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Students visit Oak Ridge National Laboratory

DR. DARWIN DAHL
Areté guest writer

A group of seven chemistry majors enjoyed a week-long special topic Honors course, Chemistry 475, held at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) over the 2009 Winter Term. The primary objective of this course was to study the current state of photovoltaics (PV), namely: theory, experimental characterization and future developments.

The Honors course, directed by Dr. Darwin Dahl of the Chemistry Department, was made possible in part by a grant obtained from the WKU Honors College. The remaining funding was generously donated by the WKU Chemistry Department, and a significant portion was donated by ORNL. Impetus for this offering came from the nation’s heightened interest for developing cost-competitive solar cells.

WKU students split most days between lecture and laboratory. The WKU liaison at ORNL was Dr. Gerald E. Jellison, director of the newly established Materials Characterization Lab for the study of photovoltaics. Laboratory experiences involved determining optical properties of Si, Ge and GaAs via reflection, transmission, and ellipsometry. Other experimental activities involved the investigation of the Hall Effect as well as observing experimental characterizations of pn junctions and determining spectral response of various solar cells.

The workshop ended with tours of ORNL PV facilities and the Center for Nanophase Materials Sciences (CNMS). The CNMS is collaborative nanoscience user research facility for the synthesis, characterization, theory/modeling/simulation, and design of nanoscale materials. It is one of five Nanoscale Science Research Centers currently being established by the Office of Science, U.S. Department of Energy.

One of the exciting outcomes of the various tours was the realization by students that a myriad of opportunities exist for summer research at ORNL. This course is tentatively scheduled to be offered again in the 2010 Winter Term.
Lights, Camera, Action: Students Produce Feature Film

AMANDA LOVIZA
Areté staff writer

HON 301 Honors Colloquium: Feature Film, Pre-Production may not grab your interest by its dry title, but the class itself keeps 13 students entertained every Tuesday night in the Mass Media and Technology Hall. Taught by Professor Ron DeMarse, an assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Broadcasting, this course teaches students from all majors how to produce a feature-length film.

The class is one of the new three-hour colloquia offered by the Honors College so that students may fulfill their Honors colloquia requirement with a single class. Feature Film, Pre-Production is compromised mostly of Honors College students, but it also includes Honors-eligible students. A variety of majors are represented, including broadcasting, biology, political science, and theatre. The students are in the pre-production plans for a horror film that will be approximately 90 minutes long. This spring colloquium will be followed by a summer course that will actually do the filming. Students can still sign up for the summer filming colloquium by contacting DeMarse at ron.demarse@wku.edu.

The idea for the feature film class developed during a casual dinner between faculty and staff of the School of Journalism and Broadcasting and the Honors College, according to DeMarse. WKU has not had a part in producing a feature film in about 10 years, and DeMarse enjoyed leading a similar movie project while teaching at another university, so the plan developed naturally. The production of the class’s film is being funded by several grants, including an Honors Faculty Engagement Grant.

Outside of the film planning, the students are also responsible for an analytical paper discussing a specific horror film and frequent posts to the class message board. In this course, broadcasting majors work side by side with students who have zero experience in film production. Regina Durkan, a junior broadcasting student from Elizabethtown, says this has not led to any difficulties. According to Durkan, having students from different majors is helpful in bringing different skills to the group and adding new perspectives.

“Professor DeMarse does a good job of making it accessible to everyone in the class,” said Moss. He believes his movie making will stop with this class, but he enjoys the class and has gained a basic knowledge of production.

The new colloquium provides students outside of the broadcasting department a chance to learn about the field while broadcasting students are given something different from their other video production classes. Durkan, who has taken two other courses with DeMarse, commented on the differences.

“There’s a lot more freedom. There are no tests…definitely more fun.”

