Honors Senior wins Fulbright

We are proud to announce that Katelyn Browher, Class of 2011, is the recipient of a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship. The purpose of Fulbright ETA is to encourage international dialogue through the sharing of national cultures and languages. Katelyn will be working with third year university students in Constanta, Romania at Ovidus University. In her free time, Katelyn hopes to use her time to help elementary school children learn English and US geography.

While Katelyn’s family has always been engaged with people from different cultures, her attachment to Romania stemmed from the ice cream store in her hometown of Weirs Beach, New Hampshire: “I worked with Romanian college students who were in the US on student/worker exchange programs for the summer. They introduced me to their language and culture and I was hooked on all things Romanian. “ Through her coworkers, she was exposed to Romanian cuisine, language, culture and history. Katelyn continued to educate herself by choosing to write papers focused on Romanian topics and reading books set in Romania. She hopes to work with Romanian students again this summer and hone her language skills before she goes abroad in the fall.

During her time at CUA, Katelyn majored in History and Secondary Education. She initially wanted to major in vocal performance, but then realized that teaching was her real passion. Even after switching majors, she continued to participate in the University Chorus and the University singers for seven semesters. Katelyn graduated Summa Cum Laude with Honors in Theology and Humanities.

Katelyn enthusiastically describes her CUA experience, saying, “The professors and administrative staff were wonderful at CUA. Most professors were enthusiastic and supportive in addition to being great scholars and I received great encouragement from them to pursue the Fulbright grant.”

Remembering Fr. Pritzl

I knew Kurt --- I used to pronounce his name in German which made him smile—from the days when he was a young professor in the School of Philosophy. He was an attractive man with a head full of dark brown curls. We were already friends then, since I cultivated an interest in philosophy. I had asked faculty to help create the University Honors Program. Rev. William Wallace, OP, Msgr. John Wippel and Msgr. Robert Sokolowski, well established scholars in their respective fields within philosophy, recommended that Kurt join Dr. Jean Moss, who then taught Rhetoric in the Department of English, in framing the first semester of the Aristotelian Studium. It was then and is still called Argumentation and Reasoning. It introduces Logic and serves as a general introduction to systematic philosophy.

After some time Kurt disappeared. He had begun his preparation for the priesthood in the Order of Preachers. He returned to the Program as Rev. Kurt Pritzl and began teaching again in the sequence. He loved the Greek philosophers, especially the Pre-Socratic philosophers, the first to conceive of Nature (physia) as a subject of investigation. They were early physicists, he insisted, and their methodology constituted a nascent scientific view of the world. Father Pritzl read the texts in the original Greek.

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Honors Program Numbers:

- 94 Incoming Freshmen
- 33 Seniors Graduating with Honors
- 17 University Scholars
- 14 Honors courses offered in the Fall
- 1 New Honors Living and Learning Community in Gibbons Hall
Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

As another academic year winds down, we have much to celebrate. During the Honors Convocation on May 13th, we honored our graduating seniors. 35 received track honors and 17 were recognized as University Scholars, the highest distinction awarded by the University. Many of our students were also awarded honors by the various schools and departments of the University. All of our graduating seniors have exciting futures in front of them, whether in graduate school, professional life, service, international study, or religious vocations.

I am very excited about the upcoming 2011-2012 academic year. In the fall, we will be sending a record 14 Honors students to Oxford University. On the home front, three of our most distinguished faculty, Dr. William Klingshirn of the Department of Greek and Latin, Dr. Philip Rousseau of The Program in Early Christian Studies, and Dr. Sidney Griffith of the Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages, will be teaming up to teach Humanities 101 ("From Jesus to Mohammed") to our incoming freshmen. In the spring of 2012, we are excited to be offering a spring break seminar in Vienna, novel Jurassic Park, focusing on how man cannot successfully control nature due to chaos theory.

Katie Purple, Class of 2011

Capstone Seminar Spring 2011:

The Honors Capstone class was a unique experience. In a small seminar of sixteen seniors, we had majors ranging from philosophy and politics to music and mathematics, so we each brought different academic backgrounds to the discussions on the role of science in the humanities. Often, one person’s perspective would enlighten the rest of us about a deeper level of the text that we could not have understood on our own. While Dr. Shoemaker contributed generous knowledge from his own discipline, he also allowed us the autonomy to delve into what interested us in our readings. In addition to the weekly discussions, another main focus of the Honors Capstone class was the thesis paper, which was the product of a semester’s reading, research, and musing. The topics ranged as broad as our majors. I chose to write about the role of science in the novel Jurassic Park, focusing on how man cannot successfully control nature due to chaos theory. I really enjoyed writing it. The class also was a great opportunity to reconnect with other UHP seniors with whom I hadn’t had class in at least two years. It truly was the capstone to my honors program experience!

Katie Purple, Class of 2011

The Merkel and Suziedelis Funds

A number of Honors Alumni have inquired about where to direct contributions to the program. We recommend that, if you wish to contribute to the program, that you direct your contribution to one of two funds:

The Suziedelis Fund provides compensation for faculty invited to prepare new courses for the Honors Program, or, in the absence of such a program, any innovative courses for undergraduates.

