

ON INTELLECTUAL PLEASURE

Prof. Joy Moore



This April, the Beauty class traveled to Chicago for the first time since before the pandemic began. When we arrived at the Art Institute of Chicago, I felt a strange sense of relief. It's not that I visit the AIC often, but I've been several times, and done so freely, without much consideration of the opportunity. To find myself, after three years of limited travel, standing in the familiar north entrance, looking down the large, window-lit atrium, surprised me with a surge of gratitude. That freedom of mobility and access I had taken for granted fell away, and I felt a shyness, knowing that right now, I was being given these hours, in this place, for whatever it would hold.

I didn't have a plan or agenda. I wanted to walk through the museum in conversation with the place and the artworks that caught me. I wandered through several galleries, seeing a temporary exhibit of Dali's works, then revisiting familiar rooms, whose works had been rearranged, some exchanged. When I happened upon Georgia O'Keefe's *Black Cross, New Mexico*, I stopped. I felt myself turn into an unarticulated question. What caught me was the size of the black cross—it dominates the canvas—and how glorious and vibrant and thin the horizon line, just below the crosspiece. And beneath the horizon, on each side of the cross post, a host of blue and purple hills.

Of course, I thought of Jesus. The painting asked me to, with its religious image, and the proportion of the cross unsettled me. Far from abstract theology, I thought more humanly about what it was like for Jesus to anticipate his suffering, the cross overwhelming his field of vision as he went about days among friends and crowds of believers, skeptics, those in need, and those plotting his ruin. As he slept and woke, ate and conversed, taught and healed, and walked long stretches between villages. In the midst of the ordinary, the coming suffering crowded his mind and occupied his inner sight, for he surely anticipated the physical, psychological, and spiritual pain he would experience, death's undoing of self that would be singular and cosmic as he would bear the devastation of the world, each person's hell, and the separation from the Father.

In O'Keefe's rendering the cross is simple and without ornamentation, factual, even. Which resonates for me in my own experiences of living

through weighty situations. For how complex and difficult the circumstances, there can also exist a clarity and simplicity. Not to say it's easy, for what's required of us is some form of death, which is why it overwhelms us and confronts us within ourselves: will we turn away, or will we walk forward in trust that God is with us and will work through this beyond what we can understand? To answer this is individual, even when the burdens are shared, for it asks one to die to oneself and give oneself wholly to God and this specific call of following Him. Who among us doesn't know his or her own wavering and fears in times of difficulty and decisions, as well as the courage that rises when we walk in faith and find God's goodness and redemption greater than we imagine?

Despite how familiar the image of the cross and the story of Jesus, standing before O'Keefe's painting, I encountered the humanity and struggle of Jesus in a new way by imagining and meditating on the heaviness he felt and the dread and longing for it to be otherwise, even as he walked toward death, knowing it was the way, paradoxically, to life. A life visible—barely, but compellingly—in the brilliant, undiluted horizon of red, orange, and yellow dawning over the whole land. But there's that black cross before it, blocking it. And yet the only way to that horizon and dawn-drenched hills is through the foregrounded and foreboding cross. In one sense, it seems so clear an answer. Of course, one would endure whatever to arrive on the other side. But this cross refuses easy treatment. There's nothing decorative here to fool him. It's the doorway, but it's a doorway that will swallow and erase whoever enters.

The painting could be understood in other ways. When O'Keefe visited and later lived in the Southwest, Catholicism held great influence, and across the landscape were wooden crosses placed by Catholic lay brothers called Penitentes. For O'Keefe, it could be these crosses, this religion, obscured the beauty of the place. To be sure, in this painting, it does. But without it, with only the dawn and hills hued in first light, would the



painting be true enough? What we would do with the suffering we know exists, and which we experience? O'Keefe's black cross both obscures the place and reveals the thoroughway to its reality. Why else suffer the suffering but for what's beyond it, and what is only possible though it? As I thought with the painting, it seemed to me that Jesus saw the vision of a new day dawning, and he saw upon whom it would dawn, and his desire and love for that great good—for these hills, their dwellers, this world—sustained him as he accepted the death that would bring life to that great good.

