

# HONORS



## SPRING '24 HONORS SEMINAR

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# SP24 HONORS SEMINARS



## INVESTIGATING PORTRAYALS OF DIS/ABILITY IN POPULAR CULTURE

This semester students had the option to take Investigating Portrayals of Dis/Ability in Popular Culture. Students, under the direction of Dr. Nicci Lambright, examined how disability and the unique positive attributes of disability are portrayed in the media. Students were actively working to take action on campus and within the community to support individuals with disabilities and further the education of the topic.

Junior Molly Shupert shares the impact this seminar has had on both herself and the community:

"Although we have come a long way over the last several years even, many individuals with disabilities ranging from learning impairments to physical handicaps are still experiencing discrimination, isolation based in exclusion, and a general sense of underrepresentation. Think about it: what was the focus of the last book or movie featuring an individual with a disability? Was the focus on the person, or their disability? Within our culture and our media representations in particular, many individuals with disabilities are experiencing an oversimplification of their daily realities – their stories are being reduced to an inspirational message or tragedy, which is simply unacceptable.

As someone who has been raised with a loved one born with various disabilities and handicaps, this course and its message hit close to home. When I saw that this seminar was being offered this semester, I knew I had to be a part of it because the message that this course seeks to share is one that I believe we all need to hear. Individuals with disabilities are just that ... individuals! It is time we consider the way that our personal biases, fears, learned stereotypes, and experiences shape the way we view, interact with, and treat individuals with disabilities. It is time we make a conscious effort to shift our focus to person-centered language and interactions, seeking to build relationships and connections with those in our communities, disabled or not.

In the Bible, we see Jesus setting an example for what community and relationships should look like. He sets an example of love and support because all lives are equally precious and worthy of love – we are all equally valuable in the eyes of our Creator. Psalm 139:13-16 comes to mind, which says – "For you [the Lord] formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me even before one of them was lived." This verse stands to remind us that each of us was crafted with immense intention, purpose, and unfathomable love. As believers and students at MVNU, this understanding calls us higher to consider the ways we need to step in with (or on behalf of) those who are not given a voice or a space to advocate for themselves. We are called to advocate for those who cannot on their own, show empathy and compassion for all, consider accessibility and the ways God calls us to inclusion and community, and most importantly, to start taking those actionable steps, no matter how small.

This class has already opened my eyes to so much and touched my heartstrings because it has made me more aware of the realities of many individuals with disabilities. I am hearing their stories and making space to listen to their voices, and that is an incredibly powerful and impactful opportunity that I am immensely grateful for. Throughout the rest of this course, I look forward to continuing to learn about the ways in which I am called as a believer to view, interact with, and support the needs of individuals with disabilities. I am so excited to continue engaging in this space with Dr. Lambright, and I am even more excited for the opportunity to make a difference, even within MVNU's own IGNITE program! It is time to take the next step – we often talk about disability and what needs to change, but it is another thing entirely to actually begin to take steps to make those changes."

Molly encourages students to become more invested in the education of dis/abilities and learn how we can apply the information to help support those in our community.



Since the film Night of the Living Dead, which appeared in 1968, American culture has been curious about zombies. What are they? What causes zombie-ism? What are we to make of this species of "undead" (and, what does undead even mean)? In addition, as the conversation about zombies has evolved, those among the living have been curious about how to survive a (hypothetical?) zombie attack. These two curiosities – zombies themselves and surviving the zombies – are the two pillars of the Zombies seminar. Through literature, film, theory, discussion, and practice, the seminar addresses two main questions: 1) how do we interpret or understand zombie-ism as well as the virus that causes zombies?; and, 2) what does it mean to survive and how do we do it?

This semester, a group of twenty-five Honors Students embark on an exploration of survival skills and the presentation of zombies in various literary pieces with professors Dr. David Wilkes and Dr. Brett Wiley. For Gina Lawhon, a junior in the Honors Program, the Zombies seminar has given her the opportunity to engage with academics in a new way.

