book and encouraged us to discuss our perspectives on it. Honors students from other schools shared their college experience, and those of us who wanted more personal discussions stayed after to get one on one conversations.



### Section 4- Advice for future members

My advice for you is to take every chance you get. It was hard for me to start attending events after never going to any from high school to my last year here at NWACC. Out of pure chance, I met the right people and got involved, but I still can't help but think I could have done so much more. Take every chance you get and enjoy your time here at NWACC while building a portfolio of experiences and skills!