For me, as for many of us, standing before an image of the cross is familiar territory, but as I imagined and meditated upon O'Keefe's painting, it felt utterly new, too. That hour held an unexpected rush of having returned to something known, but as changed, and as knowing myself and this place—this image, this man Jesus—in a new way. It recalled for me T.S. Eliot's words at the end of *The Four Quartets*:

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time.

Through the unknown, unremembered gate

When the last of earth left to discover

Is that which was the beginning;

At the source of the longest river

The voice of the hidden waterfall

And the children in the apple-tree

Not known, because not looked for

But heard, half-heard, in the stillness

Between two waves of the sea.

There I stood, doing things I'd done before—looking at an image of the cross, imagining what this was like for Jesus, perceiving the intensity of the foregrounded suffering and the powerful vision of shalom beyond—and encountering, as if for the first time, the extravagance and intimacy of his love, and his courage to trust that what blocked the good was the very way to its inauguration. I stood there, decades deep in this life of faith, and only beginning. As I trust will be the case, until I pass through that “unremembered gate” and stand face-to-face before “that which was the beginning.”

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ALUMNI: WHERE THEY ARE NOW

Kathleen Balon ('20)

University of Oklahoma College of Law, environmental law; law clerk at Wurtz & Associates; legal extern at Oklahoma Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Forestry.

Seth Brake ('14)

Visiting Professor of Political Science at Union University; finishing his PhD from the University of South Carolina. Jackson, Tennessee.

Nicholas Bitterling ('23)

Transfer Coordinator in Admissions at Union University and pursuing a Master of Divinity at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Jackson, Tennessee.

Ben Crouch ('22)

pursuing a Master of Theological Studies at Emory University's Candler School of Theology. Atlanta, Georgia.

Samuel Edgren ('18)

pursuing his MFA in drama at the Royal Conservatory of Scotland.

Samuel Eudy ('23)

Impact360 Resident; pursuing his Master of Arts in Leadership from North Greenville University and working in organizational leadership/student discipleship. Pine Mountain, Georgia.

Merry Ashlyn Gatewood ('23)

pursuing her Doctorate of Jurisprudence at the University of Memphis' Cecil L. Humphreys' School of Law. Memphis, Tennessee.

Alyssa Gowan ('21)

Registrar Services Representative at Adtalem Global Education.

Hannah Brandt Malone ('18) and Ian Malone ('19)

Hannah is the Director of Audience Services with The Rev Theatre in upstate New York, and Ian is pursuing a graduate degree in English.

Lillie McCampell Leach ('18)

Professional Research Assistant at University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.

Emily Littleton ('17)

working for the International Mission Board in Asia.

John David Logan ('20)

Legislative Aide, House of Representatives. Washington, D.C.

Anna Moss ('23)

recipient of the 2023 Elizabeth Tigrett Award; working at Brinkley Heights Urban Academy as a tutor for gifted students and the Education Savings Account Coordinator. Memphis, Tennessee.

Taylor Overcast ('23)

attending the University of Tennessee at Martin as a National Science Foundation NOYCE Scholar and pursuing her Master of Science in Education. Martin, Tennessee.

Lisa Reed ('22)

pursuing a PhD in pure mathematics at the University of Kentucky.

Jessica Searl ('23)

Data Analyst at Leaders Credit Union. Jackson, Tennessee.

Jordan Sellers ('17)

completed a MSc in Architectural Conservation from the University of Edinburgh.

Mary Swisher ('20)

Works for YoungLife in France.

Savannah Wright ('21)

pursuing Master of Library and Information Science at the University of Tennessee Knoxville School of Information Science.

We would love to hear from you! Email us at honors@uu.edu with your most recent news and contact information.

THE BOOKSHELF

What are Honors folk reading this year?

Haelim Allen—

The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World (2006) by Miroslav Volf

Scott Huelin—

Practicing Christians, Practical Atheists: How Cultural Liturgies and Everyday Social Practices Shape the Christian Life (2023) by Phil Davignon

Scott Huelin—

Backpacking with the Saints: Wilderness Hiking as Spiritual Practice (2014) by Belden C. Lane

Joy Moore—

The Poetics of Space (2014) by Bachelard Gaston

David Thomas—

Baptism and Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today (1974) by John Stott

David Thomas—

Garden City: Work, Rest, and the Art of Being Human (2017) by John Mark Comer

What are you reading?

