Soliya Connects AU Students with Students Around the World

By: Cody Trebil

“The Fall 2010 Honors 390: Honors Interdisciplinary course will definitely be unlike any course you have taken at Ashland University and hopefully one upon which students will look back as alumni and consider one of their favorite undergraduate courses,” said Honors Director, Dr. Swanson.

Like any new program, this year’s Honors 390 course was not without problems. However, it provided an experience unlike that of any other class on campus. Providing students with an opportunity to learn about themselves, while more importantly, learning about different cultures and the people who live those cultures. This semester’s Interdisciplinary Seminar incorporated a program called Soliya. As described by their website, “Soliya is a pioneering non-profit organization using new technologies to facilitate dialogue between students from diverse backgrounds across the globe. Our flagship program, the Connect Program, uses the latest web-conferencing technology to bridge the gap between university students in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and the United States.” In a time when media plays an increasingly powerful role in shaping people’s viewpoints on political issues, Soliya provides students with the opportunity, skills, and tools to shape and articulate their own viewpoints on some of the most pressing global issues facing their generation.

It is through the Connect Program that students gain the most. Having the opportunity to chat with students around the globe is an experience that isn’t offered in most college courses.

The opportunity to bridge the gap between multiple countries is the main point behind what Soliya is trying to accomplish. Soliya’s Connect Program is giving students across the world the opportunity to communicate and share beliefs. Though Soliya is a great concept, it is not a perfect program. There have been numerous issues with the Connect Program, including technology issues, differing information among groups, and lack of consistency in group meetings. However, overall, Soliya has been a great program, offering a different kind of college course with numerous benefits. With the progression of the program, the program could be an opportunity to create a global change in attitudes among college students.

Trick or Treat for UNICEF

By: Kassey Sikora

On Thursday, October 28th the Honors Society hosted Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF around Ashland county. The event was open to all students on campus. The nearly two dozen students who attended collected approximately $320 from residents and from boxes placed around campus. UNICEF’s goal is to reduce the number of preventable childhood deaths around the world by providing simple things like access to clean drinking water, medical attention, sufficient nutrition, or immunizations. “It was easy to rally support for a cause like this and I am thrilled with the results,” said Kassey Sikora, Honors Society President.
Senior Spotlight: Sean Smith Stars in Of Mice and Men

By: Sarah Guarino

Sean Smith, a senior majoring in English and Theatre, had one of the leading roles in the play Of Mice and Men presented by the Ashland University Theatre Department in October. Not only is Sean a member of the Honors Program, but he is also a College of Arts and Sciences scholar, a performer in Madrigals, a member of the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity, and the costume designer for the play Marisol at AU.

Sean’s role in Of Mice and Men took a lot of preparation to pinpoint the aggressive and rustic characteristics of George. Sean said, “I had to speak, walk, and react completely different than I do in my normal life.” In addition, Sean reported that, “It was difficult to hide the fact that he [George] was emotional and caring for Lennie while keeping him hard and aggressive on the outside.”

However, Sean’s lengthy experience in the Theatre Department here at Ashland prepared him for an excellent performance in Of Mice and Men. Sean has participated in six productions at Ashland and said, “I have been given so many opportunities in our theatre. Because of those experiences, I am now looking at graduate school in that field. Overall, I am very lucky with what I have been given the chance to do at Ashland.” After graduation, Sean plans to continue exploring costume design and obtain a masters degree in theatre.

Honors Nursing 202: That Was Interesting

By: Jeni Dodd

What makes a good class? Is it the teacher, the topic, or the level of difficulty? For the honors nursing class that was offered this fall, it is a balanced combination of all three. NUR 202: Global Challenges in Public Health is a course that provides insight into the lives of the people in South Africa and their day-to-day struggle for health. Through videos, online discussion forums, and weekly readings, students explore what life is like in a country with limited resources.

Dr. Sondra Wolfe has brought an interesting approach to teaching this course. Since the passing of Dr. June Patton before classes began this semester, Sondra Wolfe has stepped up to teach this Honors course, which was a big adjustment from teaching strictly online classes. The neat thing about this Honors course is that it is a hybrid course, meaning it is an online course that also meets in a classroom once a week. AU freshman Spencer Dolezal says, “The way the class is set up allows me to work on the weekly homework assignments at my own pace. It's nice because that lets me enjoy the class day videos and discussions.”

