

# HONORS PROGRAM NEWS

Alumni \* Sabrina Chesne to ASU \* Faculty Spotlights \* Great Plains Conference \* Awards Gala

## Sabrina Chesne to ASU & The Midwest

Sabrina Chesne, English Professor and Honors Program Director, was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities stipend to attend a two-week Institute entitled *Translation and Traveling Texts: East Asian National Literatures in an Era Without Borders* at Arizona State University. The focus was "the impact and role of Chinese literature on the formation of broader East Asian ideas about



literature, writing, and language." While there, she worked with professors and graduate students from around the country, discussing the process of translation and translating Wu Wei and Bashō. This is her third NEH summer experience: she spent three weeks at Kent State in Ohio in 2015 participating in *What is Gained in Translation: Learning How to Read Translated Texts*, an Institute "dedicated to study of texts...

(Cont. pg 2)

## Alumni Go Abroad

**ALUMNA KATELIN JOHNSON ('18), an NWACC Honors Program Graduate, continued her education overseas after joining a study abroad program to Italy. We caught up with her to talk about her experience:**



### *How did you end up in Italy? Where? When?*

I first found myself in Italy in the summer of 2018 when I participated in the NWACC in Italy study abroad program in Siena! I fell in love with Italy on that trip and decided to transfer to the American University of Rome where I completed a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Global Politics in December of 2021. After I finished my bachelor's degree, I decided to stay in Italy, and I am now attending the University of Bologna, where I am pursuing a master's degree.

### *What are your future plans?*

After I graduate in November 2024 [Masters in International Cooperation of Human Rights and Intercultural Heritage], I hope to start working (in Europe) for an NGO which specializes in women's rights! However, I am still not sure that my academic journey is over just yet, and I am considering applying to some PhD programs.

### *What is your favorite Honors Program memory?*

I have so many good memories from my time in the Honors Program, and I was honored to serve as the Community Engagement and Events Coordinator of the HSA [Honors

*(Chesne cont.)*

.....  
 ...in translation as a way to develop cross-cultural literacy and to explore what can be gained by addressing issues of translation in the classroom." Her first experience was in 2012, attending *Along the Shore: The Landmarks of Brooklyn's Industrial Waterfront*, one of NEH's Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshops, "exploring [Brooklyn's] preservation history and the questions it raises about the meaning of landmarks." Chesne's paternal grandparents settled in Brooklyn after emigrating from Russia in the early 20th century.

She was also awarded the 2024 Dr. Conrad Krauft Professional Development Grant. Chesne will use the Krauft Grant to research Tall Grass Prairies and Laura Ingalls Wilder's routes through Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. \*

Student Association]. A very special memory for me was distributing handmade (by Honors students!) holiday ornaments at a local nursing home. Also, I am happy to see that the J Street cleanup [a part of the Bentonville Adopt-A-Street Program] has continued on!

*Favorite class or instructor?*

This is a difficult question as I thoroughly enjoyed all of the Honors courses I attended! However, Dr. Gallo's Honors World Civilizations from 1500 course has a special place in my heart as it was the course that really introduced me to the Honors Program. Looking at history through the lens of food was such a unique learning experience, and Dr. Gallo is an incredible professor.

*What did the Honors Program offer you? What do you wish people knew about Honors?*

Besides the opportunity to take academically challenging courses, the Honors Program gave me the chance to be part of a community of like-minded individuals who are not only passionate about their education, but who are also interested in being involved in the greater NWACC and NWA community! And I wish that more people knew this about the Honors Program! \*

**ALUMNA MCKENZI BRINKLEY ('19) is an NWACC Honors Program Graduate who is now living in England after completing an integrated masters. We reached out to chat about what's been going on:**

*How did you end up in England?*

I went to the University of Exeter where I did an integrated masters which was a four year program that combined undergraduate and graduate modules. So while I have both an associate's and master's degree, I don't have a bachelor's degree! I chose Exeter for its beautiful campus and its world ranking. Studying abroad and living in another country is something I had wanted to do since I was young. I had a lot of encouragement from my mom, so it always felt like something I could accomplish if I really wanted it.



### *What are some differences between college in the US and the UK?*

The admission process was different to that of the US. In the UK, you can only apply to five universities, and they have different expectations for personal statements. They are more interested in academic achievements than the flowery language we expect in personal statements in the American admissions process. I was lucky to come across a service called Across the Pond (a free service paid for by collaborating universities), where I was assigned an advisor to guide me through the process. The process also included an interview by one of the lecturers from the Physics Department of the university.

