



# COLLEGIUM

THE HONORS COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2018



## EDUCATING YOUR HUMANITY

*Dr. Scott Huelin*

American higher education is in the midst of a crisis. Among the contributing factors is our collective loss of commitment to the liberal arts. Why should a Christian college education include anything other than vocational preparation and spiritual training? Why study the liberal arts? An adequate answer to this question begins with reflection upon what kind of creature a human being is.

Theological anthropology in the Christian tradition begins with the observation that a human being is a composite of body and soul. Bodies without souls are not human; they're corpses. Souls without bodies are not human; they're ghosts. Now the soul carries out several different functions for us. The lowest function of the soul, the appetites, directs the body to the fulfilling of its natural hungers for food, drink, shelter, sex. Next come higher-order desires, which like the appetites, draw us toward something outside ourselves, but unlike the appetites, which seek to satisfy the body, the desires seek out that which satisfies the soul, things like truth, beauty, and justice. Finally, above all is reason, which, when it functions properly, directs both the appetites and the desires toward the right things.

Put differently, reason is our capacity for self-transcendence. By self-transcendence I simply mean the ability to get outside of our own heads and see things as they really are. Aristotle famously said that "All human beings desire to know." Reason gives human beings the capacity to wonder about the nature of things. Human beings alone ask 'why' questions: Why is the sky blue? Why are people mean to each other? Why does

anything exist at all? I'm quite confident my dog has never entertained such self-transcending questions.

Furthermore, self-transcendence is why we have the capacity for self-consciousness, i.e. the ability to examine our own thoughts and feelings and evaluate their rightness and their fittingness. While dolphins demonstrate impressive intellectual capacities, there are no dolphin Hamlets. Human beings alone have the kind of self-awareness that allows for self-scrutiny and self-questioning which, in turn, make possible the pursuit of truth.

The pure sciences—physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics—are four liberal arts disciplines that are especially good at cultivating this aspect of reason. The sciences, of course, give us the tools to question whether the way things appear to us actually is the way things are. Through methodical testing of assumptions and rigorous narrowing of causes, we can learn truth about the natural world.

Our capacity for self-transcendence also makes it possible for us to pursue courses of action that aim at something higher than, and potentially contrary to, the survival of the individual, the pack, or the species. Reason can direct our desires towards higher ends. We alone fight battles over honor rather than mates or hunting territory (though human wars have been fought over those things, too). We alone build palaces and cathedrals instead of humble dens or nests. We alone compose symphonies and cantatas rather than sing the same pre-programmed song over and over again. Of all earthly creatures, we alone can transcend mere instinct by conceiving of, desiring, and pursuing the good, the beautiful, the just.

Liberal arts disciplines can help shape these higher desires. Political science and philosophy are particularly good at asking questions about the common good: how society should be organized, how human beings should live together. These disciplines help us see beyond the status quo to envision the best or most humane way to live. The visual arts, music, and theater give us experiences of beauty and truth that arise from the self-transcendence of the imagination, helping us to see beauty we would not otherwise see or hear beauty we would not otherwise hear.

Let me mention one more aspect of reason as self-transcendence: our capacity to learn from others who are different from us. Reason recognizes the common humanity of all while at the same time taking seriously the differences between individuals and cultures. Disciplines like history, languages and literatures, intercultural studies, sociology, and psychology all contribute to an understanding of humanity that is bigger than my particular time, place, and community.

A liberal arts curriculum can and should aim at nothing less than cultivating the humanity of our students. John Milton claimed that the end of the liberal arts was "to repair the ruins of our first parents," Adam and Eve (Of Education). When we recover this vision and this practice of the liberal arts, we'll be well on our way to repairing the ruins of the modern university, as well.

## HONORS *at* UNION

EXCELLENCE-DRIVEN CHRIST-CENTERED PEOPLE-FOCUSED FUTURE-DIRECTED

# LIFE AFTER COLLEGE: A SEA OF POSSIBILITY

by David Clark, '14

I once believed that the choices made earlier in life, before adulthood, are the hardest and the most important. Perhaps that's true in a certain light. The pressures and tangled web of emotions in high school make choosing the right path seem impossible at times, and those choices made early in life set the foundation for our lives later on. Looking back from my current viewpoint, however, those choices also seemed easy. There were fewer of them, and the right choice was usually pretty clear. Should I do drugs? No. Should I work hard in school? Yes. The difficulty lay not so much in the choice, but in the execution of the answer.

