



COLLEGIUM

THE HONORS COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2024

TO LOOK LOVINGLY, TO SEE CLEARLY

Dr. Scott Huelin



These are the things which Prof. Haelim Allen taught us during her 12 years on the Beauty team. But I'll bet that few college students or faculty believe that these should be the goal of a college education of any kind, much less a Christian one. Anyone who has had direct experience of the work of the Honors Community, on the other hand, knows how important these traits are both to intellectual and spiritual growth. Remember how Matthew Crawford urged us all toward unselfing, toward getting outside of our heads and our tangled ideas, through wrestling with the unchangeable facts of external reality? Remember how the Preacher of Ecclesiastes mocked us for thinking we could grasp the vapor of this life and make it bend to our whims? Remember how Orual, in an effort to insulate herself from pain, hid behind a veil and so lost her face? Remember how the first paper in the Beauty class forced you to look—just look—at an object for 30 minutes, and that proved to be such hard work?

That's because it is hard work to see what is really there and not merely see our own prejudices. Even though the digital age has ushered in shiny new toys to help us dodge reality, human beings have long preferred our own ideas to the really real. John Calvin was never more right than when he said, "The human heart is a forge of idols." We'd rather deal with a God of our own imagining, one who fits with our own preferences, than with the Holy One of Israel. The same is true of His creation: we'd rather the world be a stockpile

of resources for us to use in service of our own desires than to allow the norms of creation to limit our desires. Of course this general human tendency has been exacerbated by the times in which we live: where virtual worlds are preferable to the real one, where fantasy novels outsell realist ones, and where political ideologies of the left and the right care more about the self-consistency of their ideas than about the correspondence of those ideas to reality.

But Jesus calls us to something different. He calls us to love God and love neighbor, for "upon these two depend all the law and the prophets." Crucially, you cannot love God or love your neighbor in your head. You have to get outside of your head to love. You have to look lovingly to see clearly, and you have to see clearly to love rightly.

This brings to mind a favorite passage from Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. Near the middle of the novel, Fr. Zossima, an Orthodox monk, is approached by Mme. Hohlakov for spiritual guidance. She has doubts and wants to know how she can be sure of eternal life. "By the experience of active love," he responds. "Strive to love your neighbor actively and indefatigably. In as far as you advance in love, you will grow surer in the reality of God and the immortality of your soul."

A good and wise answer, but not the answer she had hoped for. Mme. Hohlakov discloses that she once felt called to become a nun, but she abandoned that vocation for fear that she wouldn't enjoy serving others, especially if they were ungrateful for her labors on their behalf. Fr. Zossima responds by sharing a story that comes from a doctor he once counseled. The doctor said, "The more I love humanity in general, the less I love men in particular. In my dreams I often make plans for the service of *humanity* and perhaps I might actually face crucifixion if it were suddenly necessary. Yet I am incapable of living in the same room with anyone for two consecutive days."

Well, you have to give credit to the doctor for his honesty. He's exactly right that it is

easier to love in the abstract—to love humanity *in general*—than it is to love particular people because the former requires so little of us compared to the latter. Here's the rest of the doctor's confession:

As soon as anyone is near me, his personality disturbs me and restricts my freedom. In 24 hours, I hate the best of men: one because he takes too long over dinner, another because he has a cold and keeps on blowing his nose. I become hostile to people the minute they come close to me. But it has always happened that the more I hate men individually, the more I love humanity.

This an important reminder for all of us. Love is truly love only when it is directed at particular people in their particularity, when it unselfishly seeks the good of particular individuals. This is why Martin Luther once said, "If anyone thinks he is not a sinner, he should get married!" Our closest relationships both reveal our failures to love and provide a school in which we may learn to look lovingly, see clearly, and love rightly.

May it always be the case that members of the Honors Community—students, alumni, and faculty—are known primarily not for our sharp intellects, our prodigious skills, or our doctrinal correctness, but for our love. After all, Jesus said that the way others will know that we are His disciples is by the way we love one another. For that to come to pass, it will take even more practice at looking lovingly and seeing clearly. And we thank you, Prof. Allen, for inviting us into and modeling for us such practice. May the students who await you at Samford University benefit from your teaching and collegiality as much as we have.