***"It's one of those classes that I never thought I would take as an academic class – it almost seems like too much fun! I'm loving the chance to read books and talk about things I wouldn't have otherwise in a college setting."***

In addition to reviewing literature, we will be learning various survival skills. We are going to have a mock "apocalypse" later in the semester, which will probably include building shelters, tying knots, and starting fires. I will be helping teach some of this later in the semester, as I have learned a lot of outdoor skills when I was working through my Eagle Scout in high school. I'm excited to teach others the skills I have learned and hopefully help us get through whatever the professors throw at us in the apocalypse.

This seminar provides students a unique and fun approach to learning survival skills that they can use outside of the classroom, even in the event of a zombie apocalypse.

# HONORS PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS

## Honors Project Spotlight: Colton Sisler

My project will be studying and analyzing the effects of minimal training on people's perceived self efficacy to respond in an event of an out of hospital cardiac arrest. I want to analyze their willingness to administer CPR and an AED to a victim.

I have worked as an EMT for about a year and a half in Columbus and have seen the benefits of CPR first hand. I have seen it save people's lives, and I wanted to create a project that raises awareness on the topic. When contemplating what topic to do my Honors Project on, the Damar Hamlin incident happened on national television. This gave the public insight that even an athlete can go into cardiac arrest, and what it took in order to save his life. I wanted to continue this education and help raise awareness as well as get more people trained in CPR because I think it is a very important life skill.

I have found, through my literature review, that anytime a bystander helps someone in cardiac arrest, even if it is less than ideal CPR, it improves patient outcomes both in survivability and the absence of cognitive deficits. This was important for me to see and for the development of my project because it meant that what I am doing is actually relevant. After my literature review, I began creating a curriculum for CPR training based on the American Heart Association standards and collecting materials for teaching a class.

On training day, participants will do a pre class and post class survey where they answer different questions on a scale from one to five on how ready they feel they are to respond in various emergency events. I will analyze these numbers and assess the impact of a two hour class on the self efficacy of the participant to act in an emergency situation involving cardiac arrest.



## Honors Project Spotlight: Zoe Schaum

I am a senior Graphic Design student at MVNU. I have always had a passion for writing and reading as well as art, and I am excited to incorporate each of these into my honors project. This year I am writing and illustrating a children's book about the striking drama of the dawn chorus.

The idea has stuck with me ever since I heard birds singing outside my window at 3AM. After some investigation, I learned this phenomenon: just before the sun rises, songbirds wake. Finding it too dark to fly, feed, or see one another, they instead turn to singing. In the darkest part of the night, just before dawn, the songbirds sing their loudest song.

Throughout the process of creating this book, I have explored the importance of picture books as well as what makes a good one. I admire the fundamental nature of children's books to tell a big story in a direct way. Through this short and simple story, I use color and rhyme to explore the beauty of the morning which directs all living creatures, as well as our natural tendency to seek the light. Through this project, I hope to create a powerful commentary on hope, using the dawn chorus as a meaningful metaphor for children and adults alike.

## Honors Project Spotlight: Guyana Trip

Hello! I am a junior Elementary Education major currently working on my Honors Project. I am creating a drowning prevention curriculum for children in Guyana. This country has the highest death-by-drowning rate in the world, and there is a very clear need for a drowning prevention program. The goal of my Honor's Project is to address this need.

For my honor's project, I will be traveling to Guyana May 12th-21st to implement this curriculum to children in a small village named Orealla. I am recruiting students to travel to Guyana with myself and two trip leaders to implement this curriculum. This trip is operating through FaithWorks and students will have access to fundraising forms through this department. During this trip, we will have the opportunity to go into the local elementary school to teach children about how to be safe around water and go into the rivers that the community is frequently in to teach children basic swimming techniques. We will also lead a Bible study that focuses on the symbolism of water in the Bible and hopefully, end the week with some baptisms.





# ALUMNI & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## MVNU'S INAUGURAL HONORS PROGRAM ADVISORY BOARD

We are honored to announce the institution of the MVNU Honors Program Advisory Board. This Board will serve as representatives and ambassadors of the Honors Program.