### *What are your future plans?*

In August, I'll be moving to Cambridge to work for Schlumberger ["a global technology company, driving energy innovation for a balanced planet"] as a geophysicist.

### *What is your favorite memory from the Honors Program?*

My favorite memory from the Honors Program is when the Astronomy Honors class visited the Air and Space Museum in Tulsa. My favorite Honors class was Astronomy taught by Dr. Dixie Androes [since retired]. The class provided a great environment to discuss one of my favorite topics. It also inspired me to push myself to achieve my goals.

### *What do you feel the Honors Program gave you?*

The Program offered me a way to engage with my education in a way I hadn't been able to in the past. I was encouraged to think beyond the surface and really engage with the material. I wish other people knew that the Honors Program isn't something to be intimidated by. It's full of curious people who are happy to help their fellow students out. ✨

**ALUMNA JASMINE BANMAN ('24) is an NWACC Honors Program Graduate living in Belize. She took Honors classes online, so we asked her about her remote experience:**

### *Why are you in Belize?*

I am studying in Belize because this is where I grew up. I love the place and I love the people.

### *What made you take classes at NWACC?*

Because I also have family members living in Arkansas, I started looking at colleges in that area, and that is how I ended up taking classes at NWACC.

### *What was it like being in Honors online?*

When I first started college, I did not think I would be enrolled in the Honors Program. I knew a little about being an Honors student, but I



never really considered the Program until it was recommended by my instructor, Jacqueline Jones. Although there are limitations to being an online Honors student, I am still happy I made the choice to become part of the Program. Honors instructors were always ready to challenge us, prompting us to be creative and pushing us to expand our way of thinking.

### *Which class was your favorite and why?*

One of my favorite classes was Chesne's Honors English Composition II class. I have always loved to write, but this class changed what I thought I knew about composition and taught me that writing is not so much a set of rules as it is a form of expression.

### *What would you tell a student trying to do Honors online?*

I would say that, from my experience, Honors classes are not more difficult than other classes. They are challenging, but in a different way. If I had to explain the difference between Honors classes and regular classes, I would say that regular classes build on your knowledge, whereas Honors classes not only build, but also break down any barriers you have about a particular subject, expanding the way you think about things. \*

## **Faculty Spotlight: Matt Evans**

---

### **POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR MATT EVANS**

took eight NWACC students to spend a week in New York City at the National Model United Nations Conference, competing against 1800 other college students from around the US and the world (pictured on next page). These eight students were in Evan's Intro to UN Honors section in the Spring 2024 semester, and the college, through the student activity fee, generously paid for the airfare, hotel, and conference registration for the group. The class was the culmination of five years of Honors students participating in statewide and regional Model UN conferences.



### *What do you try to feature in your Honors teachings?*

To the best of my ability, I try to build non-disposable assignments, to get students to build connections with their peers and the institution, and to explore the contrapuntal in my Honors classes. Over the semester, I want at least a few assignments and classroom experiences to travel beyond their original context, to get students more mileage out of assignments by bringing students to conferences, bringing their learning into other classes, becoming points of conversation that are not compelled by the state, and helping them engage in crafting their own agency (as students, citizens, and human beings). I see that in their research posters, Comparative

Politics cards, Model UN, Service Learning, and attending book club. Students present their work at academic conferences and sometimes through Service Learning, making connections to nonprofits. It's also great to get some of my students to attend book club and bring their



curiosities and interpretations of the latest fiction to texts, to go to Honors Student Association events to make new and great friends, or to have students discover the best and most thoughtfully productive friends, librarians.

Finally, it's a tiresome cliché to try to uncover both sides of any political issues. Edward Said, the great Palestinian public intellectual and one of the founders of comparative literature, had this great notion of the contrapuntal, the multiplicity of different and discordant notes. There's never one or even two sides to any political issue, but a multiplicity of credible positions that we should think through. For Said (as well as for me), we need to credibly weigh these positions and hold them in tension, at times. We need to see them fully in color and meaningfully think through political difference that is not immediately or easily resolvable. I bring these ideas to in-person classes (like my American National Government Honors class). In the Intro to UN class, we did it in a hybrid format with some in-person meeting prep, online preparation, and in-person conference participation.