Choices seem harder now. Life before college could be compared to a train track. The path is mostly set for us by our parents, our teachers, and our upbringing. High school brings forks in the track in the form of elective classes, sports teams, or dating. Perhaps then college is a rail yard. We park ourselves in a field of train tracks and can choose any of them.

We all react to this new volume of options differently. I have a friend who likes chemistry and decided to be a pharmacist. Done. Easy. I have another friend who dragged college on for five... six... maybe seven years off and on, each year bringing a new major. I'm not sure he ever finished. Yet, since I graduated, my indecisive friend has worked on farms in Hawaii and on glaciers in Alaska, while frequently flying home to visit friends and family. We often play games online together. His adventures sound awesome. Meanwhile, my pharmacist friend had three more years of intense school followed by some tough exams. We've barely had time to talk. He

works odd shifts at Walgreens now and is starting to have free time again. Who made the right choice? Whose life would you rather have had for those three years?

But the problem is those are the wrong questions. Who made the right choice? They both did! They both love what they do. Whose life would you rather have? This question is extra toxic. We can never have someone else's life, although others can certainly inspire us. After college, life isn't a rail yard anymore. It's an open sea. We can do u-turns and go just about any direction. Why not live in China, New Zealand, or Norway? Most people don't consider that an option, but it is. Some people leave the train tracks, get in the boat, and still prefer to travel straight as long as possible. They don't embrace the freedom of sailing. Perhaps it's easier that way, and that's not a bad thing. Others want to turn as many directions as possible. Also not bad. In my opinion, what IS bad is wanting to turn but thinking you can't.

My adult life has been a fervent exploration of this newfound sea of possibility. Slowly, my mind began to grasp the reality that there are millions of paths I could take. For the person who wanted to stay in college forever and get every degree (me), this reality is simultaneously thrilling and paralyzing. I want to have every career (well, most). I want to write a book. I want to be a National Geographic photographer. I want to build Jarvis, from Iron Man. I want to reinvent the human body.

After graduating from Union, my wife, Whitney, and I have taken three big explorative steps. First, we didn't know where we wanted to live, so we went to

China. We learned that while living in a foreign country is doable and neat, it's probably best for us to just visit them and live various places in the U.S. instead. Second, we didn't know how we would like living in a different culture/climate/landscape away from family and friends, so we moved to Colorado. We love it! It was easy to make new friends, we keep in touch with family, and I can see the Rocky Mountains through my window as I type. There have been too many great things about the move to mention here. Third, I don't know what career I want, so I started a Udacity nanodegree for Self-Driving Car engineering. Perhaps a career change is in my future. At the very least, it's been great to continue my education and pick up some new skills.

Taking these explorative steps are some of the hardest and most important choices I've made in my life. They have also been some of the most rewarding. Frequently I feel lost amongst the innumerable paths I can take, the countless directions I can sail. I need reminding that life isn't about reaching a certain destination or traveling the "right" path; it's about living, which is an ongoing process. While that advice doesn't make the choices easier, it does mean I should probably worry about them less. There are many great things in life to experience and enjoy. Some are found easily, and others take some exploration to be found. I love to explore, and I think everyone should do their fair share of exploration to discover what life really has to offer. Just remember to stop and enjoy what you find.



**DR. JILL WEBB,** *Assistant Director of the Honors Community*

"Greetings, dear alumni of the Honors Community. I have announced my retirement from full-time teaching at Union, effective at the end of the 2017-2018 academic year. I retire with some heart-felt regret. Chief among these is giving up the Assistant Director position, such a source of joy all these years. Gadding about with you folks was an unlooked-for infusion into my soul of your youthful ebullience. Thanks so much! But I have been young, I'm older now. I look forward to spending more time with grandchildren (and familial 'appurtenances,' like my husband Steve, son Nathaniel, and daughter-in-law Sarah)! Though not wishing to presume on the Lord's goodness, I hope to find retirement a space for new adventures, within not only family and community, but also within what synergistic teaching opportunities may call my name."