HONORS
at
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EXCELLENCE-DRIVEN | CHRIST-CENTERED
PEOPLE-FOCUSED | FUTURE-DIRECTED

ALUMNI: WHERE THEY ARE NOW

Shelby (Barritt) Ball ('20)

Manager of Special Events on the Tennessee Governor's Faith-Based and Community Initiative.

Luke Brake ('17)

Assistant Professor of Language and Literature at Sterling College. He and Sarah now have three children.

Katherine Burgess ('15)

Government Accountability Reporter at MLK50: Justice Through Journalism in Memphis, TN.

Josh Edgren ('16)

and Kelsie (Leaf) Edgren ('16)

Living in Moscow, ID, where Josh recently completed Greyfriars Hall Ministerial Training Program at Christ Church. Josh serves as an Elder and Catechist at Christ Church and a Reader of Mathematics at New Saint Andrew's College, and Kelsie stays at home with their five children.

Daria Guthrie ('24)

Serving in worship ministry and community outreach at First Baptist Church in Sudbury, MA.

Taylor Hare ('14)

Completed a PhD in English from Penn State University and accepted a postdoctoral fellowship from Baylor University.

Jaime (Christley) Ioannidis ('23)

Digital Director for a congressman in Washington, D.C. In December 2023, she married Rev.

Phillip Kurtzweil ('15)

Graduated from John Peter Smith Family Medicine Residency in June. In September, he will transition to faculty at JPS.

Josiah McGee ('19)

Completed a Masters in Global Diplomacy: Middle East and North Africa at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He works for Passages, and he and Rebecah are parents to twin sons.

Cameron (Wilson) Milien ('15)

Living in Utah and working for Mission.io as Director of Educational Development. She married Jonas in August 2024.

Scott Morris ('21)

Graduated from the University of Memphis with a Master of Science in General Physics and has received a grant from NASA to complete his PhD in computational astrophysics.

Anna Moss ('23)

Serving at Union University as the new Program Coordinator for Honors and Academic Secretary for History, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. In December, she will marry Rafael Tobler (UU '23).

Susannah Murphine ('20)

Graduated with a Master of Arts in Creative Writing from Western Carolina University. She is entering her second year as an adjunct professor at Reinhardt University.

Mason Ruby ('18)

Pursuing a PhD in Astrophysics from the University of Memphis. He recently spent six months at Caltech's Infrared Processing and Analysis Center as a visiting graduate student fellow.

Samuel Sadler ('21)

Accepted to Hillsdale's Graduate School of Education and will be working towards a Master of Arts in Classical Education.

Ben Scott ('23)

and Katie Beth (Dowling) Scott ('23)

Living in Columbia, MO, where Ben is in his second year of medical school, and Katie Beth works with adults with disabilities.

Katie Simpson ('22)

Pursuing a Master of Theological Studies with an emphasis in Theology and the Arts at Duke Divinity School.

Ryan Sinni ('18)

Assistant Professor of English at LeTourneau University in Longview, TX. He and his wife Sydney had their first child last year.

Eunice Tan ('24)

Pursuing an M.F.A. in Creative Writing at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA.

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 faculty reading this year?

Dr. Joshua Veltman

- *How Humans Learn* by Joshua R. Eyler

- *The Trouble with Trauma* by Michael Scheering

- *Critical Dilemma* by Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer

Dr. Phil Davignon

- *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt

Dr. Scott Huelin

- *A Web of Our Own Making* by Anton Barba-Kay

- *Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer

- *A Quiet Mind to Suffer With* by John Andrew Bryant

- *The Passenger* and *Stella Maris* by Cormac McCarthy

Professor Joy Moore

- *Newly Not Eternal* by George David Clark

Dr. Bill Thierfelder

- *Dominion* by Tom Holland

- *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* by Mark Knoll

What are you reading?

