



The Crozier

The Catholic University
of America
Honors Program

Issue 8
Spring 2014

President Garvey in the Classroom

This past January, twenty-two students stepped into the classroom for a course entitled “The Virtues” and greeted their new professor, President John Garvey himself.

When President Garvey approached the University Honors Program with the proposal to teach a course on the virtues, he was continuing a theme that has carried great import in his almost four years as President of Catholic University. For his inaugural year (2010-2011), he chose the theme of “Intellect and Virtue: The Idea of a Catholic University.” In spring 2011, the university devoted lectures, programming, and various campus events to discussion on the cardinal virtues,

and each month from January to April was devoted to one of the four. Since then, discussion of the various virtues has infused President Garvey’s speeches and remarks. In spring 2014, this discussion extended in a very specific way to the classroom.

Though Catholic University has featured theology and philosophy courses on the virtues, President Garvey’s course embodied a unique approach. By incorporating texts from not only philosophy and theology, but also from literature and art, he led students in an exploration of the virtues’ different portrayals. President Garvey explained this

approach to teaching in an interview with *The Catholic University of America Magazine*: “There are a couple of things I really like about this approach. First, it encourages students to consider the virtues through a number of lenses, each with its own advantages. Reading examples of prudence in literature might highlight aspects of the virtue that may not come up in a philosophy text. The reverse is true, too... An interdisciplinary approach also discourages an overly circumscribed view of academics. Students learn to look for truth in literature and art as well as in theology and philosophy... Perhaps

Cont’d on page 2

In this edition:

President Garvey’s course, “The Virtues” 1

Student Involvement in Art Restoration Project 1

Audra Nakas: Travels to Oxford 2

Student Photo Corner 2

Meet the Asst. Director, Dr. Jennifer Paxton 3

Letter from the Director 4

Students Undertake Colorful Project

For the past several years, tucked away in the closets of Salve Regina Hall, a burned and water-damaged painting sat, the remnants of a beautiful and historic piece of art. This past semester saw its restoration and hanging in the Mullen Library, and two University Honors Program students took a part in it.

The painting, entitled *Pool*, was painted by Kenneth Noland, a professor at CUA from 1951 to 1960, a famous American Color Field painter and one of the most influential artists of the Washington Color School. In acknowledgement of his rewarding teaching career at CUA, he donated the painting to the university in 1961. Unfortunately, in subsequent years, it suffered fire and water damage, and a subsequent restoration effort produced less than desirable results. Dr. Nora Heimann, chair of the art department, hoped to see the painting restored to its former vibrancy, and with a recent endowment from Jane Nebel Henson, a former student of Noland at CUA and wife of puppeteer Jim Henson, and the support of Dr. Lawrence R. Poos, Dean of the

School of Arts and Sciences, this became possible. This time, the restoration took place under the leadership of Arthur Page of Page Conservation, Inc. in Washington, D.C. It reached a successful conclusion this past spring.

As the restoration was underway, Professor Lara Yeager-Crasselt approached junior art history majors and Honors students Charles Lavallee and Elizabeth Denholm and asked them to write the wall label that explains the painting to its viewers. Despite their busy academic schedules, they eagerly began their research, drawing from resources they found in the library, in the art department, and from senior art history major Ashley Wilson, who did her thesis on Noland’s work. The CUA Archives, containing letters from Noland to the university at the time of *Pool*’s donation, brought a unique, personal dimension to their project which they really enjoyed. “If you take a contemporary art class, Noland is in the textbook,



The newly restored Pool by Kenneth Noland, now hanging in the Mullen Library.

so having that connection to CUA brings a different level of history,” explained Elizabeth. Ultimately, they had so much information that it was difficult to condense everything to 250 words!