The Dr. Ingrid Merkel Endowed Honors Program Fund is used to provide financial support to the University Honors Program. Distributions for the fund may be used for costs of participation by Program students in international educational programs, study abroad programs for academic credit, or other educational or enrichment travel conducted in conjunction with the Program; travel and other costs of participation by Program students in scholarly, academic, or professional conferences; costs of participation by Program students in research projects; faculty development in furtherance of the academic mission of the Program; and other aspects of the Program at the Fund Manager’s discretion.
Remembering Fr. Pritzl, Continued

In later years the program instituted the Senior Capstone Seminar for honors seniors who had completed all program requirements. The idea was to create a comprehensive view of the disciplines within the program. In addition, each senior would contribute a perspective from his or her major, so that the seminar presented a common multidisciplinary project with students’ disciplinary foci.

Each spring term, during more than ten years, I assembled the students’ contributions which constituted the senior seminar. “Teaching” this seminar was a rare privilege which I often shared with colleagues from the various disciplines. I chose mostly broad topics that allowed expansion and broadening of perspectives. “Nature” was one such a topic. Very early in the seminar Father Pritzl would engage the seniors in a discussion of the Pre-Socratic texts, and would have the students test them for their applicability to contemporary issues.

I remember one seminar discussion quite vividly. The group was small, but even so, the seniors were fiercely divided into progressive and conservative ideologues who never saw eye to eye on any issue. Some of the group had attended a course on artificial intelligence and were convinced that the future of mankind would bring life eternal, that every part of our mortal body would eventually be replaced by better and permanent parts. The conservatives decried such progress as hubris and did not yield an inch to their opponents. Enter Father Pritzl. After I had explained to him the conundrum of the seminar, he smiled a wicked little smile: “In other words,” he asked, “you want to live forever?” “Yes,” the progressives answered triumphantly “wouldn’t you?” Father Pritzl stopped smiling. He lowered his voice and after some deliberate silence said quietly and simply: “No, I would not. I am satisfied with the life I have. I do not want the burden of an extended existence on earth, even with perfect body parts. It’s a ghastly thought.”

This was my penultimate seminar. It happened in the year when Kurt fell ill. In the two and half years that followed, he gave ample testimony to the meaning of the “good life” that the philosophers advocate. Lately I have often dwelled on Kurt’s words. He died as he had lived, a man of great humanity and dignity. I hope that the seniors remember his equanimity in judging life in light of inescapable death.

Ingrid Merkel, May 17, 2011

Alumni Spotlight: Claire Denny (’09)

Where does a Medieval Studies major get a job? Honors alumni Claire Auger Denny was constantly facing that question during her undergraduate career. “I knew I didn’t want to teach and I liked art, so museums seemed like a good option.”

Claire serves as the Nam June Paik Archives Assistant at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and is responsible for processing the Paik collection. What does processing mean? Processing a collection includes unpacking each object from the boxes in which it arrived, cataloging each item, giving it a detailed description and catalogue number, and making sure that it is properly re-packed. An artist will often pack his/her own artwork in such a way that it is likely to be damaged, and the registrar’s office is responsible for protecting all of the artwork through proper archival storage.

The Smithsonian acquired the Paik collection in 2009 and Claire was there, helping to unload the truck the day it arrived. She began processing the collection in late September of 2010.

“I enjoy my job because I get to do something different every day. I make measurable progress and I’m not sitting at a desk. I never know what I’m going to find when I open a box. Earlier today I opened a case and found a bust of Elvis!”

Claire interned with the Registrar at the American Art Museum for two years, as well as interning at the Archives of American Art and the Walters Museum in Baltimore. While at CUA, she majored in Medieval and Byzantine Studies and minored in Art History.

The National Gallery of Art recently held an exhibit of works by Paik and a major exhibition of his works is expected to open in 2012.

Paik’s most famous piece is likely Electronic Superhighway, pictured on the right. This piece is constructed from neon and closed-circuit televisions and is exhibited in the Smithsonian American Art Museum here in DC.
We ran across this paper while sorting old Honors syllabi. Many of you will recognize the name “Ricky Bushytail” from Dr. Therese Druart’s Philosophy classes. Dr. Druart has been teaching courses for the Honors program since 1986.

(Printed with the approval of Therese Druart)

Honors graduates, we would love to hear from you!

Please update us on recent events or accomplishments that we could feature in upcoming newsletters. If you would like to share photos or memories from college, we would love those too! Otherwise, we would appreciate if you could simply update your contact information with us in a short email.

Please direct email to: cuahonorsprogram@cua.edu

Or visit us at http://Honors.cua.edu

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Dear Student in Ultimate Questions,

I, Ricky Bushytail, preparing already readings for the long winter, since Fall will be busy with nut gathering, have a question for you and literally and blissfully it will be the ultimate one (no pun intended). You see I heard you chanting “All men by nature desire to know” and all philosophers pursue the truth. But what is truth? According to Aristotle, Aquinas, Hume, and Kant, is Ruthie Ruthie because she is so called by the kids at school or do the kids call her so because she is Ruthie? But then what is the role of her mother and father in naming her? Is our mind attuned to know nuts, because there are nuts? Or do we think there are nuts because we think so? Please, disentangle for me this nutty and knotty question and tell me which philosopher(s) I should read on this issue and so I would get hold of the text to give a good education to my children. Besides, I heard that some philosopher would say that squirrels are "true": What does he mean by that? Is true said in many ways? Thank you!

Truly yours,

Ricky Bushytail