Trip to Cluny, France

Studying one Christian monastery for an entire semester might strike some students as a dry and esoteric endeavor. But, when the monastery is Cluny, the center of monastic and political life in medieval Europe and the largest church in Europe until the completion of St. Peter’s basilica in Rome in the 16th century, and the course includes a week-long visit to Cluny, nestled in the heart of France’s winegrowing region of Burgundy, students are able to draw connections across time, place, and cultures including France today, with its significant Muslim population.

Our Spring 2018 Honors Seminar, Medieval Cluny, Christendom, and Islam, began by hitting the books. Under the direction of Dr. Stephen Reinert students spent a semester developing site reports that focused on their own interests, from monastic cheese making and archaeological preservation to contemporary French equine culture. At the end of the term, we were all experts on some aspect of the complex history of Cluny, an institution that has marked European culture for more than a millennium.

After a semester of studying in New Brunswick, the entire class, along with Professor Reinert, headed to the rolling hills and vineyards of Burgundy, France. The citizens of Cluny, full of pride in their town which still bears clear traces of its medieval prosperity, invited us into their homes, their workplaces, and their shops and delighted in the opportunity to tell us their histories. From biking 18 miles to the Château Cormatin and indulging in escargot and boeuf tartare to climbing the famous cheese tower and getting to know the engineering students who now study in Cluny, we absorbed the spirit of the abbey’s colossal shadow.

After a week in Cluny, we departed for Paris where we learned how to use the Metro, viewed medieval manuscripts, including the first Latin translation of the Qur’an, at the Bibliotheque nationale de France. Although the Cluny Museum in Paris was closed for renovation, we could still see the influence of Cluny on Paris when we visited the Museum of Arts and Crafts, housed in a medieval building that was an outpost of Cluny. We also explored how medieval history has been preserved in Paris, a city which, from the French Revolution in 1789 through the late 19th century, often turned its back on its medieval past. Don’t worry! We also hit all of continued inside...

In Their Own Words:

Megan Kenny graduated from SASHP in May 2018 with a double major in Linguistics and Spanish and a minor in Psychology. This coming year, Megan will teach English in Ecuador on a Fulbright grant. Megan reflects on her SASHP experience and the impact her Interdisciplinary Honors Thesis has had on her future plans.

Upon arriving at Rutgers on my first day of freshman year, I immediately found a community in my residence hall: the SAS Honors Program. Throughout my time at Rutgers, SASHP connected me with deans, research opportunities, unique and thought-provoking courses, as well as creative programs. During my senior year at Rutgers, I completed an Interdisciplinary Honors Thesis to fulfill the SASHP capstone requirement. This research project, which focused on the acoustic speech features of university students on the autism spectrum, has inspired me to apply to graduate programs in Speech Language Pathology and continue to research the effects of autism on language. As I prepare to spend a year in Ecuador as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant, I am looking forward to drawing upon and utilizing the knowledge, motivation, and sense of self that the SASHP has both provided me with and encouraged me to foster for myself.
Message from the Honors Dean

As the stories in this newsletter reveal, the SAS Honors Program creates community for students and alumni in many ways, from friendships forged on a bike ride from NJ to Florida to friendships sustained over many years at annual Thanksgiving gatherings of former dormmates.

In our large and diverse Honors Program there are many sites of community-building, including our Honors residence halls, small interdisciplinary seminars, leadership opportunities, and Honors global programs such as the trip to Cluny featured in our cover story.

Building community is a particular focus of Honors Colloquium, our mission course. In spring 2018 we experimented with an “Ethics Bowl” format in which students debated some of the pressing ethical questions of our day – on topics ranging from immigration to artificial intelligence – while honing their skill as civil and eloquent debaters. We’ll build on this format in Spring 2019 for a special Honors Colloquium, “Paul Robeson Now: Race, Ethics, and Social Justice,” dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Paul Robeson’s graduation from Rutgers College.