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

COURSE REFLECTION: BEAUTY

Connor McCann

"Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns; I am thankful that thorns have roses."
– Alphonse Karr

I thought it was funny when I was asked to articulate a reflection on the Beauty course for the Honors newsletter—because for me, the course itself was a reflection on life. Here, I share an inexhaustive summary of how the course grew me and what the course showed me. In a word, what Wisdom helped me recognize, Beauty helped me articulate.

In the Wisdom course, I was introduced to the quote from Kongzi in *Analects* 6.20: "He who knows the truth is not equal to him who chooses it, and he who chooses it is not equal to him who delights in it." (Pleasantly, this quote has found itself on the back of one of my favorite T-shirts, given by the Honors community.) In Wisdom, we investigated such truth from many points of view and even explored what it looks like to choose that truth—and, while we also accomplished these pursuits in Beauty's inquiries, I believe the course shined brightest in our cultivating the aforementioned delight of said truth. The habits formed and questions asked in the Beauty course sowed seeds in me—some of which have already borne fruit.

Beauty revived the vital sense of wonder that had gradually grown stale during my maturation process into young adulthood. I was instilled with an appreciation for the profundity communicated through the arts—much of which I was previously unable to detect. I realized through our studies into poetry, music, and visual art that artists frequently convey a compelling statement about reality through their work—as opposed to something artistic but ultimately arbitrary. Furthermore, I discovered it was in truth preferable to such revelation being represented in didactic prose. An idea being put forth as a story—whether it be a poetic, literary, musical, or visual story—does not simply add flair to its content; it uncovers something that

speaks to us—that unlocks a part of us deep within—something which I will not attempt to describe here.

I saw this contrast firsthand through how our time with Augustine and Lewis in Wisdom perfectly complemented our time with Dante in Beauty. In the three readings, we explored *ordo amoris*—the idea of a hierarchy of loves, which must be ordered correctly in our lives. Lewis and Augustine were helpful to read first, as they taught us the concept itself through didactic prose; this allowed us to interpret Dante's applications of the same principle in his artistically enigmatic medium. For me, Dante's dramatized exploration into this concept wrought revelations which, even if in some small way, literally changed the way I see the world, and in consequence, how I act within it. I am more aware now than ever of my disordered loves; this has prompted me to—in the words of Virgil— "Trample the earth beneath [my] heels, / [and] turn [my] eyes to the everlasting King, / who calls [me] by the sweep of Heaven's vast wheels" (*Purg.* XIX.61-63).

I believe the single most effective facet of this course in my flourishing was the practice of writing in my beauty journal. If anything in this class taught gratitude—the precursor to so much in life—it was that practice.

The journal called me to articulate that which I had taken for granted. I think the practice of drawing things around me has equipped my eyes to notice little details in everyday objects and images. Every time I see them, I internally announce to myself, "That's beautiful!" This is growth toward the heart posture so joyfully captured in Gerard Manley Hopkins' profound poem "Pied Beauty." This is, in the words of C.S. Lewis in his *Abolition of Man*, rendering unto things their due esteem—another way of saying "acting on properly ordered loves."

Reflecting on this course has reminded me to keep this growth in the forefront of my mind. It's no secret that we all forget so much as the march of time continues. For those who have taken Beauty or taught it, I encourage you to dwell again on the goodness, truth, and beauty that is explored in this course. I firmly believe that if you attend to those things with your very heart, mind, and soul, it could permanently change you for the better. After my time in Beauty, I can confidently say to any prospective student: "DON'T take this course if you're just wanting an education." The Honors Community shows that with enough care, a course can indeed sow not only epistemic, but personal, creative, and spiritual development.



HIGHLIGHTS

August 2023

The Honors Community welcomed thirty-nine new students at a Tulum dinner.

September 2023

The Honors Student Association hosted their first movie night of the year and watched *Megamind*.

October 2023

HSA hosted another movie night, a *Lord of the Rings* marathon.

