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Student Profile:
Samantha Williams
By John Ladd

When I met with Sam Williams, a freshman and recent inductee into the Honors Program, for my interview of her, she was busily hand-drawing a Mother’s Day card for her Mom. When I asked to see it, she told me that the card was one of many she had done by hand over the years, and that one of her dreams was to one day found her own greeting card company. Why the interest in greeting cards? Samantha is a Graphic Design major, one of the few members of the MCHP with a major in the visual arts.

She approaches her major with a great deal of enthusiasm, and she approached her Honors Preparation Year in the same way. She says graphic design and the MCHP both require hard work and focus, and in that way the two are very compatible. She hopes to be one of the first Graphic Design majors to graduate with honors.

When asked why she chose to take the honors route, Sam told me that she “doesn’t like doing things the easy way.” She hopes the Honors program can enhance her education.

After making it through what can sometimes be the grueling HPY process, she said that she felt the experience was worthwhile. Having lived on the Honors wing of the Academic floor of Egan Hall this year, Sam lived, had class, and attended events with her fellow HPY students, and found that over the course of the year they had formed strong friendships.

Overall Sam is very happy with the Honors program, and she did mention that early registration and honors housing helped to sweeten the deal for her. In the end though, it was the sense of accomplishment of having made it through to full membership in the MCHP. Says Sam, “I took the hard way and still succeeded!”

English Department Expands Honors Course Offerings
By Kyle King

Along with the announced expansion of more housing and more students come more questions. How will the faculty deal with the increased number of students? Of particular concern is how Honors courses will be affected. Some freshmen students already wondered about a glut of students when their English Seminar courses this winter were over capacity.

“We’re not exactly sure what caused the overflow,” says English Department Chair Dr. Jeffrey Roessner, but students need not fear. There will be no dearth of Honors English classes next year. In addition to the two English Seminar courses typically offered Winter term and one World or Western Classics course offered regularly each spring, there are two offerings of Academic Discourse on the plate for incoming freshmen next fall. One is scheduled to be taught by Dr. Joanne McGurk, the other by Dr. Heidi Hosey.

Additionally, Roessner let it be known, “Core revision is a major item on the College’s agenda.” There are tentative plans to reduce the Core by roughly two courses, although it is not known which requirements will no longer be part of the Core. Roessner speculated that one of the College Writing requirements could be eliminated, which would relieve a great amount of pressure from a stretched-thin faculty, although the change would not affect the requirements for current students.

However, within the department, Roessner alluded to planned courses that could generate a lot of interest not only to English majors, but also to students from other departments. “Next year, we are planning to offer an additional elective, taught by Dr. [Christina] Riley-Brown, that concerns environmental writing,” he stated. As such, the course would be cross-listed with Sustainability studies and could count toward a variety of requirements. Furthermore, Roessner announced his intention to refresh some of the traditional seminar classes. Tentatively on the slate for next year is the ever-popular Counterculture class with Dr. Ken Schiff and a new offering, Victorian and Gothic literature with Dr. Christy Rieger.

“Our goal is to satisfy our majors, Honors offerings, and the Core requirements,” Roessner concluded. “And I think we’re going to do a very good job of that next year.”
Student Profile: Rachel Sites, *Quest* Editor

By Megan Cody

Not to know what has been transacted in former times is to be always a child. If no use is made of the labors of past ages, the world must remain always in the infancy of knowledge.

* Cicero, (106 BC- 43 BC)

Rachel Sites is a detective: a hunter of the past, with the wisdom to guide the future. Rachel, whose home away from campus is in West Chester, PA, is a senior archaeology major. Motivated by the words of Cicero, she has made it her goal in life to search out the mysteries of the past and make certain our world does not remain in “the infancy of knowledge.” She maintains a busy schedule that is steeped deeply in archaeological studies. She is currently finishing her thesis, which involves an immense database and threat-assessment survey for historic cemeteries in Erie County. Rachel also supervises the Funerary Archaeology lab, works at the Writing Center, and is co-editor of the *Quest*—in addition to taking intense courses for her major. In her few moments of extra time, Rachel enjoys reading, writing fiction or plays, horse-back riding, fencing, and acting. Her passions in life include family, history, good books, and music. Upon graduating, Rachel plans to attend the University of Sheffield in England for a graduate degree in European Prehistoric Archaeology. Rachel has certainly left her mark on Mercyhurst—contributing greatly to the Archaeology Department and the Mercyhurst College Honors Program. So now that Rachel is crossing the graduation threshold, what is her advice to MCHP underclassmen? She says, “Make the most of the requirements for the program. Don’t let them just be requirements; I’ve done that, and it really takes the fun out of your year. Make the most of your time here at Mercyhurst. These are years to cherish!”

