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Graduating Fall 2022

Associate of Science– Liberal Arts and Sciences



Honors Courses:

- Intro to International Relations
 - Cultural Anthropology
- Intro to Comparative Politics
- World Civilization to 1500

Section 1: Community, Curiosity, Diversity

When I began my journey at NWACC, the COVID-19 pandemic was already underway. As a result, the entirety of my time at NWACC and in the Honors Program was spent at a distance, either virtually or following social distancing guidelines. That gave me a really unique experience and perspective. I had fewer opportunities for Service Learning but the Honors Program regularly offered different Zoom lectures and talks with people with diverse experiences, professions, and passions. This became an invaluable tool for maintaining community engagement without needing to risk my health. I was able to attend a Zoom talk with Igor Danchenko as he spoke about Ukraine and Russia; it was unbelievably insightful and allowed me to gain greater understanding and connection with global communities that I've never been able to interact with personally. The Northwest Arkansas Holocaust Awareness Project organized a number of talks and lectures that were eye-opening and educational which gave me a unique opportunity to learn about more detailed aspects of the Holocaust and how we, as Arkansans, can help with the NAHAP's mission to educate people in the community. Most recently I tuned in for a talk by Dr. Aubrey Streit Krug titled "Sustainable Agriculture, Native

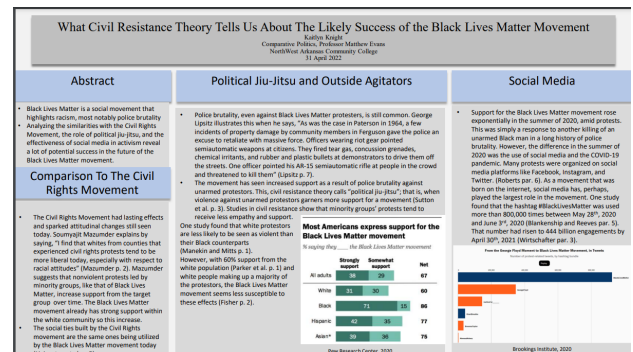
Plants, and Perennial Grains”. This subject matter isn’t in my field of study so I wasn’t sure what to expect but it introduced me to a wealth of information about sustainable agriculture and ways



that we can work to protect our planet while still gaining the sustenance that we need. They have a program that gives perennial grain plants to individuals to build personal and community gardens so that they can test out this relatively new crop in different environments and areas while educating communities at the same time. I’ve reached out to The Land Institute to see if I can be part of this program because, despite having no gardening or agriculture experience, it seems like a

really important, impactful way to make a difference in both our local community and our global community. Another opportunity for community engagement was extra credit opportunities from Honors professors. Most notably, Dr. Sevin Gallo offered extra credit for anyone who attended a community event and wrote a page explaining how it related back to the class. There’s an infinite number of possibilities because anything and everything relates back to world civilization and world history. Though I never actually completed any papers for extra credit, that opportunity pushed me to attend a number of different community events, local museums, and lectures that I never would have attended otherwise. Even with the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been a plethora of opportunities to demonstrate civic engagement and the Honors Program director and professors are the ones who’ve made the effort to make those events accessible. I would not have known about any of these events—and did not know about any of them prior to joining the Honors Program—if it hadn’t been for the individuals running and maintaining the program.

The Zoom lectures and talks were an avenue for cultivating curiosity, as well. When I first joined the Honors Program I decided that I was going to attend as many of the lectures and talks that were advertised as I could. That meant tuning into talks that weren’t in my field of study, weren’t personal passions of mine, and were topics that pushed me out of my comfort zone. I wanted to make the most of my time at NWACC and in the Honors Program in spite of the pandemic. I didn’t realize how much that commitment would spark my own curiosity and love of learning. I’m a non-traditional student so I started my college journey at 25 years old, as a mother, and I hadn’t been in school for 6 years. I didn’t like school when I was in high school and I dropped out and took the HISET. Prior to applying to NWACC, I didn’t think of myself as someone who loved accumulating knowledge. The culture and the professors at NWACC and in the Honors Program were so engaging that I fell in love with learning and the plethora of Zoom and in-person lectures outside of my degree plan were a wonderful avenue for pursuing that newfound passion. I cannot even accurately express the wealth of knowledge that I gained from both my courses, even the general education requirements, and the other opportunities available to people in the Honors Program. My courses for my degree plan were another way that I cultivated curiosity.