So you want my recommendation? Take this course! Not only will the students learn about their own health, but they will also learn how little money is needed to improve the health of impoverished countries and what that money is being spent on in Africa.
Will I fit in? It’s all so new, how will I learn to adjust? Am I the only one who feels this way? These are all questions that incoming freshmen may have when approaching their college careers. Here in the Ashland University Honors Program, steps have been taken to alleviate such worries.

This year’s freshman class of Honors students hail from the expected towns across Ohio, but also from Pennsylvania, Colorado, South Dakota, New York, and even Australia! Diversity in the Honors Program is encouraged and welcomed warmly. As an incoming freshman, I found myself afraid that I would not fit in with the “smart people crowd”; however, I discovered that others felt the same way I did, and have made some of my closest friends within this tightly knit community.

Every freshman at Ashland University is required to take an “Accent on Success” course where they are introduced to the necessities of college life. However, scholars in the Honors Program are required to take a “First Year Honors Seminar” instead which covers the necessities but also delves deeper into topics of the professor’s choice. This year, professors have chosen to enrich students with the arts, authentic experiences, and even topics delving into peace and nonviolence. I have found my Honors 101 experience to be an extremely rewarding one; I have learned the basic ins and outs of this university and feel like I have finally crossed the border into becoming a true Ashland University college student.

Every day I am more and more thankful that I chose to become a part of the Honors Program. I already feel that it has endowed me with a more consummate college experience and cannot wait to see what more it has to offer.

December Graduates Present Capstone Projects

Every senior graduating from the Honors Program at Ashland University completes a Capstone Project, an original and creative final project that helps the senior dive deeper into a specific area of their major. Honors Program projects can range from musical compositions to group psychotherapy analyses to philosophical treatises and everything in between. After taking a Capstone preparation class in their junior year, the senior will spend two semesters doing research, analysis, and writing. Capstone Projects are archived in the Ashland University library for posterity after the senior defends their project in the last weeks of their final semester.

This year, the Honors Program proudly presents three seniors graduating in December: Amber Chase, Christopher Williams, and Tyler Millhouse.

Amber Chase is a Criminal Justice major whose project examines the arguments for and against the exclusionary rule in criminal law. After her successful graduation from Ashland, Amber plans to go to law school and then work as a federal criminal investigator.

Christopher Williams is a Philosophy and Religion major who is writing a “critical analysis of Radical Orthodoxy’s interpretation of Duns Scotus’ univocity of being”. Christopher hopes to be accepted in the JET (Japanese English Teachers) program after his graduation, and will then go to graduate school for a degree in theology.

Tyler Millhouse is a Philosophy major whose project is titled “Natural Law Perspectives on Contraception and Human Sexuality”, a philosophical analysis through the Catholic tradition. After his graduation, Tyler will pursue either a law degree or will attend graduate school for philosophy.

“Should the Criminal Go Free Because the Constable Blundered?”

Senior Amber Chase defends her Honors Capstone Project
Letter from the Editor

Hello everyone!

Wow, what a semester! This fall we added forty-nine new faces to the Honors Program! It has been awesome to get to see and know all of the new faces!

This is the first newsletter of this school year and the first one that I have worked on. It has been such a rewarding experience for me! I want to thank all of the writers for all the work that they put into writing their articles and for putting up with my emails. I also want to thank Nancy Andres who has helped walk me through the entire process.

Thank you to all of our Honors Society Officers and Honors Program Interns!

Honor Society Officers for 2010-2011

President: Kassey Sikora
Vice President: Lindsey Knapp
Secretary: Theresa Riley
Treasurer: Nader Shihada
Public Relations: Jessica Anderson

Freshman Reps: Katy Higaki and Melany Bagnola

Honors Program Interns:
Val Grosso
Melany Bagnola
Jeni Dodd
Cody Trebil
Kassey Sikora
Sarah Guarino
Nick Grantiz

~ Val Grosso