

HONORS NEWSLETTER

University of South Carolina Aiken

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UofSC Aiken
Honors Program

Message from the Director

Greetings! Each summer I sit down to write the annual newsletter, and for the past four years I have approached this task with much excitement. For me, it is as an opportunity to document, share, and reflect on all of the accomplishments and successes of our students. It is an opportunity to highlight the unique academic nature of our honors program, and to gather my thoughts on the coming year. Admittedly, this year has been a bit different. Not because I am not proud of all of the accomplishments of our students, in fact I have never been more impressed with our students, but because many of the social rituals and celebrations we hold to recognize our students were canceled due to what will likely be remembered as the year of the coronavirus. These are the fun activities that I love to feature in our newsletter, but this year we simply had to make unexpected and unprecedented changes. I am grateful that in the fall semester we welcomed close to 40 students in the program, and we had a new experience of having breakfast with Chancellor Jordan and Dr.

Timmons. We also had a successful service Saturday at the Friends of the Animal Shelter (FOTAS) where we got to walk dogs and snuggle kittens (a great way to destress!). In March, classes transitioned to remote learning, and I soon realized that the semester was not going to end quite as planned. The seniors would not be presenting their capstone projects at the Scholar Showcase, and the in person Academic Awards ceremony was not possible. Our end of the year celebratory reception with Chancellor Jordan and Dr. Timmons was also not possible. Our hopes to return to FOTAS for a spring service day were dashed. Our first ever honors study abroad trip to Italy was cancelled. As I answered queries from students about the year end activities and capstones, I was expecting to hear some reservations, and perhaps even some complaints. And I would not have blamed them one bit. I could not help but feel that they were getting the short end of the stick. I explained to the graduating seniors that they would need to record their capstone presentations, and we would post them on the website. We would mail their Honors stole and plaque to them in lieu of the Awards ceremony. Instead of responding with frustration or disappointment, they responded with resilience! The capstone presentations were fantastic. And so, as the year wrapped up, I found myself reflecting on the ability of our graduates to see the bigger picture, to adapt when necessary, and to carry on with a positive outlook and a sense of determination. And despite Covid-19 dashing our celebrations and ceremonies, the honors students stood out as they always do, winning awards, serving in leadership positions, and receiving scholarships and other accolades. As I think about our upcoming year, I remain optimistic that despite the fact that some things may be different for a while, our program will still be able to offer students a unique academic experience. We will make adjustments when needed and continue in the tradition of excellence that precedes us. Our incoming students are arriving from states as far away as Alaska and California. We are offering many new unique honors classes as well as some past favorites. We are introducing a new learning community in Pacer Commons. There is much to be excited about! I hope you will take a minute and continue reading to learn more about the accomplishments of our students, the high impact learning opportunities that our honors courses offer, and some additional changes we have in store for the 2020-2021 year. I look forward to our year ahead!

Pandemic Interrupts Study Abroad In Spain

By Breanna Florido



When the news about the spreading pandemic came I wasn't sure what to expect. I was in the middle of my semester-long study abroad program in Spain. I noticed each day my class sizes fell shorter and shorter as U.S. universities called their students home. Not long after I started saying goodbye to my new life long friends, I too had to say goodbye to Granada.

It was crazy because just six months ago I was preparing to leave the United States to study abroad in the south of Spain for an entire semester. When I arrived I had no clue what to expect, but every turn was full of pleasant surprises. I had an apartment with 4 other roommates who soon became great friends. I lived in the city center where everything was at my fingertips, from the local farmers markets, to the authentic Muslim vendors, to the beautiful parks that welcomed everyone. Even more, I was living in Granada which is a beautiful place. It is home to the Alambrah, beautiful Moorish architecture, the Sierra Nevada mountains, and of course the olive filled hills that make one of Spain's most valued exports; olive oil. What more could I have asked for? It was perfect, but as you know then came the Coronavirus.

Those two months living abroad were tremendous and I couldn't allow myself to return to the U.S. just yet. Since my classes were in the process of being moved online and I had no choice but to leave Spain, I decided to hop on a plane and head

to Colombia, South America, where I planned to finish my semester online and stay with my boyfriend. Since my boyfriend is Colombian I was very excited to see his country for the first time. Everything was even more amazing than I imagined. I spent several months in the capital Bogota and another month or so in the more rural province of Santander. I was fascinated by the exotic biodiversity. Just in front of the house avocado, papaya, mango, and banana trees filled the street. Even more, the weather was pleasingly hot and every landscape featured the most spectacular hills and mountains. Anyways I finally returned back here in the U.S. after I truly got that semester abroad experience. Even though things didn't work out as planned I am so happy and grateful they went as they did. I encourage everyone to study abroad and take risks like this. After all, you never know what might come from it.

