



URI Honors Program
URI Honors Program Alumni

The Honors Student Advisory Board

The HSAB is a small group of students who meet twice monthly to relax on the comfy student lounge couches while planning events, conferring with staff, and making things happen for the Honors Program.

If you're interested in learning more about upcoming events, or if you'd like to join the HSAB, sign up on the sheet posted in the student lounge to receive the board's meeting minutes via e-mail. Newcomers are always welcome.

Special thanks to HSAB members Holly Tran, Alexa Kretsch, Luca Cintolo, and Megan Neubauer who contributed articles and photos to this semester's newsletter.

We are currently looking for a new editor for the Honors Program newsletter. If you're a student interested in working on the newsletter next semester, contact the current editor Kaylen Duarte by e-mail at kaylen.duarte@gmail.com. Writing experience is helpful.

Fall 2011 Course Offerings

The Honors Program has announced its Fall 2011 course listings. There are many exciting courses on the horizon! Among them, Professor Walter von Reinhart's senior seminar, "North-American Future Scenarios," which questions the future of our society.

The course will take a critical look at contemporary extrapolatory fiction. Course texts include Kurt Vonnegut's "Galapagos," Margaret Atwood's three novels "The Handmaid's Tale," "Oryx and Crake," and "The Year of the Flood," and Octavia E. Butler's "The Parable of the Sower" and "The Parable of the Talents."

Each of the novels deals with future scenarios that Professor von Reinhart calls "frightening." Even more frightening is the fact that the authors arrived at each scenario through analysis of current contemporary trends.

The course will analyze text through economic, political, environmental, and social viewpoints and examine the probability of each future scenario. This course promises to question our current society, and caution against the potential future of our society.

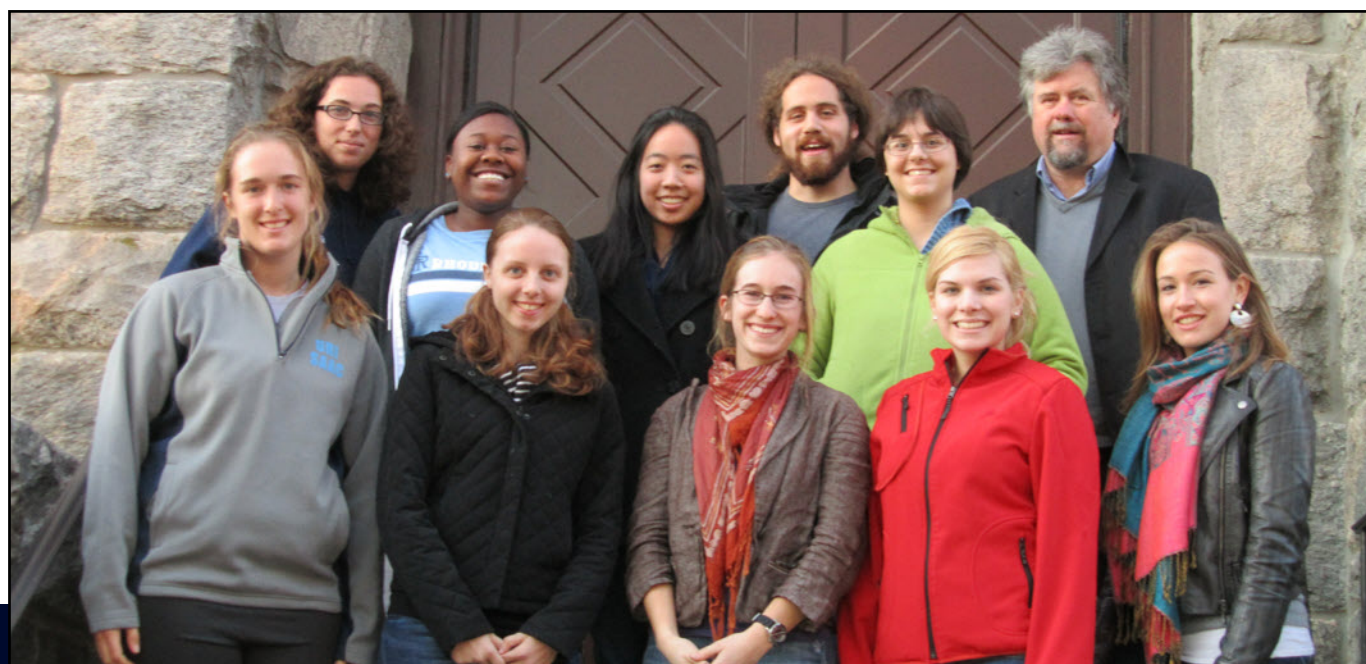
The course, "Designing Sustainable Solutions for Developing Communities," taught by professors Vinka Craver and Thomas Boving, was previously offered as a 300-level course and is now a senior seminar. The seminar focuses on creating awareness about social problems in developing countries and strategies to alleviate the problems using sustainable solutions.