Important to understanding *Pool* was knowing Noland’s background in the Washington Color School, a loosely affiliated group of artists of the 1950s and 1960s that used color and

Cont’d on page 3

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:
cua-honorsprogram@cua.edu

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



Politics, Lewis, and Many Adventures

By Audra Nakas, class of 2015

To call my experience at Oxford exciting and transformative sounds like the tired cliché of many a student who ventures abroad, but it is an accurate description. In the exhilaratingly challenging one-on-one tutorial system, I learned that it is, in fact, possible to research and write a seven-page paper on an unfamiliar topic in three days. I studied Modern Political Theory, C.S. Lewis, and



Audra (center) with two friends, and C.S. Lewis works in hand, before leaving for travel

Middle East Politics, the latter being the most challenging. My Middle East Politics tutor, a friendly, laidback, Australian doctoral student, was a tough critic—his feedback

always began with the frustratingly general comment, “Good essay,” and then proceeded to detail everything that was wrong with it. In the one-on-one setting, I couldn’t hide my ignorance when he asked me questions. Although I felt inadequate at times, I was intrigued by what I was learning, and my desire to improve and to prove myself to my tutor kept me motivated. To my delight, he told me at the end that he had been impressed with my work all along. As humbling as the academic experience was, it was also affirming to realize that I could thrive at Oxford.

Despite the heavy workload, I found plenty of time to explore Oxford, which boasts a rich history brimming with notable figures and cultural icons. I visited several places that appear in the Harry Potter movies; occasionally, I ate lunch at my college’s dining hall, the setting for Hogwarts’s Great Hall. Nearer to my heart, however, was the opportunity to immerse myself in the surroundings of one of my favorite writers, C.S. Lewis. Besides studying his works, I had drinks at Eagle & Child, where Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and the rest of the Inklings literary group met regularly. I listened to Lewis’ per-

sonal secretary recount anecdotes about “Jack,” as he was known. I even biked out to his grave and laid flowers there. Finally, I went to some events at the Oxford Union Society, renowned for its superb debates and for hosting everyone from Winston Churchill to Mother Theresa to Stephen Hawking. The most memorable event I attended was a Q&A session with Richard Dawkins, during which a fellow CUA classmate stumped the

zealous proponent of New Atheism with a question about the origins of morality.

What I most treasure, however, is the friendships I made with full-time Oxford students, whom I met at Oxford’s

Catholic chaplaincy. Despite the UK’s secularism and small Catholic population, for various reasons Oxford happens to be home to a vibrant Catholic community, which significantly eased my transition to life abroad. My friends were a diverse bunch: undergraduate and graduate students of various nationalities, some Dominican (Order of Preachers) friars, and a young philosophy lecturer. Some other CUA classmates and I even hosted an American-themed party for our new friends, which included country music, homemade fried chicken and sweet tea, and a pub quiz on topics such as American history and sports. It was a hit.

Afterward, my travels took me to Ireland, including the Cliffs of Moher, Dublin, and Belfast; a 24-hour jaunt in Paris; Valencia and Madrid, in Spain; and a week in Lithuania, where all of my grandparents were born. There was no shortage of adventures, such as hitching a ride on a tour bus—only possible in Ireland, where people are exceptionally friendly—and keeping up with the Spanish, who don’t find it unusual to eat dinner at midnight and then go out at 2 am. I was sad to leave Oxford, which will always have a piece of my heart, but the rigors of traveling made me happy to come home.

Garvey virtues, cont’d

Cont’d from page 1

most important, the presentations of virtue in art, literature, and film make a greater emotional appeal to students than a dry philosophical account might. Part of my aim is to make the students fall in love with the virtues we study – to change the way they act as well as the way they think.”*

President Garvey structured much of his teaching around class discussions, challenging the students to contribute thoughtful ideas. Grace Woo, an Honors freshman lauded this intellectually stimulating discussion format: “We learned, besides the course objectives, the value of discussion between peers. Often, we would come to class with very different takes on the reading, and it was interesting and enlightening to hear what everyone had to say.” From class discussions guided by the President, his profound knowledge of the subject matter, and his experience as husband, father, and lawyer, Grace felt that she learned a great deal and called the President a wonderful teacher.

John Archer, a third-year English Ph.D. student and the President’s teaching assistant for “The Virtues” course, also observed the beneficial effects of this teaching approach, which helped the students to under-

stand “what the virtues entail in concrete settings.” Through works of art and literature, the students encountered situations and characters “that mimic real life.” The students not only were able to relate these scenarios to their own personal experiences, but also became better prepared to encounter the questions that these scenarios might raise in the future. Archer explains that many of these questions, at their core, attempt to identify “what it means to be human,” questions that are the essence of studies in the liberal arts.