New! Honors Living Learning Community

This year marks the inaugural year of the Honors Program Living Learning Community (LLC). Our Honors Program LLC is housed in Pacer Commons which will serve as “home base” for many of our activities. We hope to hold a variety of events including coffee chats, game nights, and study groups. An honors LLC provides additional opportunities for honors students to develop friendships and an enhanced sense of community, as well as increased academic engagement. Some of our fall plans may be contingent on social distancing requirements, so we will adapt plans as necessary, but I am looking forward to working with the professionals in housing that are anxious to provide another unique and special opportunity for our students in the honors program. The LLC is designed as a residential enhancement to increase social and academic opportunities for our students and includes a resident mentor, Mr. Nick Fanchette, who is also in the honors program. I am grateful to this talented and forward-thinking group of people for their time and effort in getting our LLC off the ground! Please read more about the LLC associates below. If you have questions about our new LLC please direct them to me, michellp@usca.edu , or honorshousing@usca.edu

Meet our Honors LLC Associates



Katherine Glassman is the Assistant Director of Pacer Commons here at USC Aiken since January 2020. Before that, she was a Residence Director for North Campus at Mississippi University for Women located in Columbus, MS. Katherine is from Durham, North Carolina where she received a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice from Appalachian State University. She also has a M.Ed. in Higher Education Student Affairs from the University of South Carolina-Columbia. Katherine's focus areas are helping facilitate the Honors Living-Learning Community, overseeing the other living-learning communities in Pacer Commons, supervising the Pacer Commons Resident Mentors, and creating a vibrant living environment for the residents of Pacer Commons. Her office is located in Pacer Commons Office 200B. In her spare time, Katherine likes to cheer on her favorite sports teams, do yoga, and play video games.



David "Nick" Fanchette is a rising junior here at UofSC Aiken. Nick is excited to be the resident mentor for the upcoming Honors living-learning community. A lifelong Scout and secret theater kid, Nick has a lot of team-building experience and cannot wait to help his fellow Honors students make the most out of their resident life. Big on neighborliness and always willing to lend a hand, feel free to stop him on campus or in the residence halls with any questions, problems, or conversation you might want to share! Nick hails from Walterboro, SC and is majoring in political science.

Honors Ambassadors Named

Honors ambassadors assist the Honors Program Director with a variety of duties including the open house events, the Chancellor's reception with new students and the spring reception. I would like to thank our **graduating ambassadors Ashlyn Freeman and Drake Jones**.

The 2020-2021 Ambassadors:

Ashton Blush (Psychology)

Samuel Boyd (Mathematics and Computer Science)

Madison (Maddy) Carelock (Biology)

Melanie Howe (Chemistry and Engineering)

Kylie Tager (Biology)

Eva Slagle (Communication)

Congratulations 2019-2020 Graduates

Hannah Bonham (Nursing)

Kiana Franklin (Nursing)

Ashlyn Freeman (Nursing)

Ralph Greene (Business Administration)

Drake Jones (Computer Science)

Karah Moulton (Biology)

Santanna Templeton (Education)



Welcome Class of 2024!

Eliyana Brown (North Augusta, SC)
 Lindsey Cartledge (Evans, GA)
 Braden Comar (Aiken, SC)
 Jennifer Cristino (Johnston, SC)
 Edwin Emmer (Irmo, SC)
 Paige D'Agostin (Morrisville, NC)
 Karmyn Gallios (Homer, AK)
 Abigail Garrick (Lexington, SC)
 Ryan Goldman (Aiken, SC)
 Heidi Gyselinck (Ravenel, SC)
 Savion Harris (Hephzibah, GA)
 Cheryl Harrison (Columbia, SC)
 Jillian Hicks (Hephzibah, GA)

Timothy Hood-Pittenger (Irmo, SC)
 Jordan Huynh-Luetkemeyer (Lithia, FL)
 Jasmine Kitchings (Aiken, SC)
 Caitlin Mann (Mooresville, NC)
 Sophie Meredith (Daniel Island, SC)
 Iris Nichols (North Augusta, SC)
 Rebekkah Ogbuefi (North Augusta, SC)
 Chidinma Okafor (Canton County, CA)
 Nicholas Riveglia (Aiken, SC)
 Caitlin Shirey (Aiken, SC)
 Jacob Smith (North Augusta, SC)
 Lily Swindell (Taylors, SC)