Do you have ideas for building ties with our current students and networks within the Honors alumni community? If so, don’t hesitate to share your ideas with us. Whether you were part of the Honors Program at Rutgers College, Douglass College, Livingston College, University College, or the School of Arts and Sciences, you are essential members of today’s SAS Honors Program.

Jennifer M. Jones

Honors Students Bike East Coast for Homeless Youth

In 2013, SAS Honors alumna Gabrielle Rossi SAS’13 was part of the first “Dream Journey” of students biking from NJ to Florida for a cause. Five years later, Rossi’s creation The Dream Project NJ led SAS Honors students Alexander Lopez-Perez ’18 and Xiangyue “Max” Wang, ’21 to complete the same journey. Lopez-Perez, Wang, and three other Rutgers students—Hope McCraw ’18, Sakib Jalal ’18, and Neenahika Thuravil ‘20—biked 2,000 miles through nine states over the course of one month, making stops along the way to participate in community service projects related to youth homelessness.

Wang first learned about The Dream Project after meeting Lopez-Perez on a bus ride to the annual SAS Honors Winter Formal. Wang recalls, “Alex was kind, friendly, and, above all, inspiring. A week after the formal, I received a text from him that said, ‘Max, have you ever thought about bicycling from New Brunswick to Miami for a good cause?’”

The Dream Project NJ’s five-member team raised over $10,000 during its 2018 bike trip. Proceeds will go to Visions and Pathways, an organization serving abused, neglected, homeless, and at-risk youth.

“My experience in the Rutgers Honors program helped me imagine a vast array of possibilities for myself, and I think The Dream Project is largely a byproduct of that environment. My professors, deans, and classmates constantly pushed me to think bigger, better, and bolder in that I was always asking, ‘What can I do to play my part in making the world a slightly brighter place?’”

-Gabrielle Rossi SAS’13, Head Dreamer, The Dream Project

To learn more about The Dream Project visit thedreamprojectnj.org
facilitating local English-language learner discussion groups to winning Fulbright Grants and Goldwater Scholarships, they are quietly making their mark on the world in wonderful ways. The class of 2018 senior reflections on the Honors Blog offer convincing evidence that our students (and likely our alumni) have accomplished more than they admit. We love to celebrate the ways our students and alumni contribute to their local and global communities.

**What do you wish more people knew about the SAS Honors Program?**

Our students are a rare combination of brilliant, resourceful, and humble. They work hard for their success inside and outside the classroom. From

**What is your vision for the SAS Honors Program?**

I envision that we will continue to be a beacon for Rutgers’ academically talented SAS students who want to live and learn in a diverse, inclusive
community of scholars. Through our holistic advising and specialized programming, we strive to foster opportunities where students from New Jersey and across the world feel welcome and supported. I hope to refresh and enliven our long-standing programs and traditions—with the expertise of our capable staff, and the insight of our students and alumni—to enhance the readiness of our graduates for their next steps.

What have you enjoyed most about Rutgers and the SAS Honors Program?
Livi, I could see “college me” spending a lot of time on Livingston Campus. It is such a lively and modern space nestled in such a historic university. Plus, Henry’s Diner has stolen my heart: I’m not a NJ native, so having access to French toast whenever I like is essential.
Coaching students through a challenge and seeing them emerge more confident and capable through their success. I’m so proud of our students’ resilience, how they take the lead in student organizations, and how they take their lessons beyond the classroom into the community.
I’m grateful to be part of a dynamic staff who are truly student-centered and enthusiastic for their work with our talented students.
There is always something amazing happening on campus: speakers, cultural performances, colloquia, and more. I’ve been enthralled with the vibrant major research university experience.

What advice do you have for young Honors Alumni?
Making friends after college takes work. Where is the involvement fair when you need one? So it’s really smart to stay connected with the meaningful relationships you built at Rutgers. Take advantage of your newly-found free time to pick up an instrument or learn a new language. Volunteer with a community organization. I liked going to the theater or sporting events. You often meet people along the way on your new adventures.