You can always email us at honors@uu.edu to chat, swap titles, or update your contact info.

COURSE REFLECTION: JUSTICE

Sarah Trouwborst ('25)

Going into the Justice course, I had no idea what to expect. The only thing I knew was that it was supposed to be challenging, and it was supposedly the most like the Wisdom course. But without taking the wisdom course I was left floundering, left only with the booklist. In my mind it was doable; I went to a Classical Christian high school, and reading Plato, Wendell Berry, Tim Keller, and St. Basil were all mountains I had conquered before. And I had kept my notes.

We did not waste any time jumping in. The course began by conquering the entirety of Plato's Republic in the first three weeks, reading one book a day. On average, we had 50 minutes of discussion three times a week, which left two options. Some classes were spent covering the whole section with the purpose of gaining a general understanding of the text, its background, and the general issues it addressed. Others were spent dissecting singular paragraphs.

At the end, the paper prompt was not the one I expected: how does philosophy factor into the ordering of the soul? Plato, philosophy, and the ordering of the soul were all very obvious themes in The Republic, but the paper prompt seemed both too narrow, and too broad. How can one properly address all that philosophy encompasses in 3-5 pages? But in attempting to do so, how can you craft a modern approach with text from a work from one philosopher who lived over 2000 years ago?

We continued to cover a large amount of information; I'd be disingenuous if I said that I wasn't frustrated at times. By the end of the course, however, I found that breadth of information invaluable. It took me a while to understand that the Justice course was not crafted to answer questions, but to teach us to ask them, to spur us to act.

Let's take a step back. The words "I am a Christian" no longer indicate a set of semi-predictable beliefs. To say there are divisions within the church is an obvious understatement. Yet as college-aged students, our exposure has been naturally limited. And in Jackson, Tennessee, "the buckle of the Bible belt," at a Southern Baptist school, exposure to people with different worldviews, from different backgrounds is an undeniable challenge. But the importance of accepting this challenge cannot be under-emphasized. The fundamental assumption of Christianity is that in order to live a God-honoring life, you prioritize God's Word; you have to interpret it. But in an

increasingly polarized world, facts, faiths, presuppositions, prejudices, and pride mix together before you can realize what is happening. Does what I believe about women serving in the church founded in what I see in the Bible, or do I just stick to it because that's what I was taught growing up? Should I alter it because I saw an interesting take on it on social media? And is capitalism really a biblically acceptable way to form a society, or is it just too hard to switch to anything else? Would socialism be better? Now that I think about it, why am I not donating everything I have to the poor and oppressed? When broaching these topics, tense atmospheres and unwillingness to say the wrong thing clouds clear thinking and judgment.

The Bible has so much to say about the concept of Justice. Mainly, it emphasizes its importance. Some of the most famous Bible verses, such as Matthew 5:38-39, Amos 5:24, Romans 12:19, Micah 6:8, etc. revolve around the fact that justice is a crucial part of God's character. Furthermore, a failure to recognize that and act in a consistent manner contradicts a Christian's conscience. Yet, most of the "hot topic" issues concerning justice, those that stir up the most controversy today, are those that the Bible doesn't address specifically. No single sophomore course could answer those concerns adequately. The justice course aimed to direct me to ask them, to think about other people's perspective, and why they could be right. The broad lens pushed me to be an active seeker of injustice in the world, to personalize the giant problems that

are argued about on national stages. And it encouraged me to instigate conversation, even when, not if, it's uncomfortable.

But most importantly, it pushed me to first love. Being right isn't important if I can't love people the way Christ demands. Plato emphasizes the eternity of the soul; although his tendency is gnostic, the emphasis on prioritizing spiritual well-being, of recognizing the eternal soul in humans, is vital for healthy interaction. St. Basil's encouragement to give up everything, while maybe a bit drastic, points to the importance of the golden rule in daily life. Wendell Berry highlights the evil and harm that comes from racial segregation and discrimination; it not only breaks your heart, but makes it abundantly clear that the human tendency to put others down is a double-edged sword, immensely harming both parties. Tim Keller demonstrates how conviction and grace and love can translate into helping people in need. But all of these mean nothing if I don't implement these principles.