As the newest addition to the Honors in Liberal Studies track, President Garvey’s course probed the puzzles of human nature. In the words of President Garvey, it taught students “to think across disciplines, to put Caravaggio in conversation with Aquinas, and Josef Pieper in conversation with Evelyn Waugh.”* As evident by its enthusiastic reception, President Garvey’s goals have been actualized, and students have taken these lessons on the virtues to heart.

*from “Crossing the Academic Borders” in the spring 2014 issue of *The Catholic University of America Magazine*

Student Photo Corner



One of the newest UHP events that took place this semester was Honors Jeopardy! Team “Ghost Ride the Whip” faced off against Team “MATS.” After an intense competition, filled with questions submitted by Honors professors about Honors course material, Team “MATS” took the lead and won!



Q&A: Dr. Jennifer Paxton, Asst. Director of the Honors Program

During the summer of 2013, Dr. Jennifer Paxton joined the Honors Program as the Assistant Director! Get to know her with the first installment of our "Q&A" series.

What is your education background? Teaching background?

I received my BA in History from Yale and my PhD in History from Harvard. While I was working on my PhD, my husband got a teaching position at American University, so we moved down to Washington, DC. After I finished my PhD, I taught part-time at Georgetown for more than ten years. In 2009-10, I taught graduate courses in medieval Britain at CUA as an adjunct, and then the following year, when Dr. Jansen went on leave, I started teaching full time at CUA, and I've been here ever since. I have taught undergraduate courses here on medieval Britain, medieval Ireland, and the crusades, as well as the junior and senior seminars in the History Department, and graduate courses on medieval historiography and monasticism.

How did you first become interested in studying MBS?

When I was in high school, I took a spring break trip to England and fell in love with the medieval cathedrals and castles. My high school taught an interdisciplinary course in English history and literature, and I enrolled the following fall. It was the best course I took in high school, and I was hooked. Then when I got to college, I took every medieval course that I possibly could.

Have you had the opportunity to travel throughout your career?

I have studied abroad a number of times, so I am a strong supporter of study abroad. In addition to that transformative trip to Britain, I also spent two months in France as a senior in high school and six months in Germany as a junior in college. In between high school and college I did a gap year, during which I lived in Ireland for a semester. I also lived in Cambridge, England, for a year doing research for my dissertation.

What was it like to transition from teaching full-time to being Asst. Director

of the UHP?

While I sometimes miss having so much time in the classroom (I now teach one course per semester), I have thoroughly enjoyed everything about my position in the Honors Program. When I started this job last summer, I needed to learn the Honors curriculum and policies. I spent a lot of time reading syllabi and poring over the UHP web site. Dr. Shoemaker and I had many, many briefing sessions. He has been extremely helpful in teaching me about not just the Honors Program but also the ins and outs of the wider

university community. I also know a LOT more now about how Cardinal Station works (or doesn't!), as well as many other mysteries of our office computer systems thanks to our Administrative Assistant, Jillian Moser, who has been an invaluable source of help and advice all year, as has Katie Purple!

Describe some of your duties. What is your favorite part about working with the UHP?

It's hard to pick one, but I think advising students about course selection is my favorite part of the job. Honors students are extremely rewarding to work with. They are deeply engaged at every level: with their schoolwork, certainly, but also with the campus community and the wider world. Honors students are not just smart; they are *interesting*, because they are curious about the world around them. It is great fun to talk to them about their future plans. I also enjoy working on policy initiatives such as the creation of the new for-credit Honors internship, and of course, I like planning excursions and events, such as the Honors Jeopardy Night in March. There is a certain amount

of trouble-shooting that comes with the territory, and I enjoy that as well. In short, every aspect of the job has its delights, and I enjoy coming to campus every single day.

Describe your most surprising moment this year with the UHP.

I think the most surprising thing that happened was when the School of Music offered to lend us two pianos for the Honors Residential Community. It felt like Christmas and my birthday all rolled into one. I had merely passed along the observation that we had a lot of incoming stu-

dents who were passionately interested in music, and before I knew it, this extremely generous offer popped up in my inbox. The day we moved the pianos into Walton and McDonald was a day of pure happiness. This was such a wonderful example of different organizations

within the larger CUA community supporting each other.

Describe how you balance your professional vocation with family life.