Professor Karen McCurdy's Honors tutorial, "Children and Families in Poverty," will examine poverty in the United States and analyze the sociological, psychological, economic causes of poverty and its development effects on children and families. The course is cross-listed on e-campus as HPR 310 (Section 2) and HDF 434H.

Professor Gina Valentino's honors tutorial in literature, "Class and Labor in Continental US Multi-ethnic Literature," will examine the complex relationship between work and identity in the "new economy" through exploration of various themes.

For a full course listing for Fall 2011 visit www.uri.edu/hpr.

The Student Advisory Board on the front steps of Lippitt Hall. Top row, left to right: Alexa Kretsch, Mecca Smith, Holly Tran, Luca Cintolo, Kaylen Duarte, Dir. Richard McIntyre. Bottom row, left to right: Megan Nepshinsky, Mary McGunigal, Bridget Griffith, Meghan Neubauer, Jackie Woodside.



UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

University Honors Program
300 Lippitt Hall
401-874-2303
uri.edu/hpr

THIS ISSUE:

- Student photos
page 1
- Vetlesen Lectures
- Undergrad Research
page 2
- Director's Note
- Students teaching
page 3
- Fall 2011 courses
page 4

UPCOMING EVENTS:

"Rise and Shine" Student Photo Gallery Opening

When: April 5th,
4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Where: Lippitt
Hall, Third Floor

Vetlesen Lectures

Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.
in Edwards Hall

April 5th:
Norbert Wu
"Exploring the World's
Notable and Threatened
Underwater Habitats"

April 12th:
Deborah Kelly
"Bringing the Internet
into the Oceans"

Student photography exhibit brings Africa to life

The warm sunlight filtering through the windows in the Honors Program lounge reveals a row of four framed photographs. Each captures a moment frozen in time, each depicts candidly raw expressions, and all provide a glimpse into the culture of South Africa. They are bold, vibrant, and emotional, and they were captured by senior Honors student Bridget Griffith's digital camera.

In spring 2010, Bridget sought to get as far away from campus as possible for her semester abroad. She chose to go to South Africa because she thought it would be an experience she wouldn't find outside her undergraduate studies. She thought it would expose her to something radically different, but she found that it actually brought her closer to home.

In the city of Port Elizabeth, Bridget began her study abroad experience like most students, taking a few classes at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and exposing herself to the language and culture. But Bridget's journey diverged from the typical study abroad when a man from a local township approached her and four other students to ask for their assistance.

In many areas of South Africa, children do not have extra-curricular activities and other important developmental components commonly found in the United States. Some parents cannot even afford to send their children to school. Bridget and her peers started an after-school organization called "Vu'kupile," which translates as "Rise and Shine." Once a week, Bridget helped run workshops and teach children about issues like health, safety, and team-building.

"They were very responsive," Bridget said. "Like all kids, they just wanted to play and learn. They loved to group-read, and they were the best actors and dancers!"

In an effort to preserve the memories of her irreplaceable experience, Bridget took pictures with her digital camera, never thinking they would amount to anything more than personal gems from a chapter in her life. However, after seeing her extraordinary work,



Bridget Griffith with her photographs.

Dr. Roger LeBrun, a professor for the Honors Program and the College of the Environment and Life Sciences, suggested that her photos be framed and hung. The idea garnered the full support of the Honors Program, and beginning with a gallery opening on April 5, Bridget will be the first student to showcase her photos on the third floor of Lippitt Hall.

"When you study abroad, you're in complete control of how your experience turns out," Bridget said. "I want these pictures to demonstrate how you can make your experience your own. Experience the culture and all that you can."

Inspired by her travels, Bridget is pursuing a career in public health with plans to obtain her M.D. and Ph.D. She hopes to work in women's health and sees herself returning to South Africa to promote advocacy and improving lives of residents. She has already applied for the nationally competitive Boren Scholarship to fund such travels.