How can Honors Alumni engage with SASHP students?
Arrange a visit this academic year and share about your life after Rutgers. Help our students explore careers and build connections by hosting an intern or summer shadow. You can also host a gathering for incoming honors students in your neighborhood next summer. If you have an idea, let us know and we can make something happen. You’re an alum for longer than you’re in college: we hope honors comes to mind as part of your Rutgers nostalgia. Come on back to see how we’re doing and continue to share with us: your failures, successes, and everything in between. We continue to be proud of all you do.

What I’m listening to:
On my way home to South Jersey, I like to listen to something inspiring, funny, or for self-betterment. My favorites right now are “Happier” with author Gretchen Rubin, “Another Round” with social commentators Heben Nigatu and Tracy Clayton, and Oprah’s “Super Soul Conversations.”

What I’m working on these days (research, writing, etc):
I recently submitted an article to an honors journal about a qualitative study featuring reflections of a group of Black women in honors on the significance of their academic identities. Some colleagues and I are working on a piece on how to craft an academic advising philosophy, which is based on our national academic advising conference presentation this fall.

Fun Facts about Dean Musu Davis
- Studied experiences of Black women in honors for her doctorate in urban education.
- Was one of eight student-athletes to receive an NCAA Top VIII award in 2007.
- Loves purple. You should see her office. And her car.
- Is originally from Buffalo, New York. So, she’s practically from Canada.

MIAMI • FLORIDA

Tour of Hard Rock Stadium with Myles Pistorius, RC ’93
“It was my pleasure to welcome current Rutgers students and recent graduates to Hard Rock Stadium after their long journey. As a Rutgers alum, I’m especially proud of my fellow Scarlet Knights for spending a large part their summer giving back to those in need.”

-Myles Pistorius, RC ’93
Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Miami Dolphins
Brett Hall Alums Share a Thanksgiving Tradition

Michael Poreda enjoyed Rutgers so much that he didn’t want to move out after graduation. A good part of the appeal was living in Brett Hall with fellow Rutgers College Honors Program students. “I was really sad when we had to leave,” says Poreda RC’03. “I loved living in Brett and I wanted it to continue.”

Poreda and his fellow Brett alums from the classes of ’03 and ’04 have found a fun and festive way to recapture the good times and renew the friendships they forged as undergraduates. For the last 14 years, they’ve been getting together on Thanksgiving weekend for a “Brettsgiving” potluck feast that has become a cherished part of the holiday season. “It has taken on a life of its own,” says Scott Shaffer RC’04. “It has become part of the Thanksgiving holiday for all of us.”

Indeed, Poreda says: “I enjoy it more than my parents’ Thanksgiving gathering.”

Brett Hall, located on the College Avenue Campus, is one of several dorms at Rutgers University—New Brunswick that houses students in the School of Arts and Sciences Honors Program. Poreda describes Brett as fun, friendly, and supportive—a place where students choose to stay for most of their undergraduate years. “You become like siblings,” says Poreda, an attorney. “I remember locking myself out and climbing in through a friend’s windows to get back in the building.”

Adding to that close-knit feeling is the Honors Program, which provides more shared experiences. “We were often having classes with one another, and in addition there were seminars and other activities held right at Brett,” says Shaffer, a child psychiatrist. “There was a seminar room where we’d experience these intellectually challenging programs, and right next to it was the lounge where people would watch The Simpsons.”

“It was a real community.”

Brett alums first got together for Thanksgiving in 2004 when recent graduates were still in the New Brunswick area, Shaffer says. He and Poreda credit alumnus Joel Davidson for creating a Yahoo group that kept everyone connected. Over the years the numbers have grown with spouses and children joining the mix.

“A lot has happened over 14 years,” Shaffer says. The get-togethers take place on the Saturday night following Thanksgiving. The location has changed depending on which alum wants to host, and has taken place on both sides of the Hudson River. The food is eclectic, from Thanksgiving staples to some quirky additions, like sushi from Costco. One alum has occasionally prepared Feuerzangenbowle, a traditional German beverage in which a rum-infused sugarloaf is set on fire and drips into wine.