More often than not, I bring these things to online asynchronous classes, like Comparative Politics and International Relations. In the future, we may be able to offer Honors versions of State and Local Politics, Intro to Public Administration and Public Policy, and Political Science Topics.

### *When did you get involved in political science?*

I failed to become the next Hunter S. Thompson in the previous century, so I got into my backup career - taking as many political science courses as I could, simply because it seemed like a great space to endlessly argue with my professors and classmates about the nature of the good life, struggles over meaning and collective action, and the power of the state. Over 20 years ago, I was inspired by Rachel Cory, an American college student, who got run over and killed by a bullet-proof bulldozer standing in front of a Palestinian doctor's home in Gaza, and then Martin Buber to study the margins of power. I did my dissertation on selective and pacifist conscientious objectors to military service and anti-militarism in Israel.

### *Why should students care about political science?*

People assume that political science means a series of debates over political parties or leaders, that it's a tiresome diatribe of both sides and partisan hackery. It's really an effort to think through how our political context enables and disables us as citizens and as people at the nexus of different global processes, and how we envision different notions of politics through different notions of political morality. \*

## Faculty Spotlight: Jim Laughton

---

**ENGLISH PROFESSOR JIM LAUGHTON** took fall Honors Composition students on a journey into the world of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Blending this emerging technology with hands-on learning, Professor Laughton's students conducted surveys on AI perceptions, engaged and participated in creative challenges, such as an AI-generated recipe cookoff, and created a student-focused AI guide for community colleges as part of a Service Learning project. The course exemplifies the Honors Program's commitment to providing students with real-world skills, research opportunities, and collaborative experiences. Honors students not only gained valuable insights into AI but also honed their critical thinking, teamwork, and adaptability - essential skills for future academic and professional success.



### *Laughton on his experiences:*

As an English Professor at NWACC for the past 25 years, I've been fortunate to receive a faculty sabbatical for Fall 2024. My project, "Creating Open Educational Resources (OERS)," is about developing AI-related resources for educators. I've been teaching Honors classes in Composition, American Literature, and British Literature, and I've seen firsthand how AI is starting to impact these fields. That's why I'm planning to create a self-paced Canvas course on AI for faculty. My aim is to introduce instructors to AI software, share best practices, and tackle important issues like curriculum design and academic integrity in the age of AI, to "demystify" AI for instructors. AI is becoming increasingly important in higher education, and we need locally focused faculty guides to help us harness its potential while navigating its complexities. As part of my project, I'm looking forward to interviewing local academic and business leaders who have already adopted AI. I think this research will be invaluable in understanding how AI is being integrated into our community and will help me tailor the educational content to connect with local employers and ultimately benefit our students. I see this project as a natural progression of my work in this area. I've already hosted five professional development presentations on Generative Artificial Intelligence for our faculty at NWACC, and I look forward to creating this more comprehensive project.

### *How do your special interests factor into your Honors classes?*

As with many NWACC faculty, my intellectual curiosity spans a wide range of subjects, and my current interests and readings naturally influence the content of my courses. In my Honors American Literature class, I strive to make the American past relevant to students by exploring its

## Great Plains Honors Council Conference 2024

### HONORS PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**SABRINA CHESNE** took Tate Kaudy ('24), Yullyana Laguna ('24), Braiden Burton ('24), and Allison Davidson ('24) to the annual GPHCC in Stillwater, OK, hosted by Oklahoma State University. Keeping with the theme "Honors at the Intersection," the students presented "Honors Arkansas: Using Camaraderie to Take Education Out of the Classroom." This was the 8th conference where Honors students have presented their research.

*Yullyana Laguna: GPHCC taught me about the difference between talking to a crowd and connecting with them. Public Speaking is so much more than not reading off your slides and not seeming robotic; it's about being able to capture the audience's attention and maintaining it. Everyone has their own style of doing this, and it was interesting seeing everyone's presentation styles.*

*Braiden Burton: I chose to present at GPHCC to represent NWACC Honors. As involved as I am with the program, I feel knowledgeable about our goals and what we want to accomplish in the future. I also wanted to meet other members of their respective Honors Programs and see what I could learn from them.*

*Allison Davidson: I wanted to present because it gave me the opportunity to stretch beyond my comfort zone, especially since in another state! I learned how bigger conferences function and will use that knowledge to help me with other presentations I might have.*