The Honors Program creates an environment, in class and otherwise, that is rich with diversity. The Honors classes available at NWACC were beyond my wildest expectations and the Honors professors I had were all so unbelievably brilliant, engaging, and insightful in the pursuit of exploring different perspectives. My Honors classes didn't merely scrape the surface of information or have us memorize fast facts for the short-term like some classes I've taken. We would often have extensive discussions including in depth analyses, focusing on critical thinking and diverse perspectives more than just fact retention. My Honors classes always yielded fruitful conversations, as a result; I often felt like I was learning even more from our discussions than I did from reading source material. Being a non-traditional student, I expected to feel out of place

in the Honors Program. In reality, there's not just one type of person who joins the Honors Program. I had classmates in my Honors courses who were older than me, classmates who also had children, and classmates who were still in high school. We all have such different backgrounds and experiences and it allows us to be exposed to diverse perspectives and opinions. In Dr. Matt Evans' courses, I was able to truly see and benefit from those varied perspectives when we completed our Honors research posters. The potential topics for our posters were nearly unlimited and it was eye-opening to see

that people valued just from looking at the area they chose to research. All in all, the Honors Program truly embodies its mission to provide community, curiosity, and diversity.

Section 2: Preparation

The Honors Program gave me the tools and resources to prepare myself for transferring to a university and entering the workplace in a number of ways. Perhaps most notably was my interaction with professors and classmates. As a non-traditional student, I was out of practice with academia and the workplace and I came to NWACC nervous. I began my academic career doing online classes but so many excellent Honors courses are only offered in person. I was forced out of my comfort zone when I finally chose to take in-person courses and it turned out to be a blessing. It helped me gain confidence in professional settings with strangers. My World Civilization to 1500 course with Dr. Gallo impacted me the most in that regard because of how interactive the class is. Part of the grade in the class is determined by your class participation and interaction so I started out answering questions just so I could get points. After just a week I got more comfortable and I started to enjoy interacting, to hear other people's responses to what I had said. I would've been petrified to go to a school the size of the University of Arkansas prior to joining the Honors Program but I'll be starting classes there in two months and I'm extremely excited.

Section 3: My Favorite Experience

War and Withdrawal: Failure in Afghanistan			
Kathryn Knight International Relations, Professor Matthew Evans NorthWest Arkansas Community College 17 Dec. 2021			
History	Withdrawal Was Long Overdue	Withdrawal Failure	Implications of Withdrawal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The U.S. supported the "mujahideen" rebels in Afghanistan against the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s but decided not to fight after their victory, leaving Afghanistan destabilized and in chaos. Kabul fell in April 2001 and the Taliban gained control in 1994 (Thomas p. 1). Numerous human rights violations were committed by the Taliban in the years following. Women and girls were among the most oppressed groups of Afghans. The U.S. entered Afghanistan in October 2001 after the Taliban offered a safe-haven to al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization behind the 9/11 attacks. The U.S. remained in Afghanistan for two decades. Both the war and the eventual withdrawal would be failures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within a few months of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the Taliban was pushed out. The Taliban had been the only form of government Afghanistan had known for nearly a decade and, again, the country was left in chaos with no central government ("The U.S. War in Afghanistan" par. 1). The U.S. war in Afghanistan was a costly failure. Over \$2 trillion was spent in Afghanistan. The International Crisis Group explained, "Despite billions of dollars in aid, state institutions remain fragile and unable to provide a good governance, deliver basic services to the majority of the population or guarantee human security" (Shelley p. 2). The alternative cost was in human lives, including American service members, other allied service members, U.S. contractors, journalists, and Afghan civilians and military service members. The death toll is upwards of 135,000 ("The U.S. War in Afghanistan" par. 20). <p>U.S. Costs to Date for the War in Afghanistan: \$2.313 Trillion Total</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Military: 50% Reconstruction: 30% Humanitarian: 10% Other: 10% <p>Wilson Institute, International & Trade Affairs, Brown University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The U.S.-backed president, Ashraf Ghani, abandoned the country and allegedly fled with millions in cash as the Taliban prepared to enter Kabul. (Chavez par. 20). U.S. soldiers, Afghan civilians, U.S. service members and other personnel and equipment were left behind awaiting evacuation (Afzal et al. par. 1). The U.S. was unable to garner rights for women and girls. The most at-risk Afghan girls live in the regions that preceded the withdrawal (Jalen par. 6). As a result, Afghan women have lost their access to education, jobs, and healthcare. Women are once again barred from voting, their bodies mistreated, and their families and local community members of the Taliban. The withdrawal has left hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees attempting to flee the Taliban (Afzal et al. par. 3). The withdrawal resulted in the deaths of 13 U.S. service members and an untold number of Afghan innocents, including those who perished attempting to flee on the wings of a U.S. military aircraft. <p>Ward Kuban, AP via Getty Images</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The U.S. has a long history of withdrawal under fire, including Vietnam, Bosnia, Somalia, Iraq, and Haiti, Afghanistan. This pattern could potentially lower America's reputation and credibility as an ally and an opponent, since Taliban explained the long-term ramifications of this when he said, "I never knew that the Taliban found encouragement from some of these master negotiators, and that other will come the result from Afghanistan that the United States doesn't have to be thoughtful, just outcasted" (Dobbin par. 2). Al-Qaeda supporting jihadist groups will likely be emboldened by the withdrawal and the Taliban's victory. The fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban may lead to the radicalization and recruitment of other groups across the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. (Petersen p. 1-3). This will be difficult to track with the loss of intelligence resources and personnel in the region.