## THE BOOKSHELF

Our revamped colloquia series continues in the form of faculty-led book discussion groups. These were 2017's colloquium reads, with a special emphasis on Reformation topics in honor of the anniversary year.

### Dr. Brad Green

*A Reformation Debate by John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto*

### Dr. Jill Webb

*Delighting in the Trinity by Michael Reeves*

### Dr. Mark Dubis

*Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn by Daniel Gordis*

### Dr. Janna Chance

*Jesus Feminist by Sarah Bessey*

### Dr. Phil Davignon

*Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight by Norman Wirzba*

### Dr. Fonsie Guillaran

*On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518 by Gerhard O. Forde*

### Dr. Scott Huelin

*Silence by Shusaku Endo*

### Dr. Nathan Finn

*The Unfinished Reformation: What Unites and Divides Catholics and Protestants After 500 Years by Gregg Allison & Christopher Castaldo*

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW

**Nicole Bantz ('16):** is a Certified Nutritional Therapy Consultant at Longevity Health Center. Atlanta, GA.

**Jordyn Battistelli ('17):** teaches English in Spain.

**Clark & Emma (Kurt) Bilbrey ('17):** pursuing Doctor of Physical Therapy and Master of Plant Biology degrees (respectively) at Ohio University.

**Seth Brake ('14):** pursuing a PhD in Political Science from the University of South Carolina.

**Breana (Benefield) Dahl ('16):** teaches science at Trinity School. St. Paul, MN.

**Ryan Edenfield ('13):** completed her M.Div. in Missions from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and works as the Circulation Coordinator for Southern's library. Louisville, KY.

**Thomas Griffith ('16):** does fine art illustrations and portraits, and plays in the bands flyco and Psallos. Allensville, KY.

**Levi Hartsfield ('16):** is an engineer at AFPG. Jackson, TN.

**Cara (Lunsford) Kolbe ('17):** teaches adult ESL with World Relief Chicago.

**Zach Lancaster ('16):** works at the University of Michigan Museum of Art.

**Cherish Lo ('16):** is getting a Masters of Financial Mathematics at the University of Queensland, Australia.

**Kimberly Lukens ('12):** is an Associate Actuary at the Cincinnati Insurance Co.

**Jenny Main ('16):** published her DSH thesis work, "Work-Life Expectations of Christian Millennials," co-authored with Dr. Emily

Lean, in the *Journal of Religion and Business Ethics*. Cincinnati, OH.

**Garyn McIntyre ('17):** teaches English in Paris, France.

**Morgan (Morfe) Melton ('17):** is an Account Executive for Nova Copy. Memphis, TN.

**Whitney (Williams) Rio-Ross ('13):** having completed her MA in Religion & Literature from Yale Divinity School, teaches English at Trevecca Nazarene University.

**Vicki Searl ('15):** having completed her Master's in Music in Instrumental Performance for the harp, is now pursuing a PhD in Math at the University of Louisville.

**Hilmar Skagfield ('10):** used prodigious problem-solving skills acquired in the Interdisciplinary Studies program to outwit the hunters on NBC's reality TV show, *Hunted*.

**Joshua Stucky ('17):** received a full tuition waiver and grad teaching assistantship to enter Kansas State University as a Mathematics PhD student.

**Angela Taylor ('17):** is attending UTHSC for a PhD in Neuroscience. Memphis, TN.

**Rachel Witt ('17):** received the STTI Leadership Award from the School of Nursing upon her graduation and now works as an RN at Vanderbilt University Hospital in the Medical ICU.

**Paige (Tang) Wunrow ('15):** completed her Master's in Violin Performance from DePaul University. Chicago, IL.

**Anderson Underwood ('17):** works with refugee resettlement in Atlanta, GA.

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Want to update us on what you're doing? Email us at [honors@uu.edu](mailto:honors@uu.edu) with your most recent news and contact info.