- Regina Durkan

Honors opportunity to study abroad in Berlin

MANNIE WEBB
Areté staff writer

Spending a couple of weeks of summer break in Europe? The WKU Honors College is. Students enrolled in Honors German 100 and Honors German 102 Abroad will travel to Berlin, Germany, in May. Think studying abroad is only for language majors? Guess again. This trip, inspired by the successful Winter Term 2008 program, is a collaboration between the Department of Modern Language’s Dr. Laura McGee and the Department of Biology’s Dr. Philip Lienesch. Dr. McGee will teach the language course, and Dr. Lienesch will guide students through interesting science-related excursions.

Not a biology or a German major? Not a problem. The itinerary is full of activities interesting to many different majors. Additional activities include tours and plays or concerts. Love history? Join the class for walking tours of Berlin’s and Dresden’s historic city centers. Interested in engineering? Perhaps you would find a day trip to learn about German engineering innovations and robotics or aeronautical engineering interesting. If you find green technology appealing, then you might enjoy a trip to the World Green Roofs Industry Network. Even if you are not a fan of the sciences, you might enjoy learning about the science of brewing beer at the Radeberger Brewery.

What activity did the participants from the last program list at the top of their favorites? Homestays with their host families were ranked highly. Exploring another country is also a favorite. What is a better way of really learning what life in Germany is like than living with a local family for a while? Students enjoyed actively participating in the everyday family activities and exploring Berlin with their host brothers and sisters. Can you say “Ich bin ein Berliner”? 

Nunti communalis  News about Honors community involvement and events
Field trip furthers relationships of English students

AMY BISHOP
Areté guest writer

Seven Honors English 200 students and their professor, Dr. Sandy Hughes, traveled to Murfreesboro, Tenn., to see Middle Tennessee State University’s production of *Summer and Smoke* on Feb. 22.

...crammed into a rented 8-passenger van, nicknamed “Moby.”

Tennessee Williams were hoping to further the literary aspect of their lives.

Although the pacing of the play was slower than the group would have liked, they enjoyed the costumes and agreed that the lead actress put on a great performance.

However, those who went said that their favorite part of the trip had nothing to do with the play; it was how the field trip brought them together as a class.

The group most enjoyed laughing over their Cracker Barrel dinner biscuits and getting to know their classmates while crammed into a rented eight-passenger van, nicknamed “Moby” for its massive outside appearance. The group bonded over conversations about music preferences, 8-tracks, Pop Rocks, and Hughes’s inexperience in driving large vans over speed bumps.

“We know each other a lot better now; we know Dr. Hughes better,” said Jennifer Thomas, a freshman in the WKU Honors College. “I feel like the other students missed out.”

The field trip was primarily funded by the Honors College with secondary funding by the English department.
Study-abroad photo and essay contest winners

ASHLEY MEFFORD
Essay Contest Winner

The tent was covered in ants, the outhouse was full of lizards, and the red dust that covered the ground also covered our belongings by the time we left. Such were the more unpleasant aspects of my trip to rural Kenya. However, we were there to have an adventure and adventure is most certainly what we found. With eight pre-medical students, three doctors, and one professor, we headed to Kasigau in southwestern Kenya to offer medical services to people whose closest doctor was 40 kilometers away.

Despite the bothersome ants, lizards, and dust, we found ourselves in a place on the other side of the globe where we felt we belonged. From the moment we arrived to women singing in celebration of our arrival to the farewell barbecue, the people of Rukanga welcomed us with abundant hospitality. Never before in my life have I felt so appreciated. As a service learning trip, this study-abroad opportunity gave me the chance to interact intimately with the local people and serve them according to one of their greatest needs. It was an adventure heading to the clinic every morning, not knowing what illnesses you would be asked to treat or what type of food you would be eating for lunch.

Yet the greatest part of the adventure for me was seeing needs we can only read about in the U.S. and being able to begin to meet those needs one patient at a time. As a student not yet trained to be a medical professional, it was hard to believe that my contributions would be significant, but I discovered differently as we began our work. I was able to take medical histories and vital signs so the doctors could work more quickly. I was able to help organize the patients so the line ran smoothly. I was able to teach school children how germs spread and how to wash their hands well to keep from becoming sick.