Honors Course Offerings

HONS 101.001 "S.T.E.M. Literature" (Professor T. Hagstette)

In this class, students will examine representations of the S.T.E.M. fields in literature. Nobel nominee Émile Zola declared in *Le Roman Experimental* (1880) that fiction is essentially the selection of truthful instances in life that are subjected to laboratory conditions in a novel, whereby the hypotheses of the author about the nature and operation of the forces that work on human beings can be tested. This course will take that view of literature as we evaluate works whose primary tensions reveal truths about the sciences, technology, mathematics, the business world, psychology, and other non-Humanities areas of study. Readings and their accompanying subject studies include: the popular short stories of Edgar Allan Poe (Psychology), works of literary Naturalism, especially the novella *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* by Stephen Crane (the Sciences), Edwin Abbott's 1884 novella *Flatland: A Romance of Several Dimensions* (Mathematics), Richard Powers's 1995 novel *Galatea 2.2* (Technology), and the Nobel-prize winning 1922 novel *Babbitt* by Sinclair Lewis (Business). Overall, an important goal of this class is to help bridge the ever-widening gulf between the Humanities and the S.T.E.M. fields. It will help to

demonstrate the value of the Humanities in narrativizing and thus clarifying the animating concerns of disciplines across campus, while simultaneously exploring the potentials of S.T.E.M. for humanist education. Offered Fall.

HONS 201.001 "The History of Rock and Roll" (Professor S. Pierce)

The first half of the course focuses on the origins of rock and roll as a musical form and an expression of popular culture, beginning with a discussion of earlier forms of popular culture (including jazz, blues, and minstrelsy), covering the beginnings of rock and roll in the 1950s, and moving through the British Invasion and Woodstock era. This will incorporate discussion of the wider social movements established in this period and how they connected to the development of rock and roll as a musical genre (for example, no class on Woodstock would be complete without covering the hippy movement). The second half of the course will chart the history of rock and roll in the 1970s and 1980s, with emphasis on the punk revolution, the influence of rock and roll in the Spanish transition to democracy, and the relationship of rock and roll to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. There will be some discussion of the history of the Eurovision Song Contest, a major annual event in Europe. Throughout the entire class, there will also be discussion of the technological changes that affected rock and roll (such as the invention of electrical sound amplification, the electric guitar, etc.). Offered Fall.

HONS 201.002 "Ancient Wisdom: Happiness, Contentedness and Suspension" (Professor T. Burrus)

This colloquium shall practically examine the following three questions:

Ought I pursue happiness ?

Ought I be content with my life?

Ought I sometimes suspend my judgment?

These three questions shall be pursued with special relation to the works of both Hellenistic and Ancient Chinese philosophers—namely, Kongzi and Epicurus (associated with notions of the pursuit of happiness), Laozi and Epictetus (associated with situational contentedness), and Zhuangzi and Sextus Empiricus (associated with the suspension of judgment). While the primary writings of these six thinkers shall

form the grounds of our inquiry, the practical application shall be in the self-interrogation of these questions, with reference to the methodology and application thereof in one's own life; therefore, the objective of this course is to provide students with skills of self-inquiry and to be apply these questions unto oneself—with these Hellenistic and Chinese thinkers as our guides. The essential pedagogy of this course shall be a synthesis of monological lectures and Socratic dialectic. Offered Fall.

HONS 201.00a "The Black Experience Through Film" (Professor M. Johnson)

This course will take a deep dive into the Black experience using film as a point of discussion and analysis. Using popular Hollywood, independent, and documentary films to illustrate the Black experience, students will gain a depth and breadth of knowledge of the Black experience as it pertains to women's rights, politics, media, leisure, religion, health, education, civil rights, enslavement, economics, marriage, sexuality, and more. The sociological and ideological aspects of the films will be emphasized. This course will facilitate an understanding of the significant aspects of the culture and history that contribute to the social experience of Black Americans. Students will evaluate how concepts of ethnocentrism, prejudice, discrimination and racism mold the Black experience in America. The course examines how elements of social structure shape the Black experience in the United States and abroad, illustrating the black experience in a variety of contexts. Offered Spring.