## COURSE REFLECTION: WISDOM

Katie Chappell '19

*"Our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee." – Augustine, Confessions*

My first experience with the Union University Honors Community was unlike anything I had experienced before. When I heard Dr. Dub speak about the integration of faith and learning during Scholar's Weekend, I was both surprised and excited. These two areas, despite their equally dominating presence in my life, had never coincided. Rightfully, I had no idea what to expect on my upcoming journey. I also had no idea the impact that it would have on my perception of myself, my academics, and God.

The Wisdom course is designed to take students on an upward journey toward Wisdom, modeled after the kind of descent and ascent that Dante or Augustine made. The course follows one of three Transcendental qualities attributed to God – Truth. I had never heard of, much less studied, the three Transcendentals. For me, beginning with Wisdom was extremely beneficial because understanding Truth is so vital to the Christian scholar. The Honors Community's dedication to faith-centered education sets it apart from other courses. It is not an English class that discusses where God fits in; rather, it is a journey dedicated to the intersection of truth, or earthly wisdom, and the incarnation of Truth, Christ.

Looking back, I realize that this journey began with a descent. Augustine's *Confessions* reminds us that the pathway to Truth is not paved by the proud, but rather, the humble. The proud try to find the path on their own and fail, but the humble are willing to listen to their professors, their peers, and the Word. Wisdom's profound effect on me derived from three humbling factors: conversation partners, application to writing, and dedication to the Word. These three major influences encouraged me to listen to other voices to inform my theses and encouraged me to think critically alongside the opinions of others rather than against them. Both Dante and Augustine descended before they could ascend to Truth; similarly, the other Wisdom students and I had to humble ourselves before succeeding in the class.

A conversation partner is one with whom you engage as a guide on your journey while you are learning, including your peers, your professors, and the authors of your reading material. Often, Honors students come into Wisdom believing that they are already very wise – can you tell that I am speaking from personal experience? However, to participate in a conversation, I had to be willing to accept and respond to the ideas presented to me – and even be willing to change my mind. Dante listened to his guides, Virgil and Beatrice. Augustine listened to the writings of Cicero and Plato and Scripture. Likewise, I learned to listen to my professors, my texts, and my peers.

The ascent of the Wisdom course began without an immediate recognition because the ascent begins when we are the most broken and the most humble. However, the ascent becomes apparent through one's writing – not only was this true for me, but, as a writing tutor for Wisdom students, I can confirm that it is often true for other students of Wisdom. Once I learned to listen well, I began to respond humbly and intelligently. Writing papers is both easier and more effective when you learn to listen to your conversation partners. It requires humility and earnestness. Speaking loudly and proudly will not answer a paper prompt, no matter how many times a student uses the words "elucidate" or "dichotomy." Wisdom's emphasis on learning to write critically and humbly points students to the connection between truth and Truth. Understanding truth comes from listening and writing; understanding Truth begins with the ascent.

For me, Wisdom was truly an upward journey toward rest in Truth. This does not mean that the beginning reading materials are deficient, though. The upward journey does not refer to the quality of the readings; rather, it refers to the mindset of the student. Progressing through Flannery O'Connor, Augustine, and C.S. Lewis taught my mind, but it also ordered my desires, reminding



me that the thing that I am seeking after is always God. There are countless texts that I could have learned from, but the Wisdom course has specifically sought out texts which will lead you to Truth.

The course is centered on the Word. It prepared me to read the Word humbly, so I could therefore understand the Word. There are texts in the class that refer to truth, there are texts that refer to Truth, and there are texts that refer to both. However, the class is so based on the Word that each class begins with a group reading of Scripture, usually a Psalm, because there could be no other way to start Wisdom. Without its emphasis on the Word, the journey loses its purpose. Without it, there is no way to Truth. It is what pushes the class from educational to life changing. As I got closer to Truth, I began to experience the class with an increasing joy. After all, when we are getting closer to the One who created us, why should our hearts not dance? Wisdom was truly an upward journey and I am so thankful to have experienced it.