The Wisdom class traveled to Waco, Texas, for Baylor University's Symposium on Faith and Culture entitled "Called Together in an Age of Discord." Three groups of Union students presented on the topics of listening, silence and solitude, and storytelling.

The Honors Community held its annual Cèilidh at the Farmer's Market.

On Campus and Community Day, members of the Honors Community gathered to rake leaves and pick up trash at city parks.

November 2023

The Honors Community celebrated Thanksgiving by gathering for a potluck.

One Discipline-Specific Honors Student defended their thesis.

December 2023

Three Honors students—one University Honors, two General Honors—graduated from Union.

March 2024

The Honors Community sponsored and hosted a Room in the Inn night to serve Jackson area men affected by homelessness.

April 2024

Students in the Beauty class traveled to Chicago to tour the Art Institute of Chicago and attend the symphony, while students in the Justice class visited the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis.

9 Discipline-Specific Honors students defended their theses.

The Honors Community held its annual end-of-the-year Banquet with 110 attendees. There we said goodbye to Dr. Henry Allen and Professor Haelim Allen, who have taken teaching positions elsewhere. We also introduced two new scholarships funded by generous alumni and friends of the Honors Community: the Randall Bush Award for study abroad (awarded to Kianna Coleman) and the Koinonia Award for exceptional contributions to the common life of the Honors Community (awarded to Grace Sarver).

May 2024

The Honors Community celebrated the graduation of 38 Seniors: 28 General Honors, 6 University Honors, and 4 Discipline-Specific Honors.

Nathaniel Barnard was the 2024 recipient of the Tigrett Medal.

July 2024

For the third summer, the Honors Community hosted Summer Seminars for Classical Teachers featuring a course on (surprise, surprise) Augustine's *Confessions*.



ALUMNI REFLECTION

Anne Adams ('22)



God creates beautiful things, and in that we have hope. Finding community in a new city, especially after leaving a season of rich community, is an unsettling and exciting experience. As a student in Honors from 2018-2022, I enjoyed the deep, soul-filled community and Christian intellectual fellowship that many find there. In August 2022, after graduating from Union with my degree in History and Applied Linguistics, I began my masters in Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Memphis.

In my SLP program, as I learned necessary knowledge for my future work, my desire for an integrated Christian intellectual life felt fragmented. I missed the shared love of wisdom, beauty, creation, justice, finitude, reading old books, and imagination. Taking classes and clinical experiences full-time, I devoted much of my energy to growing into an effective and caring clinician. This required, for a start, understanding speech and language disorders, their etiologies, and their psychosocial impact; relating to clients and families and providing person-centered care; assessing, planning treatment, and advocating for social change. In *A Little Manual For Knowing* that my Honors Cohort read in Wisdom, Esther Meek invites readers to an epistemological framework of loving in order to know. I love speech-language pathology very much, and yet focusing on a clinical program meant burying

seeds from my time in the Honors community. While I learned the anatomical and acoustic factors in speech production, psychometric properties of standardized diagnostic tests, and more, I often set aside my love for the beauty and truth revealed in language. It remained as an underlying current and sometimes sparkled forth, like when I marveled at the delectability of scripture, was refreshed by the clarity of expression in Jane Austen's characters, or recited to myself a newly-memorized Emily Dickinson poem. I sighed, however, that I could not tend the flame more faithfully and weave it more fully into my studies. My time in Honors was a beautiful training ground for integrated intellectual and spiritual life, a place where God wove many vibrant cords. Looking back over my SLP program, I see that God continued to spin these glowing threads and he offers them now to me. Turning away from worry, I receive the hope that in the coming years I will weave my love of people and of the beauty and truth of language, nurtured in Honors, into my clinical work.