My husband is a professor of international economic policy at American University. We have been married nearly twenty-five years. We have three children: Christopher (19), who is a physics major at Cornell; Sean (14), who is in eighth grade; and Peter (10), who is in fourth grade. Balancing my professional vocation with my family life would be impossible if my husband and I did not support each other so completely. Because we are both academics, we sympathize with each other's work-related stresses. We try as much as we can never to schedule evening events on the same nights, but sometimes it is unavoidable, and then we call on "the village," a network of friends and neighbors who step in to drive our kids to soccer practice or Boys Scouts. There is sometimes quite a bit of improvisation involved, and I am often up early finishing class prep or sending out Cub Scout-related emails, but ultimately, our kids know they come first, and we hope the example we are setting them of being supportive of each other's careers will pay off if they get married and have families themselves. ■



Dr. Jennifer Paxton, Assistant Director of the University Honors Program

Art Piece (cont'd)

Cont'd from page 1

geometric forms to convey depth. Elizabeth highlighted how in *Pool*, Noland "uses cool colors and warm colors in relation to one another so that they're totally flat, but your eyes see the blue and the green receding back, and this bright yellow and red coming forward at you. It's succumbing to the flatness of the picture frame, but playing with that so you visually experience it in a different way." Despite the flat canvas, the painting *Pool* appears to have depth and movement.

The restored *Pool* was hung in the Mullen Library on March 19, and a special reception in appreciation of its restoration took place on April 22.

Pool has gained a new significance in its new venue, as it gives warmth and meaning to a busy reading room. Charles explained, "In the sense that it makes it a comfortable, welcoming study space, it takes on a whole significance all your own."

Both Charles and Elizabeth are appreciative of the great opportunity that they were given to work on the wall label, and are eager to see where their art history studies will take them in the coming years. Charles hopes to go to graduate school and participate in the "business side" of art. Elizabeth is eager to facilitate community development through art. Their futures are bright, and time will tell what form they will take!



The Catholic University of America
Honors Program

University Honors Program

620 Michigan Ave, NE
112A McMahon Hall
Washington, DC 20064

Phone: 202-301-5220

Fax: 202-319-5199

E-mail: CUA-Honorsprogram@cua.edu

Honors Staff

Peter Shoemaker, Ph.D.
Director

Jennifer Paxton, Ph.D.
Assistant Director

Jillian Moser
Assistant to the Director

Katie Purple
Graduate Fellow

Julie Yarwood
Coordinator for Distinguished Grants
and Fellowships

Letter from the Director



Dear Friends,

Last Friday, we celebrated the Class of 2014 at the annual Honors Convocation in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The Class of 2014 is the first class that I welcomed to CUA, so this was a particularly bittersweet event for me. In my first two years as director, I personally advised all of the exploratory (undecided) majors, so I was close to many of the freshmen and followed them with interest as they developed into scholars and aspiring professionals. They have already accomplished much, and I am sure that they have even brighter futures in front of them.

One of the privileges of being director is teaching the capstone seminar, and this spring I was gratified that we had a bumper crop of 20 students in the class. As always, it was a pleasure and challenge to teach, but this time I was particularly struck by the sense of community and solidarity among the students. The topic was "Memory," and the students found themselves sharing fond memories of HSPH classes with Dr. Timothy Noone and life in Regan Hall (the home of the Honors Residential Community until it

was moved to Centennial Village in 2012). Listening to them, I realized the extent to which their experiences in the UHP had formed them and shaped their experience of college.

I will limit myself to one other highlight from 2013-14. This year, we established a UHP internship program, supervised by UHP Assistant Director Dr. Jennifer Paxton, that allows honors students to pursue internships for free elective credit. As always, we are eager to hear from alumni who are interested in mentoring our students, whether as part of an internship or in another context. Or you can just drop us a line to say hello: is always a pleasure to hear from Honors alumni!

Finally a staffing note: at the end of this month, we will say goodbye to Katie Purple, our graduate fellow, a recipient of a masters in theology (2014), and the editor of this newsletter. We'll miss her, but we wish her the best of luck!

I wish you a restful and productive summer,

Peter Shoemaker, Director

As we come to the end of the semester, we celebrate the generosity that makes this program possible. Please consider making a donation to one of the University Honors Program 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 course 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 costs of faculty development in furtherance of the academic mission of the Program; and other aspects of the Program at the Fund Manager's discretion.

Visit <http://honors.cua.edu/alumni/index.cfm>

Click under "Donate" and enter one of the two fund names in "Other" in the gift form.