HONS 201.00b "The Phenomenon of Spanish Soccer Films" (Professor T. Ashton)

This course addresses different aspects of Spanish soccer films including: the difficulties the genre of soccer films have had in being respected by the intellectual classes; the techniques filmmakers have incorporated to make soccer films accepted and appreciated by the masses and the intellectual classes; and the sociopolitical background which underscore each of the films that will be watched. Additionally, this course will help students gain a broader understanding of Spain and the cultural differences of the Spanish-speaking world. The class illuminates political differences, and different belief systems, which are expressed through the medium of Spanish

soccer films. Students will have a better understanding of soccer and cinema as two of World's most powerful and fastest-growing cultural phenomena of the past 100 years. Students will understand that soccer and cinema are two of the modern world's most powerful vehicles of globalization. Offered Spring.

HONS 201.00c "Harlem Globetrotters--The Global Influence of the Harlem Renaissance" (Professor M. Miller)

Everyone knows of the Harlem Globetrotters, the most famous basketball team around the world. According the team's website, the Harlem Globetrotters began playing around the world starting in the 1920s, during the height of the Harlem Renaissance. The connection between the team and the cultural movement is not coincidental. Aside from black culture becoming n vogue at the time. Writers, artists, and other cultural figures of African descent earned a certain cachet as trailblazers for modernism. This honors colloquium explores how global the Harlem Renaissance was. With the influx of Caribbean immigrants, the Harlem renaissance reached abroad, especially due to the number of writer and artists who traveled and lived in Europe. Through a variety of readings, art, and film, students will learn about the significance of the Harlem Renaissance for modernism and literary history. Students will examine the writings of Claude McKay from Jamaica; Eric Walrond, a Guyanese writer writing in Harlem; Nella Larsen, a Harlemite writing from Denmark; and Zora Neale Hurston, a folklorist writing about Haiti. Students will examine visual images from Aaron Douglas, Lois Mailou Jones, Jacob Lawrence, and sculptor Augusta Savage, each of whom communicated styles borrowed from and adapted to other modern artists in Europe. Students will view early films by Oscar Micheaux, as well as clips starring Josephine Baker, the most famous African American of the time period who eventually became a French citizen. The course will conclude with discussions of two writers, Langston Hughes and James Baldwin, that lived abroad to mark new grounds for African American writers. Both writers emerge toward the end of the Harlem Renaissance, and they discuss their lives in Paris openly in their works. Offered Spring.

Spotlight on Honors Course Faculty



Dr. Timothy Ashton

We are thrilled to have Dr. Ashton teaching in the spring 2021 semester. Dr. Ashton has taught a number of HONS 201 classes, and his class the Phenomenon of Spanish Soccer films is back by popular demand. Dr. Ashton earned his Ph.D. in Iberian Literatures and Cultures from The Ohio State University in 2009. His scholarly activity focuses primarily on Hispanic Soccer Literature and Film. Since arriving at USCA, Dr. Ashton has presented his articles covering these subjects at academic conferences in the United States, Latin America, and Spain, and he recently published a book titled, *Soccer in Spain: Politics, Literature, and Film* (Scarecrow Press of the Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group).

Professor Thomas Burrus



Professor Thomas Burrus has taught numerous HONS 101 classes to rave reviews. In fall, Professor Burrus will be offering a new HONS 201 colloquium course that quickly ran a wait list due to overwhelming interest from the honors students. An alumnus of USC Aiken in 2006 with a BA in history, Prof. Burrus later received his MA in philosophy at the University of Houston in 2009. He has been teaching philosophy at his alma mater, USC Aiken since 2012 and has taught various courses on the history of philosophy, the philosophy of race, feminist philosophy, logic, ethics, and the philosophy of religion. His research interests include the philosophy of ideology, social philosophy, history of philosophy, philosophy of history, philosophy of science, and the philosophy of religion, as well as where these disciplines intersect. In 2015, he received one of USC Aiken's "teaching excellence" awards. He has recently published a book chapter on Søren Kierkegaard's existentialist philosophy of religion and has also presented a paper on the notion of ideological epistemology and transmission at the South Carolina Society for Philosophy.