One specific role of the Honors Program Advisory Board will be to help build our alumni network, with an aim toward establishing professional and mentoring relationships between current students and alumni.

If you are an alumni or current Honors student, please join our Honors Alumni LinkedIn page at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/mvnu-honorsprogram-alumni>.

We hope to strengthen external support of our program; our Board will be operating together to enhance the undergraduate experience for Honors students at MVNU.



### ASHLEY SOLANO

My name is Ashley Solano (formerly Wall), and I graduated from MVNU in 2018 with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and a minor in Spanish. During my time at MVNU, my pursuit of learning Spanish led me to connect with international students, including my now-husband, Edward Solano.

Following graduation, I taught 3rd grade for 5 years in Columbus and at a rural school in my hometown. However, I have recently embarked on a career change and now work as a Benefits Specialist at McGowan Brabender, an insurance brokerage company. In my current role, I assist small businesses in navigating employee benefits. Just as I did in teaching, I educate employees on how to utilize their benefits effectively, offering assistance during what can be a frustrating and daunting experience.

I am also pursuing a master's degree in Curriculum & Teaching from Boston University. I was nervous about enrolling in the required Introduction to Research course during my first semester as I was advised it would be challenging. However, my previous exposure to qualitative and quantitative research concepts during my Honors project gave me the confidence to excel in the course.

My heartfelt gratitude extends to MVNU's Honors Program for providing me with unique courses and seminars that broadened my horizons. Seminars on Race & Culture and Art in South Africa, as well as acting in Katie Sherman's Honors project on Human Trafficking awareness and experiencing the intriguing exploration of Science Fiction were personal favorites. I've carried the spirit of learning into my adult life, embracing new hobbies, acquiring fresh skills, and delving into diverse literature, all unrelated to my work life. Last year, my husband and I embarked on a transformative journey, completing 150 miles of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in Spain. The experience resembled an Honors course in many ways, involving extensive research and preparation, and navigating unforeseen challenges. Being part of the Honors Program at MVNU has prepared me to embrace new experiences and expand my horizons. My Honors project played a pivotal role in shaping my teaching philosophy. Centered around the concept of gamification, it became a cornerstone of my approach. During my student teaching, I designed a science unit that required students to apply their knowledge of weather to stop the plans of the evil Dr. Thunder, who threatened to destroy the world as we know it. This experience laid the foundation for my future teaching endeavors.

My journey from an educator to a Benefits Specialist has been marked by unexpected turns and valuable lessons. The foundation laid by MVNU's Honors program has been instrumental in shaping my adaptability, love for learning, and commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of those around me.



### GRACE BRUBAKER

My name is Grace Brubaker, and I was in the MVNU Honors Program from 2017-2021 while working on my undergraduate degree in biology (environmental) with a minor in business. I was recently hired by the Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water Ecological Assessment Unit as a fish biologist/stream ecologist.

My team and I conduct water quality assessments that include biology (fish and bugs), habitat, chemistry, nutrients, bacteria, and fish tissue in watersheds across the state. My fellow fish biologists and I primarily collect fish, habitat, and fish tissue data while the rest of the data is collected by a team of macroinvertebrate biologists, water chemists, and modelers. We then synthesize data into a technical support document (TSD) which is available to the public and analyzes water quality impairments throughout a watershed.

My Honors Project, which was my first true experience designing and writing a substantial research project, has been invaluable to me as I have entered my profession. Through my project, I sought to establish healthy populations of a riverine plant, American water willow (*Justicia americana*), in the Kokosing River in Mount Vernon, Ohio where it was largely absent. The Honors Project paper that followed, which evaluated the factors involved in successful plantings, has been expanded with the guidance of MVNU professor Dr. Jon Bossley and recently published in *Northeastern Naturalist* under the title *Factors Influencing the Planting Success of *Justicia americana* (L.) Vahl (American Water Willow) in a State Scenic River in Ohio*. This project, and continued work towards publishing after graduation, has given me an in depth look at the scientific writing process and ecological research, which is directly related to everything I do in my current position with the Ohio EPA. This project challenged me and made me think in ways that I had never had to think before as I experienced the process of writing a scientific paper. For me, my Honors Project looked like a scientific study and research paper. For others it can look like a creative project, designing software, or almost anything else. The real value of this project is just that: how adaptable it is. It is what you make it and therefore can be incredibly valuable regardless of profession.