Seeing Bridget's gallery, onlookers will realize South Africa is not very far away and that any place is as far away as one makes it. She understands that people are often desensitized to images of poverty, and she wants to bring the message closer to home. Bridget's gallery is a symbol of hope—hope embodied by the people of South Africa, hope for a brighter future, and hope that all may gain the opportunity to rise and shine.

The Vetlesen Lectures: The State of Our Oceans

Over the last few years, much has been made of the condition of Earth's atmosphere. Between holes in the ozone layer and the rapid increase of greenhouse gases high above land, people are constantly looking upwards, but what is the effect of global climate change on the water around us?

This is the question posed by the 2011 Vetlesen lecture series "The State of Our Oceans." This year, the annual lecture series sponsored by the G. Unger Vetlesen Foundation focused on the oceans in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of URI's Graduate School of Oceanography. The URI Honors Program is one of several co-sponsors of the series.

The first lecture in the series, "Will Coral Reefs Disappear? Biology of Ocean Acidification," featured a panel discussion among Andrew Dickson of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego, CA; Dr. Anne Cohen of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Woods Hole, MA; and Brad Seibel of the URI Biological Sciences Department. The speakers defined ocean acidification, discussed ocean acidification and animal physiology, and affirmed that the negative affect of climate change on coral reefs.

Dr. Margaret Leinen, in the sec-

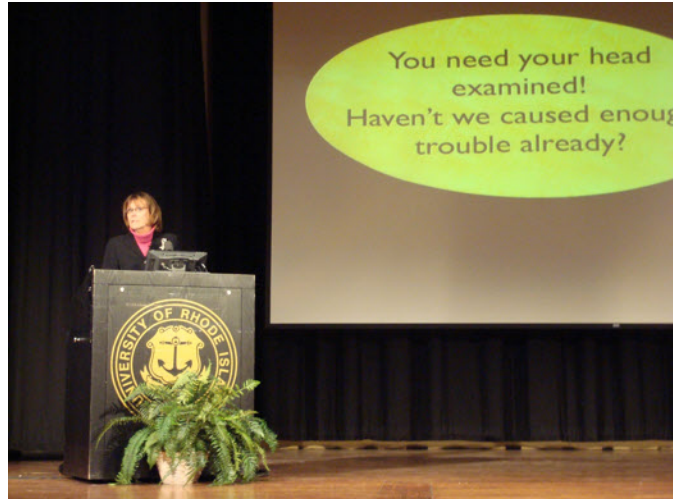
ond event of the lecture series, discussed climate engineering, also known as geoengineering. She defined climate engineering as "deliberate modification of an element of the climate system" and described methods like seeding the ocean with iron to increase productivity and carbon sequestering.

Dr. Leinen also discussed the political, economic, and ethical issues associated with these practices.

The information she presented offered a glimpse into a climate-related field that is not much talked about in current media.

Each lecture so far has attracted an audience from the surrounding community, faculty, and students. The breadth of the lecture offerings, from biology to political science and from engineering to journalism, attracts an audience from all corners of the university and community.

Future speakers include marine photographer and filmmaker Norbert Wu on April 5, Deborah Kelley who



Dr. Leinen with a poignant question for her audience.

will discuss bringing real-time ocean data to the Internet on April 12, and Senator Sheldon Whitehouse with the National Ocean Policy he brought to the country on April 26.

Each of these lectures will be held at 7:30 in Edwards Hall Auditorium, and there is also a live webcast that can be found at www.uri.edu/vetlesen. Whether you attend one or attend them all, you are certain to learn about new ideas or learn how others are looking at existing ideas from a different perspective.

The Undergraduate Research Initiative: It's Never Too Early

A lot of students feel that they are in over their heads when the words "independent research" spring up, but there is no need to fear the plunge. As long as you prepare adequately before submitting your proposal, the process is relatively stress-free, and you will learn that the experience of carrying out your own project is incredibly rewarding.

Getting a project in the works does take some time, though, which is why it is never too soon to prepare for your project. Here are a few things to consider:

1) You will need an academic advisor for your project. It is probably wise to choose a faculty member with whom you are comfortable, whom you know, and who understands the

entire point of your project—not just what the results will be, but why you should do it.

2) Your proposal will take several revisions before it is well-written, clear, and thorough. Don't try to submit a first draft, as your advisor's signature is also required on the application, which means that his or her reputation is also on the line.

3) Follow the directions. Following the directions is key. No jargon means no jargon. The Undergraduate Research Initiative review committee members don't all know biochemistry or medieval art history. An itemized budget should be clear and specific. Explaining your project in plain English will also help you gain a clearer picture of your project as a whole.