**Fall Honors Courses**

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Discourse (Dr. McGurk)</td>
<td>Dr. Snyder</td>
<td>MWF 12:30-1:50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Discourse (Dr. Hosey)</td>
<td></td>
<td>TTH 12:10-2:05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statistics (Ms. Deshmukh)</td>
<td></td>
<td>TTH 2:15-4:10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophical Inquiry (Dr. Snyder)</td>
<td></td>
<td>MWF 9:30-10:50</td>
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<td>American Government (Dr. Federici)</td>
<td></td>
<td>MWF 11:00-12:20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intro. to Psychology (Mr. Hoff)</td>
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<td>TTH 10:05-12:00</td>
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Mercyhurst prides itself on looking to the future. Expanding the opportunities for students has always been and continues to be a motivating factor in developing new programs and incorporating cutting-edge technology into the curriculum. Blackboard, PowerPoint and the new Smart Podiums are all relatively recent examples of integrating technology with classes at Mercyhurst. Now, however, there is another, completely different option that is taking shape on campus. The Center for Information Technology, CIT, is currently creating an alternate “MercyWorld” through the auspices of Second Life, a virtual classroom program similar to the Sims game. Joining the ranks of schools such as Princeton and Vassar, the Mercyhurst island in Second Life provides a full online-learning experience. According to the Second Life website, with the program, “learning is a hands-on experience that simulates the feel of a classroom, or better yet, field work without the cost and challenges of venturing into the field.”

With the opening of the island becoming increasingly imminent, it’s time to look at just how such technology could actually work in classes. The immediate attraction to Honors courses is clear: with Second Life, you can virtually experience such places as the Sistine Chapel as recreated by Vassar or actually step into the environment of a painting like Van Gogh’s “Starry Night.” With such a resource, the possibilities for academic application are nearly limitless. However, what are the practicalities? Having every student create a Second Life account and avatar as a requirement for classes that may or may not incorporate the program will undoubtedly create the same annoyances, possibly on an even higher scale, that one hears from students whose professors do not use Blackboard. All those little technology charges added onto student’s bills incorporate access fees for Blackboard: is it really fair to have everyone pay for something that a portion of students will never use? Then again, is it fair to have one part of the student body pay for something another doesn’t, just because they happened to register for a professor who does use it? Is mandatory participation in Second Life-supplemented classes going to be accepted by the student body at large or should more time be spent investigating the interest of the student body?

Regardless of the logistical issues that have yet to be solved, the next few years should see some amazing growth in the Mercyhurst curriculum. Tester courses are already in the works, so it will definitely be interesting to see the changes wrought by the marriage of cutting-edge technology and classroom or even online classes.
MCHP Seniors: A Farewell

At this year’s graduation, twelve seniors will be graduating from the Honors program. Quest sent out questionnaires asking them their opinions about different aspects of Mercyhurst’s Honors program. Five responded, and here are some of their responses. The Quest staff wishes each and every Senior the best of luck.

1. What was your favorite Honors class at Mercyhurst and why?

Ashley Gabriel: There are two honors classes that are my favorite, and I am having trouble choosing between the two. First, Dr. McFee’s Religious Persons and Traditions. He was an awesome instructor, and I learned a lot in his class. We also had a great group and some excellent discussions. The second one was Dr. Roessner’s World Classics. He was also a great teacher, and we had many good discussions in that class as well.

Kevin Schneider: Academic Discourse. Even though it was a lot of work at the time, it definitely prepared me for writing in college. The setup of the class, integrating novels, textbooks, and films, made it very engaging and unlike any other class I have taken.