A perennial favorite is sweet potatoes prepared by the mother of Russell Sharp, a 2004 graduate. “There’s more sugar and butter than potatoes,” Poreda says.

But best of all is the shared affection between alums, which has deepened over the years. Poreda says he has forged new friendships with people he barely knew as an undergraduate. “The relationships have fluctuated and grown,” he says. “It has become a very important resource for me, a lot like a second family.”

SAS Honors Program by the Numbers

12 Honors Program graduates awarded a Distinguished Fellowship in 2018

Distinguished Fellowships Earned:
• Barry Goldwater Scholarship
• Gates Cambridge Scholarship
• Fulbright Grant (Armenia, Brazil, Ecuador, Indonesia, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan)
• Princeton in Asia (China)

Honors Program Scholars graduated in May 2018 207

THE HONORS PROGRAM

Brettsgiving 2011


continued from front page...

the tourist spots including the Louvre, the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, and Notre Dame as well as some more off the beaten path places like Père Lachaise Cemetery to see Heloise’s and Abelard’s—and Jim Morrison’s—graves, as well as Shakespeare and Company, a famous bookstore known as a gathering place for the writers of the Lost Generation. Who knew that Cluny could teach us so much?! We left France with a richer understanding of the complex connections between religion, politics, and culture, as well as memories and new friendships that will last a lifetime.

-By Faith Hoatson SAS’19 and Olivia Di Trollo SAS20

In front of the Bibliothèque de l’arsenal in Paris, France.
2018 Summer Reading Program

In the graphic memoir *The Best We Could Do*, the Summer Reading book for the SASHP Class of ‘22, Thi Bui examines her family history in Vietnam and traces her flight as a young child to the U.S. Students will expand upon issues raised in the book during the fall in their Honors Colloquium class.

Meet our New Honors Staff

**Dean Kathy Sadowsky**

Dean Kathy Sadowsky joined the Honors Program in 2017 as Douglass campus coordinator. Kathy is a proud alumna of the Douglass Scholars Program, where she earned her bachelor’s in French and anthropology. She attended Penn State for her master’s in higher education administration. Kathy coordinates honors housing, and is fortunate to combine her love of books with her job by coordinating the SASHP’s summer reading program. She lives with her husband, also a Rutgers alum, and two daughters.

**Emily Wolfrum**

Emily Wolfrum joined SASHP in 2017 as the Administrative Assistant on Busch Campus. An alumna of Pace University Honors College, Emily graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in Communications. She served as the Editor-in-Chief of her campus newspaper and as a Peer Leader for honors students. When she isn’t assisting with the Peer Mentor Program or the Honors Alumni Gathering, Emily enjoys reading, yoga, and quality time with her family.

In Their Own Words:

**Michael Antosiewicz**

Michael graduated from SASHP in May 2018 with a double major in Classics and History.

In October, Michael begins the M.Phil. course in Classics at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge as a Gates Cambridge Scholar.

While the SAS Honors Program proved central to the entirety of my Rutgers experience, during my freshman and sophomore years it served to awaken new academic passions and invigorate my then incipient academic journey towards cultural history. The opportunities, the people, the programs, and the environment of encouragement motivated me from my first class and still continue to do so. Above all, the interdisciplinary honors seminars indelibly shaped my overall intellectual trajectory. I met instructors and confronted ideas that both challenged me and invited critical thinking. If I have one regret, it is that I could not take more! The support I felt from SASHP enabled me to explore extracurricular activities. Most notably, I became a Sports Broadcaster for WRSU Rutgers Radio and traveled across the country to cover Rutgers Athletics. My broadcast partner and I were even fortunate enough to launch WRSU’s coverage of RU Wrestling. My SASHP experience ensured that my Rutgers career was not limited to curricular completion but involved intellectual and personal development.

Photography courtesy of Faith Hoatson, Olivia Di Trollo, Michael Poreda, and Kara Donaldson