It might take some time to reduce your project description to something comprehensible, but the reduction will shed light on the real importance of your project both to yourself and the people who decide whether you get the money.

While there may be more things to consider, these are probably the three most important. Having an academic advisor is essential. Writing and rewriting your proposal will help you explore your project and give you confidence.

Finally, following directions will show the evaluating committee that you are serious about your project and capable of meeting its demands.

For more detail, please see <http://www.uri.edu/research/tro/funding/undergradprojects/index.html>. The next round of proposals will be in the fall.

A Note From Director Ric McIntyre

As we approach the most demanding time of the academic year I am especially appreciative of the work of Kaylen Duarte and the other members of the Honors Program Student Advisory Board who write and edit this newsletter. They are all engaged in challenging academic programs and their goal is to excel, so the gift of their time to our program is something I am truly thankful for.

We just found out that Theresa Murphy has won a Udall Fellowship! In the next few days we will hear the results of the Goldwater, Boren, and Fulbright Scholarship competitions and we have confidence that several of our students will be winners. The process of applying for a prestigious national fellowship is itself a great learning experience and

I encourage outstanding sophomores and juniors to look at the opportunities listed at the Honors Program website at <http://www.uri.edu/hpr/Scholarships.html> and talk to me or to Kathleen Maher about what might be right for you.

The Senior Honors Research Conference is the highlight of our year. Professor Hames is busy finalizing the schedule. Please join us on May 5 in Lippitt Hall to celebrate the work of the largest group ever to complete the Honors Program. The schedule will be posted on the Honors home page along with all the other events we are hosting in the busy month ahead.

Ric

Students Teaching Students

For many University of Rhode Island students, the idea of public speaking is a nightmare. Maybe they should talk to Brian Stack, a junior, who will lead URI's first ever "Students Teaching Students" course in Fall 2011 as his Senior Honors Project.

"It's mostly just terrifying," Brian admitted, smiling a little crookedly. "What if the students don't listen to me?"

Fortunately, Brian won't be left to fend for himself against the sophomores, juniors, and seniors who will enroll in HPR 107 this September. A small team of university professors will assist, mentor, and supervise him.

The course is the first of many planned for the "Students Teaching Students" concept pioneered by the University Honors Program. Bridget Griffith, who is helping to develop Students Teaching Students, explained that the experience is designed to be a learning process for both the students and the student teacher, who receives six Senior Honors Project credits for leading the course.

"Students can take their big idea and turn it into a course," Bridget said. "It challenges the role of who is the best educator."

Brian's course, entitled "LGBTQ History," will explore the social construct of sexuality throughout history. "LGBTQ" is an acronym for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning," and as Brian explained, one of the focuses of the course is to demystify the history and significance of the term.

"LGBTQ is an adjective, not a noun,"

said Brian. "People say, 'LGBT.' Well, LGBT what? LGBT signs? LGBT courses?"

Brian, who is a philosophy and history double major, says the course will span from ancient history all the way up to the modern day, covering a diverse range of topics from "Transgenderism in Greek Myth" to "Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals" to the U.S. military's "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy.

The course will also feature several guest speakers. Brian said his speakers could include an expert on sexuality in ancient times and the administrator of a gay rights center, but that the purpose of the course is not to sway students into believing one way or another about controversial LGBTQ issues.

"It's not so much going out there and advocating LGBT, it's more about understanding gay people as a historical concept," Brian said. "They're going to learn a lot. They're not going to get it anywhere else."

And how did Brian put together his own course, with no prior experience and no Ph.D in his field? The first step, he said, was picking his subject and talking to faculty members he admired to hone the course concept. Then, to design his proposal, he tackled the challenge of assembling a syllabus by

Below, Brian Stack, the Honors student who will lead "LGBTQ History" in Fall 2011.



cannibalizing old syllabi he'd liked from courses he'd taken himself, which he'd never thrown away.

"I horde things," Brian said with a laugh, who added that the experience of putting a syllabus together was invaluable for him, since he hopes to be a professor himself one day. His best advice for future students who submit a proposal to the Honors Program's Students Teaching Students is to know your topic and choose something you're passionate about.

"If you're going to be leading a course, it should be something you care about," said Brian. Bridget agreed, and said that she didn't think passion would be a problem for Brian.

"It seems like he's been waiting to do this course his whole life," Bridget said.