One experience that I had as a member of the Honors Program that will always stay with me is Dr. Gallo's World Civilization to 1500 course. The class is structured through the lens of food so it's incredibly unique. We learned how different foods and ingredients shaped history and civilization by going to restaurants and breweries to tour and taste dishes from those civilizations. I've been interested in history and past civilizations for many years and despite all I've learned in structured courses and on my own, I've never seen history taught in this way. Not only is the class interesting and engaging, but it taught me to learn and think in a different way. On the very first day of class Dr. Gallo said a number of things that have stayed with me. Some of those things are specific to the study of history but the big one, the one that I'll take into the rest of my life, was about knowledge in general. She talked about epistemology and asked us to think critically about everything that we learn, in class and in life. She told us to ask ourselves "how do we know?". How do we know the information that is presented to us, where does it come from, and what methodology is used. There are obvious benefits to this philosophy, like being able to discern what is credible, which I'd already gotten very used to noticing in everyday life. However, the implications for accumulating knowledge are greater than just determining credibility. It made me realize that asking "how do we know?" about information that we already know is credible helps us to be better thinkers, researchers, and observers in every aspect of life. While Dr. Gallo was the first to fully put into words for me, the Honors Program as a whole embodies this philosophy. It isn't just smaller class sizes, a sense of community, or more engaging and interactive courses. The Honors Program is full of people who are committed to helping you learn how to think and observe the world differently. Dr. Gallo's World Civilization classes through the lens of food are



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Section 4: Advice

There are so many pieces of advice I'd like to give new members and prospective members. For prospective members, I highly recommend applying. I understand a lot of people's trepidation about joining the program because I was hesitant to do so. I didn't join the Honors Program or take an Honors course until I'd already been at NWACC for a year and it remains one of my biggest regrets. Whether you join the Honors Program or not, I still suggest taking as many Honors courses as possible. The class sizes are smaller and they feature a more outside-of-the-box learning structure. Fact retention is rarely the focus which allows you to learn things deeply, as opposed to memorizing fast facts for the short-term. As for new members, my number one piece of advice would be to challenge yourself to attend lectures, talks, and discussions, either in person or virtually, as much as possible. One of the greatest benefits of the Honors Program, in my opinion, is the access to knowledge. I rarely ever got information about these talks prior to joining the Honors Program but the Honors professors always advertise upcoming events and lectures. When your schedule and circumstances permit, attend the talks and Honors Program events, even if they aren't discussing a topic you're interested in, related to your degree plan, or something you'd normally be comfortable doing. There's a wealth of knowledge that is accessible to you outside of your classes and it is priceless.