The fact that I was able to help despite my limited medical knowledge was gratifying. The gratitude of the people simply increased my desire to serve them. The result was not only great memories, but experiences that will continue to shape my decisions as I invest more time in serving needy populations as a student and later as a medical professional.

Congrats Contest Winners:
1st place essay: Ashley Mefford
2nd place essay: Natalie Peak
3rd place essay: Amanda Beers

First place for the study-abroad photo contest.
KATRINA BIDWELL

Second place for the study-abroad photo contest.
ADRIENNE REUTER

Third place for the study-abroad photo contest.
SARAH HOOD

Veni vidi vici  News about Honors students going out into the world to see and conquer
WKU’s 39th Student Research Conference

On Saturday, Feb. 21, hundreds of WKU students, faculty, friends, and family members gathered at the Carroll Knicely Conference Center for the 39th Annual Western Kentucky Student Research Conference. Held annually every spring, the conference serves to spotlight outstanding undergraduate and graduate WKU students in research from all fields. Students present their research either during a concurrent paper session or poster session.

This year several of the undergraduate students participating in the conference were also Honors College students. Honors research was quite diverse, ranging from topics on romantic poetry and Nathaniel Hawthorne to reef fish and climate change.

Honors students and their research project titles are listed below:

Dana Adams: Brand Research Collage.
Rachel Bowman: Using Visual Art to Teach Matrix Transformations.
Brandon Colvin: A Reasonable Alternative: the role of midge in Hitchcock’s Vertigo.
Gregory Capillo: The Farm: growing a new world.
Bobby Deignan: Hand in Hand to Hell: Blanche DuBois and Norma Desmond as victims of genre.
Jessie Magee: Protecting Walden Pond: a step towards defending ordinary nature in the United States and William Faulkner the Humanist: how his Nobel Prize acceptance speech changed how we interpret “Barn Burning.”
Jared Mink: Transformation of Medicago sativa with Agrobacteria to Create Insecticidal Plants.
Kaitlen Osburn: Waiting for Godot: We are all born mad. Some remain so.
Anne Gray Perrin: Guess who’s Coming to Dinner: the web of racial, class, and gender constructions in late 1960s America.
Chad Phillips: On-Metal Synthesis of Some Substituted Rhenium Pyridazyl Complexes.

Honors sophomore Amanda Beers (left) checks in a presenter. Beers was a member of this year’s Student Research Council.
WKU’s 39th Student Research Conference

Top Left: Chad Phillips presents his project at the poster session.
Top Middle: Jane Marie Wix presents her project at the poster session.
Top Right: Kirby Watkins answers questions after presenting her paper.
Center (l to r): Anne Gray Perrin, Kaitlen Osburn, and Bobby Deignan listen to another speaker before presenting their own research at one of the concurrent paper sessions.
Bottom Left: Astrid Suarez Gonzalez presents her project at the poster session.
Bottom Right: Justin Mobley presents his project at the poster session.
Carpe diem

Mark your calendar for these Honors events so you can seize the day

Honors Club T-shirts are now on sale! Purchase a shirt today for $10 at the Honors Center from 8-4:30 p.m. Sale ends Friday, April 10.

Calendar of Events

April
1: April Fool’s Day
4: Honors trip to see the Nashville Predators
5: Easter Egg Hunt at 1-4 p.m. at Chaney’s Dairy Barn
10: Last day to purchase Honors Club T-shirt
13: Honors Club meeting at 8 p.m. at DUC
25: Honors Formal at 8 p.m. - 12 a.m. at Sloan Convention Center (Holiday Inn)
27: Honors Club meeting at 8 p.m. at DUC

May
11-14: Finals Week
12: Honors End-of-the-Year Party
17: WKU Commencement