Dr. Todd Hagstette



We are very excited to have Dr. Todd Hagstette teaching his first class for the Honors Program. Dr. Hagstette has taught for the USC Aiken English department since 2015, specializing in courses on Early American Literature, Southern Literature, American Romanticism, and Gothic Literature. Within those subject areas, Dr. Hagstette's classes have featured segments on niche topics like pirate autobiographies, the *Code Duello*, criminal narratives, contemporary horror movies, Civil War novels, and southern rock lyrics. He earned his PhD in 2010 from the University of South Carolina, his MA from the College of Charleston, and his BA in English and Philosophy from the University of Georgia (Go Dawgs!). His scholarly agenda features two separate tracks of research: (1) the historical and rhetorical study of southern honor culture and (2) the restoration and evaluation of work by antebellum South Carolina writer William Gilmore Simms. Both pursuits have resulted in the publication of journal articles and book chapters; have been bolstered by regular presentation of work at academic conferences in history, literature, and interdisciplinary studies; and have culminated in academic press books: *The Field of Honor: Essays on Southern Character & American Identity* (2017) and *Reading William Gilmore Simms: Essays of Introduction to the Author's Canon* (2017), both from the University of South Carolina Press. Currently, Hagstette is co-editing the book "Companion to the Literature of the U.S. South" from Routledge Press. In his voluminous spare time, Dr. Hagstette likes to spend time outdoors and with his family, including Dooley, the world's dumbest Goldendoodle.

Dr. Melencia Johnson



Dr. Melencia Johnson, Associate Professor of Sociology, will be teaching a new class this spring called The Black Experience through Film. Dr. Johnson has taught an Honors class before, and she has served as a mentor for the Honors Capstone experience. We are lucky to have her back this year! Dr. Johnson graduated from Norfolk State University in Virginia with a bachelor's degree in sociology with an emphasis in criminal justice. She earned her Ph.D.

in sociology with an emphasis in criminology from Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 2010. She also holds a master's degree in sociology and a graduate certificate in women's studies, obtained from SIU Carbondale. Dr. Johnson's interests in African American history and culture developed as an undergraduate at NSU. She was urged to attend cultural events throughout the city of Norfolk, including operas, ballets, museums, and plays while attending the university. Her love of the evolution of African and African American art and culture expanded through her travels across the globe. Dr. Johnson recently joined the board of directors of the Center for African American History, Art and Culture (CAAHAC) to help foster educational opportunities for others with similar interests. Her work with CAAHAC and her passion for a more inclusive arts community was noticed by many and she was appointed as a commissioner on the City of Aiken Arts Commission in 2018. Dr. Johnson spends her free time reading, playing tennis, and volunteering for several local organizations, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Aiken Chapter of The Links, Incorporated.

Dr. Matthew Miller



Dr. Miller joins us in the spring 2021 semester with a new HONS 201 colloquium course. Dr. Miller has taught a number of popular Honors 201 classes, and we are excited by his latest offering. Dr. Miller joined the UofSC Aiken English Department faculty in 2005. He earned his doctorate in English focusing on 20th Century American Literature at the University of South Carolina.

He received a Master's degree specializing in multicultural literature from East Carolina University. He took two B.A.'s in English and history from Gardner-Webb University. He currently holds the John and Mary Grew Chair in American Studies. Dr. Miller teaches 20th Century and Contemporary American literature. He also developed and teaches African-American literature, non-Western literatures and films, especially from Africa and the Caribbean, and the Graphic Novel. He has published a collection of essays on using graphic narratives in college course through McFarland Press, *Class, Please Open Your Comics: Essays on Teaching with Graphic Narratives* (2015). Dr. Miller is the recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award

(2010) and the University Service Award (2012). Dr. Miller has three children, a fat cat, and two demanding dogs.

Dr. Samuel Pierce

We are pleased to have Dr. Samuel Pierce, an Associate Professor of History, teaching his first class for the UofSC Aiken Honors Program. Dr. Pierce received his PhD in history from the University of Florida. His research explores the political mobilization of Catholics during Spain's Second Republic. Dr. Pierce teaches classes in world history, European history, the Historian's Craft, and a variety of special topics classes. He is the recipient of an ASPIRE 1 grant where he conducted archival research in Spain. Dr. Pierce resides in Lexington with his wife and children.

KUDOS! Academic Awards, Leadership, and Scholarships!

Outstanding Student Awards

Karah Moulton, Outstanding Student in Biology

Wesley Ralph Greene, Outstanding Student in the School of Business Administration

Pace Setters

Madison Carelock

Larisa Arias

Chancellor's Ambassador

Samuel Boyd

David Wilson Steinmeyer

Santanna Templeton

Student Government Association

Samuel Boyd, President

David Wilson Steinmeyer, Treasurer

Eva Slagle, Historian

Scholarships

Angela Plemmons, McNair Scholar

Marjorie George, Ernestine B. Law Journalism Scholarship

Eva Slagle, Samuel A. Cothran Journalism Scholarship

Madison Carelock, Honors Program Scholarship (New!)

Melanie Howe, Honors Program Scholarship (New!)

Ashton Blush, Honors Program Scholarship (New!)