## HONORS PROGRAM RESTRUCTURE

Rolling out in the Fall of 2024, incoming Honors Students will have the privilege of joining the Honors Program at Mount Vernon Nazarene University in a new, two-tiered structure.

This new opportunity in the Honors Program is carefully crafted and allows incoming, academically excellent students to take unique, discussion-based courses, taught by full faculty at the university that emphasize critical and integrative thinking along with practical skills that will benefit students while in college and beyond, whether they are headed to post-graduate studies or directly into a career.

This new program is made up of two, 2-year programs, and students may complete both or just one, based on their individual interests and goals to graduate as an Honors Scholar. The first tier is titled The Honors Innovation & Service Program; the second tier is Honors Research Scholars Program.

One of the most beneficial aspects of this structure is that students further advanced in their time at MVNU, who are conducting a research project and meet requirements, can join the Honors Program in the final 2 years of their college careers.

You can learn more about this new two tiered program at <https://mvnu.edu/honors> or reach out to Dr. Wiley at [brett.wiley@mvnu.edu](mailto:brett.wiley@mvnu.edu).

# FALL '23 EVENT RECAPS



## Scholars Day 2023

On Thursday, November 16, MVNU hosted over 75 students for MVNU Scholars Day.



During that day, our visitors heard about the academic and extracurricular opportunities at MVNU, including the Honors Program. This program replaced a traditional Honors application process, as students who attended could potentially earn one of 40 spots in the Honors Program (\$1000 annual scholarship), a Presidential Scholarships (various annual awards between \$500 and \$3000), and two University Scholars Fellowships (full-tuition scholarships). Visiting students sat for group discussion interviews, visited with faculty in their prospective disciplines, and heard from current students and alumni, who shared about their experiences in the Honors Program and at MVNU.

If you weren't able to attend Scholars Day, you can still apply to the Honors Program! To be eligible, you must meet at least 2 of 3 requirements: 1) 3.5+ High School GPA; 2) 25+ ACT score or 1210+ SAT score; 3) Top 15% high school class ranking. If you are interested, please contact Dr. Brett Wiley ([brett.wiley@mvnu.edu](mailto:brett.wiley@mvnu.edu)) directly.

And, prospective students, watch for details about Scholars Day 2024 on our [website](#).

## Knox County Community Clean-Up Day

In the spring of 2022, Honors students completed a neighborhood assessment of the Westside of Mount Vernon, a research project requested by the Knox Area Development Foundation (ADF). The assessment concluded with recommendations for improving the aesthetics, safety, quality of life, etc. of area residents. In the Fall 2023 semester, Honor's students participating in the "Love Your Neighbor" seminar had the opportunity to work on implementation plans for some of the recommendations.

Students were provided ideas by Knox ADF and concluded that a community clean-up day would be largely beneficial to the quality of life of residents in the area. The team of Honors students put together Knox's very own community clean-up day in coordination with Rumpke and T-Shirt Express here in Mount Vernon. Students hoped to encourage community members to clean up around their property and dispose of unwanted items in an effort to keep our neighborhoods clean and beautiful.

On Saturday, November 4, 2023, the Honors Program at MVNU hosted this event for Knox County. Many students from MVNU volunteered to help assist with unloading and picking up trash. Dozens of people came to drop off their old televisions, furniture, construction materials, etc.. It was quickly made clear how much the community needed this event as all four forty-foot dumpsters were filled within the first hour and a half.

"West End Community Cleanup Day a much-needed service."  
Knoxpages.com,  
Cheryl Splain,  
Feb 19, 2024.

Article is linked [HERE](#).