**"Why should your heart not dance?"**  
– C.S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*



## 2018 IN THE WORKS

**Courses** - In Spring 2018 Dr. Justin Barnard will begin teaching in the Justice course (the fourth in the General Honors arc), alongside veteran Justice professors Dr. Henry Allen and Dr. Hunter Baker. Building on work from his research leave last spring, Dr. Barnard will also offer a special studies course in Spring 2018 on Technology and Human Flourishing.

**Fellowships** - As part of the development of future scholars, the Honors Community has begun an initiative supporting applicants for prestigious scholarships and fellowships beyond Union. Staff are creating an annual cycle for informing and guiding students through opportunity selection, statement composition, and interview preparation. This year, students applied for Fulbright's Summer Institute for undergraduates to study Conflict Transformation at Queen's University

Belfast, and for a grant to teach English in Peru.

**Lectures** - The 2018 Scholar-in-Residence will be Dr. Ronald Rittgers, Professor of History and Theology at Valparaiso University, where he holds the Erich Markel Chair in German Reformation Studies. Dr. Rittgers earned his Bachelors degree from Wheaton, a Masters in Theological Studies from Regent College, and his doctorate from Harvard. He is the author of two books on pastoral theology and practice in the Reformation and the editor of the Hebrews and James volume in the Reformation Commentary on Scripture series (IVP). He was recently elected to the presidency of the American Society of Church History, the oldest and most prestigious scholarly organization for historians of Christianity in North America.



## 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

Honors brought Martin Scorsese's film *Silence* to campus for a screening and panel discussion in Barefoots Joe, where every chair in the room was taken.

Dr. Barnard spoke at the University of Louisville Medical School on the issue of fetal personhood. Honors alumnus Andrew Stricklin arranged the debate against Dr. Paul Simmons, which was attended by 150-200 students.

39 freshmen spent three days in Chicago for the annual Beauty class Art & Architecture Tour.

Dr. Jason Crawford, who teaches in the English Dept. and the Beauty class, published *Allegory and Enchantment: An Early Modern Poetics* through Oxford University Press.

Dr. Marilyn Chandler McEntyre delivered the 2017 Scholar-in-Residence lectures on "Poetry, Politics, and Spiritual Practice." Dr. McEntyre is professor of medical humanities at the UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint Medical Program and is a poet, essayist, and memoirist.

In May, Dr. Huelin received the Carla D. Sanderson Faculty of the Year Award.

General Honors student Joey Bakeer won the 106th Tigrett Medal at spring commencement. Joey graduated with a BS in Cell and Molecular Biology, and entered medical school at UTHSC in Memphis this fall.

To kick off the fall semester, the Honors Community gathered for its second annual cèilidh, an instructed Scottish folk dance, at the farmer's market downtown. Kilts were present and accounted for.

36 freshmen from the Wisdom class travelled to Texas for presentations at the Baylor Symposium on Faith and Culture. This year's theme was "The Bible and the Reformation."

Dr. Jessica Hooten Wilson visited Union to lecture in the Wisdom course on Flannery O'Connor and iconography. Dr. Wilson is the author of three books on O'Connor, Percy, and Dostoevsky, and has recently prepared O'Connor's unfinished third novel for publication.

A small patio area outside of the Honors Suite was completed with the addition of furniture for outdoor study groups and a *Stewartia* tree sapling—part of the UU Arboretum, replacing the old Bradford pear. Students have nicknamed this tree "Flannery."





HONORS COMMUNITY  
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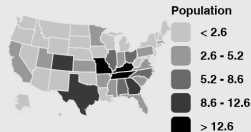
## OUR DIGITS

**Alumni** 165 graduates in 4 years

**where are they?**



6 countries



34 states

\*includes IDS grads

**what are they doing?**



**49%**

gone to grad school



**16%**

teaching



**12%**

pursuing arts



**18%**

social or spiritual care

**Current students**

162 students in the Honors Community  
in 61 majors

24 Discipline-specific Honors students  
in 13 DSH programs



7% of undergraduate student body



46% of Resident Advisors



33% of LifeGroup Leaders



31% of Student Gov't Association



31% of Awards Day 2017

**Class of 2021** 35 students representing

12 states

9 denominations

29.4 avg ACT

26 majors

71% female

8% minority