To be honest, I'm still processing the Justice course. It was a lot, not just academically. It is one of those courses that will stick with me, one where the notes can only be so helpful. Closure for the class requires action, it requires further discussion and insight and thought. It requires me to listen to more perspectives, and most importantly to get out of my own mind and into the world. And maybe in a decade, I will understand what justice really is, and how I can help implement it.



HIGHLIGHTS

August 2022

The Honors Community welcomed a new cohort of forty-two freshmen, and everyone enjoyed a Tulum fiesta and sweet fellowship.

September 2022

As part of Union's Bicentennial kick-off, Honors professors and alumni from months and decades past gathered on October 24th for a reception in the Jones Suite. Meaningful conversations and much laughter were enjoyed by all.

October 2022

The Wisdom class travelled to Waco, Texas, for Baylor University's Symposium on Faith and Culture. Students presented on the topic "Art Seeking Understanding." Coming up for fall 2023: "Called Together in an Age of Discord."

Dr. Barnard took a group of upperclassmen to Pennsylvania to participate in Grove City College's Intercollegiate Colloquium on the Liberal Arts.

November 2022

Almost thirty Honors students, faculty, and staff cleaned up three separate areas with the City of Jackson during Campus & Community Day. Students spread mulch and weeded flower beds at Stella Duncan and Malesus parks.

Senior Ben Scott introduced his exquisitely hand-crafted game, "Honorsopolis," to the Honors Community at one of the Honors Students Association's game nights. It was incredible!

January 2023

Spring classes were up and running by January 10th—even if professors and students were dreaming of J-term breaks gone by.

March 2023

Francis Su, Ph.D, was Union's 25th annual Scholar-in-Residence. Dr. Su is a Professor of Mathematics at Harvey Mudd College, and his book, *Mathematics for Human Flourishing*, won the 2021 Euler Book Prize.

April 2023

The Beauty class adventured to Chicago for the Art and Architecture experience while the Justice class experienced the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis.

Eight discipline-specific seniors defended their theses, and all Honors graduates were celebrated at the annual banquet.

June-July 2023

The Honors Community hosted its second annual Summer Series for Classical Teachers, offering four courses on Virgil, Bach, Shakespeare, and C.S. Lewis.



ALUMNI REFLECTION: EMBRACING GROWTH, LOVE, AND THE JOURNEY AHEAD

Cate Price ('22)



I remember standing behind a podium in late August as twelve pairs of eyes stared back at me, waiting. I stood, waiting too, until I realized that I was the one who had to put an end to the waiting. Someone was really allowing me to be the teacher, to lead these students through the classics, and to be responsible for their education. In the weeks to come, I would understand what was behind those individual pairs of eyes. I would learn my students' loves, their family relationships, their favorite sports, and their shortcomings. I would be able to recognize when one of my students was about to tell me a bad joke or if two of the girls were in conflict with one another, but most rewarding of all, I would be able to tell when a student had one of those moments when a work of literature would capture him. I could see the connections light up the student's eyes, and it seemed as though rain had finally arrived after a long dry spell.

And yet, even in the midst of learning more about my students and becoming more comfortable at the front of the classroom, doubt plagued me. As the year progressed, I became more aware that my main duty as a teacher was not to make sure my students knew the major characteristics of an epic poem or to ensure that they could reproduce the nineteen rules of inference upon request. I was there to shape my students' souls, to guide them along the paths of virtue, and I felt like a fraud in front of my students because I knew that I was no Virgil, much less a Beatrice. The thought that someone

better than me could be teaching these students became quite comfortable in my mind, holing up in a dark corner, content to stay a while.

I found myself thinking back to Wisdom seminar and all the discussions we had about imposter syndrome---the idea that everyone else belongs in a place while you have managed to fool the authorities and have slipped in through the cracks. Put simply, it is the idea that you are not good enough. Well, let me break the news to you. When you graduate college and enter the "real" world, you will still think you are an imposter. There will be moments where you think you are not good enough.