Abigail McDonald: My favorite honors class was Applied Ethics because I felt more engaged in the topics on whole in comparison to other classes.

Nicole Ruffo: My favorite honors class was Philosophical Inquiry with Dr. Snyder because he had a great teaching style that made the class interesting and very worthwhile.

Jess Kocent: United States History III with Dr. Magoc. I loved the content. I am a bit of a history nerd!

2. What’s the best part about being in the Honors program?

Ashley Gabriel: I liked taking the core courses with smaller groups of students and more opportunities for class interaction and discussion.

Kevin Schneider: The opportunity to present research at national conferences and to network with others in the same field across the nation.

Abigail McDonald: The best part about being in the Honors program is that it helped to keep me motivated throughout the years, basically acting as a driving force for a need to achieve great things.

Nicole Ruffo: The best part of the honors program is the feeling of accomplishment, and of being ahead of the game, by completing a portfolio and having activity cards. These things helped me to start thinking about my future earlier than most and allowed me to develop a detailed resume.

Jess Kocent: Being on the Council for three years. I met a lot of awesome people, who really cared about the Honors Program and who were as dedicated as I was in making it better.

3. Conversely, what’s the worst part?

Ashley Gabriel: Before the activity cards were created and we had to attend 15 honors certified events each year. I always forgot to get things documented or get tickets when I went to events, so two weeks before portfolios were due I was attending every event on campus.

Kevin Schneider: It seems like the school does not take the honors program seriously. Any perks that belonged to the members of the honors program have been slowly taken away over the past few years. If the school wants to keep the honors program, it should show some appreciation for all the extra work that honors students do.

Abigail McDonald: Not having a wider variety of Honors classes to choose from.

Nicole Ruffo: The thesis part was not a fun experience, but it was a good learning experience.

Jess Kocent: Doing my thesis. I know that it was for my own good, and now that it is almost done, I am glad it is a requirement. It taught me a lot about research, but actually doing that research in addition to the everyday demands of being an Honors student was rough.

4. What are your plans for next year?

Ashley Gabriel: Next year I will be participating in a service program called the Urban Catholic Teacher Corps. This program is through Boston College and I will be earning my Master’s Degree in the summer and serving in an urban catholic school during the school year. The program lasts two years and I will be living and working in Boston!

Kevin Schneider: Next year I will be attending Florida International University in order to obtain a Ph.D. in chemistry with a concentration in forensic science.

Abigail McDonald: Graduate school: Masters of Science in Biological Sciences.

Nicole Ruffo: I plan to do a year of service with Americorps and then go to graduate school to be a geriatric nurse practitioner.

Jess Kocent: I will be staying here at Mercyhurst to pursue a Master's Degree in Special Education.

5. How about ten years down the road? Where do you see yourself?

Ashley Gabriel: Ten years is really far away. I guess I see myself back in Pennsylvania teaching French and hopefully I will have started a family by then. Someday I think I want to go back to school for my doctorate so I can teach at a collegiate level.

Kevin Schneider: I hope to be out of graduate school and be working for either a state or federal crime lab as a forensic toxicologist.

Abigail McDonald: Ten years down the road, I see myself as being well established in a career that is directly or closely related to forensic genetics.

Nicole Ruffo: I see myself working as a nurse practitioner in a nursing home with Alzheimer's patients, and hopefully raising a family.

Jess Kocent: Teaching Social Studies in a public school in Erie or Pittsburgh.

6. Any parting words of wisdom for current Honors students?

Ashley Gabriel: Just have fun and enjoy your years here in school because they will be over before you know it.

Kevin Schneider: Take advantage of all the opportunities the honors program can offer you. In the long run, they are invaluable experiences and connections that will serve you well in the future.

Abigail McDonald: Live each day according to our school’s motto: [Seize the day-‘grasp the opportunity’]. Reach forward at all times...because most of the time (if not always) it is attainable.

Nicole Ruffo: I would encourage students to get involved on campus and within their major departments early in order to gain experience and to help them decide what their interests are for the future.

Jess Kocent: Stick with it. Yeah some of this stuff is a pain in the butt, but it is an awesomely fulfilling feeling to be a senior and to look back on what you have accomplished to stay in the Honors Program. So don't give up!