Moving to Memphis, I left a tapestry of friendships and moved to a place that was, to my eyes, relationally threadbare. In the early months in Memphis, I was often disconsolate, not feeling rooted or connected at all. All the while, the Holy Spirit guided me, provided opportunities, and enabled me to make small decisions to invest in relationships and experiences. Ultimate frisbee Fall league provided instant community, and soon I found my church home, Faith Anglican Church. Slowly, classmates became friends. Across the months, God wove a tight cloth, providing kindred spirits in my roommate, two friends from school, and a nearby friend-and-fellow-Honors-alum. Together we prayed, laughed, conversed, cried, and rejoiced. More often than not, I was heedless of the strands thickening around me, except for interspersed moments of epiphany. In one clear moment of God's community-weaving, I met a new Christian friend by "chance" because our seats were next to each other at the Memphis Symphony

Orchestra performance of Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. We met for coffee a few weeks later and I found in her a thoughtful conversationalist who loved the theology of language. That same afternoon, I ran into people from both the Memphis Anglican community and my ultimate frisbee community. Moments like these snowballed until one evening I noticed myself feeling very connected. Suddenly, I marveled and before me popped up the memory of my loneliness and rootlessness of my first months here. I noticed how God provided connections in each place I went and then gave me grace to step back and see the tapestry, layers of memories connected to roads, parks, buildings, trees, and people. It was worth it to invest here.

In a few weeks, I will graduate and move to Kentucky. As I prepare to begin a new chapter in my hometown, I am lovingly folding up the embroidered cloth of my life in Memphis and looking forward to shaking it out in the future to quietly marvel at the beauty of its texture and unique design. It is a testimony to me to trust in the Lord with all my heart. Dear friends, let us not be discouraged, in seasons entrusted with many duties, when we long for community and Christian intellectual fellowship, when we must plant seeds and trust God to provide the growth at the right time. Let us hope in God's patience and creativity.

“TURNING AWAY FROM WORRY, I RECEIVE THE HOPE THAT IN THE COMING YEARS I WILL WEAVE MY LOVE OF PEOPLE AND OF THE BEAUTY AND TRUTH OF LANGUAGE, NURTURED IN HONORS, INTO MY CLINICAL WORK.”



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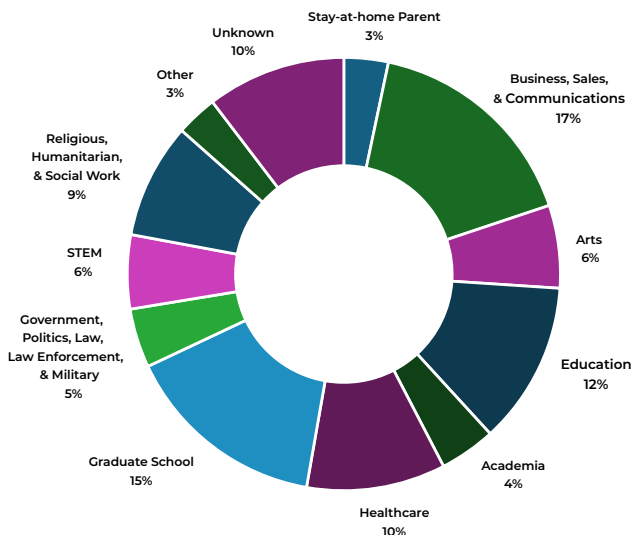
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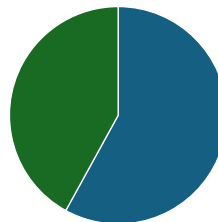
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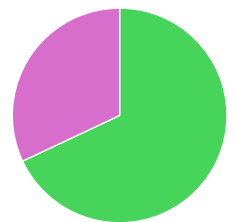
457 Graduates in 12 years



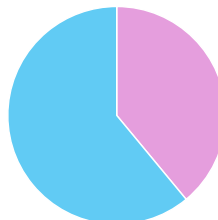
58% of Debate Team



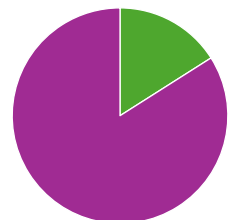
68% of Resident Advisors



39% of Awards Day



16% of Undergraduate, Traditional, Full-Time Student Body



193 current students in 62 different majors