Here's the truth: You are not good enough.

Here's another truth: It is okay that you are not good enough.

Whatever job you enter after college---teaching, marketing, nursing, or even working at the local fast-food restaurant---you will not be the best you can be at that job. There will be people at those jobs who are older than you, wiser than you, and far more experienced than you. They will be better at their job than you are at yours. This is not cause for weeping or the gnashing of teeth, but rather, it is a blessing to be able to learn from those who have come before you. You should never feel as though your learning is complete. As T.S. Eliot writes, "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time" ("Little Gidding," *The Four Quartets*). Learning does not necessarily mean going somewhere new, but rather seeing a familiar place with new eyes.

Yes, I am the teacher now, and yet I am still the student. My teachers are Homer, Virgil, and the veteran teacher whose desk is next to mine. When I stand at the front of the room, I am entering into the community of the living dead, where so many before me have sought after the true, the good, and the beautiful. Even though there are those who are better teachers than me, that fact does not preclude my being a teacher at all. Instead, it encourages me to embrace the humility of my position. As a teacher, it is my duty to rouse my students and tell them to leave

behind frivolities and comfort to follow me on the hard path of virtue. It is also my duty to wash the dust off my students' wearied feet, anointing them with perfumed oil. I am both master and servant to my students, and what unites these two duties is love.

Allow me to share one final truth: The pursuit of virtue is not limited to the classroom. Love is not limited to the classroom.

What I have described above is what we, as followers of Christ, are all called to. We are called to be both leaders and servants in our communities. We are called to love our neighbors, which can sometimes mean washing our neighbors' feet, but it can also mean dragging our neighbors out of the warm darkness of folly and guiding them into the harsh light of truth. This too is love.

So, let me encourage you as we all navigate post-grad life. We are not imposters in this life God has called us to unless we cease from our exploration and from bestowing the love that has been granted so mercifully to us.

"There were thousands and thousands of forms of joy in the world, but all were essentially one and the same, namely the joy of being able to love" Ende, Michael, *The Neverending Story*.

HERE'S THE TRUTH:
YOU ARE NOT
GOOD ENOUGH.

HERE'S ANOTHER
TRUTH: IT IS OKAY
THAT YOU ARE NOT
GOOD ENOUGH.

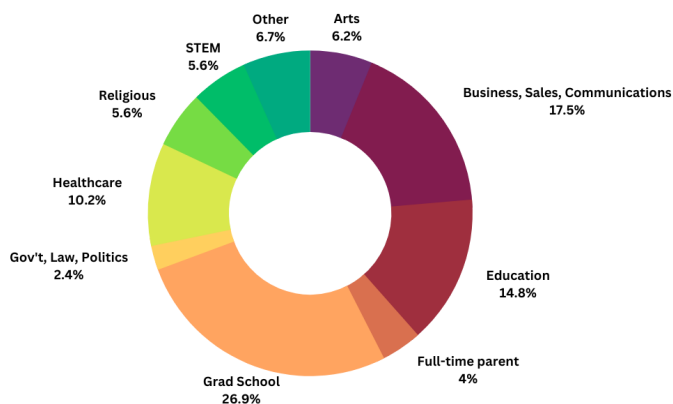


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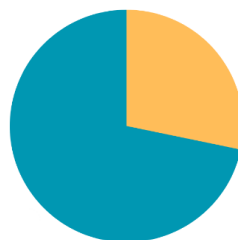
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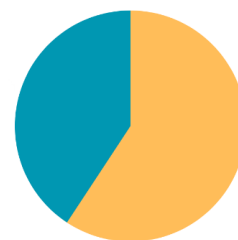
395 Grads in 11 years



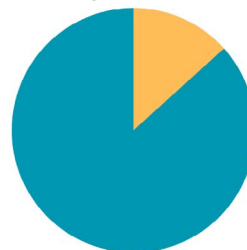
28% of Life Group Leaders



59% of Resident Advisors



13% of Undergraduate Student Body



188 current students in 58 different majors

29 discipline-specific students in 14 different programs