*Tate Kaudy: I learned the importance of time management when it comes to a presentation. I also learned valuable skills for oration and how to present myself for an audience. It was also really fun being in a new environment with the other Honors students. To see them outside the normal work/study flow, their personalities really shined through. \**

unexpected influences on the present. One example is our study of Virginia Dare's story - the first English child born in North America, who disappeared along with her entire colony. Despite the limited historical evidence, Dare's tale has become a powerful symbol of American identity, adapting to various cultural and political narratives over time. It reflects shifting perspectives on gender, race, and national origin, and has even inspired numerous products (from church fans to cigarettes). Students find it captivating - as do I - to trace how these historical "myths" originate, evolve, and continue to shape our understanding of American culture. This approach helps students connect the past with the present in meaningful ways.

### What got you into AI? Teaching it?

In early 2023, I began researching the impacts of Generative AI, such as ChatGPT and Google Bard, on student writing and composition

teaching. My Fall 2023 Honors Composition I class served as an excellent testing ground for exploring and learning to use GenAI effectively. We discovered that crafting specific prompts and critically evaluating the results are crucial skills in AI use. To illustrate this, we conducted an experiment where each student independently asked Chat GPT for a breakfast recipe costing under \$10. We then prepared the AI-generated recipes exactly as specified. The results ranged from delectable treats to questionable concoctions - like a muffin resembling a turtle rolled in hazelnuts. This hands-on project taught us - through our minds and tastebuds - the importance of carefully vetting AI outputs. Later in the term, we collaboratively created an AI guide for students. This involved conducting student and faculty surveys, with each student focusing on a specific aspect, such as different platforms, prompting techniques, and academic integrity. While the multimedia project was engaging and meaningful, it also highlighted a key challenge in GenAI research: the rapid evolution of the technology often outpaces the relevance of created content. This experience not only provided valuable lessons for the students but also informed



my approach to developing the upcoming faculty course. It underscored the need for adaptability and continuous learning - which is a hallmark of all the good teaching that occurs in our Honors Program. \*

## Honors Awards Gala (April 18, 2024)

The annual Honors Awards Gala honored outstanding students (chosen by faculty) and outstanding instructors (chosen by students), as well as Honors Program Graduates and Honors Program Distinguished Students. Graduates were also awarded their Honors Program graduation medallions. The awards are as follows:

### Honors Program Graduates:

*completed at least 3 Honors courses at NWACC*

#### **ADEOLA AYOMIKUN ABE**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences STEM

#### **KELSIE CLARK**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences; Associate of Arts

#### **CARL COONFIELD**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences STEM;  
Pre-Radiologic Imaging Sciences CP; Pre-Healthcare Studies TC

### Honors Program Graduates with Distinction:

*completed at least 4 Honors courses at NWACC*

#### **ALLISON DAVIDSON**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences STEM

#### **JASMINE TABITHA BANMAN**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences STEM; Associate of Arts

#### **MASON DUABENMIRE**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences STEM

#### **TATE KAUDY**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences STEM

#### **YULLYANA LAGUNA**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences in Global Studies; Associate of Arts

#### **MELODY LOPEZ**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences

#### **AUSTIN PARKER**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences STEM

#### **KELLY SMOTHERS**

Associate of Science, Liberal Arts and Sciences STEM



**Outstanding Honors Awards:**

**KELLY SMOTHERS**

Brown Chesne Honors Program Award: For dedication to Community, Curiosity, and Diversity

**ETHAN PETERSON**

Olivia and Benjamin Schaap Honors Program Award: For outstanding dedication to Honors scholarship

**YULLYANA LAGUNA**

Dodd Huggard Honors Program Award: For outstanding work in Honors Social or Behavioral Sciences

**ANNA HARCOURT AND COOPER CHIDDISTER**

Fox Looney Laughton Honors Program Award: For outstanding work in Honors English, Literature, and Humanities

**Outstanding Honors Association Member**

**BRAIDEN BURTON**

**Outstanding Honors Program Instructors**

**MATT EVANS - Political Science**

**CHRIS HUGGARD - History**

**SHANE MAY - Programming**

**Honors Student Association Graduate Appreciation**

**KELLY SMOTHERS - HSA President, 2023-2024**

**YULLYANA LUGANA - Secretary, Vice President, (everything really) 2022-2024**

**TATE KAUDY - Honors Communicator, 2023-2024**

