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Honors Courses:

Art Appreciation
English Composition II
International Relations
Comparative Politics



Introduction: Why I Chose the Honors Program

When I first started thinking about whether or not I wanted to enroll at NWACC, I was not sure if I was ready for college-level classes. I had been home-schooled for my high school years and most of my elementary years. As a result, I did not know if I would be able to handle the workload, much less being in an honors program. I did not seriously consider this option until I had finished my first semester of classes, when my English instructor recommended that I take an honors course. She told me that, even if I did not want to join the honors program, I still had the option of taking a class and experiencing what it was like to be an honors student. Although I had many doubts at first, she gave me the assurance that I had the potential to do well in an honors course. I took her advice, registered for an honors course, and talked with an advisor about the honors program.

By the time I had finished my second semester, I was an honors program member, enjoying the many unique experiences it had to offer. I was able to succeed in these courses because of my love for creativity. Furthermore, my advice for anyone who is considering joining the program would be to stop doubting that you are not smart enough or good enough to be an honors student. As my instructor told me, honors courses are not harder. They are for anyone who enjoys thinking creatively. There is nothing I regret about joining the honors program.

Embodying Community, Curiosity, and Diversity

Unlike many honors students, I was studying abroad and my unique situation meant that my experience in the honors program would be different from others. I quickly learned during my first semester that taking online classes made it difficult to connect with other students. However, my honors instructors kept me from feeling isolated by engaging in discussion boards and encouraging positive interactions. One reason I enjoyed these classes more was because I could sense that the instructors were passionate about their students' successes and that they truly enjoyed teaching. They actively participated in discussions, readily gave their feedback on assignments, and were open to emails or calls to go over anything I was struggling with. They played an essential role in making me feel part of a community by reaching out to me and connecting me with other peers.

One assignment that stood out to me from a comparative politics class was the "Buddy Assignment." We were required to reach out to an assigned peer and ask them questions about how they were doing or what things were troubling them. What I found interesting was that these questions were not all school-related, but some regarded their mental health or hobbies, which allowed me to get to know my classmates personally. I had the opportunity to complete these assignments more than once. Consequently, unlike most of my regular classes, the honors courses promoted a highly interactive environment, enabling me to develop valuable connections with my peers.

Another important facet of honors courses—discussion boards—also helped to establish community. They allowed me and my peers to share ideas and collectively obtain a broader knowledge of a subject. On account of the inspiring prompts, we were encouraged to think both analytically and creatively, while being driven to curiosity. One of the courses in particular that piqued my interest was Art Appreciation. Many quiz questions and essay prompts would be subjective; questions like these inspired out-of-the-box thinking. One assignment even allowed us to come up with and name our own art piece, while giving the significance behind it. In other instances, we would be given pictures of artwork and were required to analyze each one and give our opinion based on the reading. From this experience, I enjoyed learning about my classmates' thoughts through discussion boards and expanding my own understanding of art based on their unique



perceptions. Such prompts and assignments promoted diverse perspectives, allowing each individual to express their ideas while learning about others. Hence, community, curiosity, and diversity are largely integrated into these courses and make up an important aspect of the honors program.

How Honors Prepared Me for My Future Studies

The honors program has played a huge role in preparing me for my transfer to a university, and has also prepared me for the rest of my life. My writing skills, in particular, greatly improved since my first semester here. Although English Composition has always been one of my favorite subjects, I have learned more in this honors course than I have in any other English class. Years of studying grammar and composition taught me that writing was somewhat of a structured system, governed by rules and principles. But by the time I was done with this course, I saw that it was less systematic, and more of an art. I learned how to express myself and I realized the difference that it made in my writing. Writing is a fundamental element in communication and I am grateful that this honors class was able to help me improve my composition skills.

Additionally, the honors program shaped me and taught me how to better interact with my peers. Group projects and discussion boards enhanced my problem-solving abilities, decision-making skills, time management, and much more. Instead of studying about solutions to problems in society, politics, the environment, etc., I learned to think critically, using my creativity, backed by reading and research, to come up with possible solutions on my own. Furthermore, many assignments in honors courses required me to give feedback to peers, while also receiving their response to my work; this opportunity allowed me to develop open-mindedness toward others' opinions in order to improve my own. Building community is a large part of the honors program and, as a result, I have developed many life-long skills by interacting with my peers.

Climate Change and Nuclear Energy: The Search for Cleaner, Sustainable Energy
The world's need for energy is growing. Meanwhile, the adverse effects of climate change are becoming undeniable, leading many to wonder: could nuclear energy be a solution?

Most Producers in the Energy Industry
This bar chart shows the top 10 countries producing electricity in 2018. China leads with 23,100 TWh, followed by the United States at 12,800 TWh. Other major producers include India, Russia, and Germany.

Renewable Energy
Renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and hydro are growing rapidly. Wind energy is particularly fast-growing, with a 10% increase in capacity in 2018. Solar energy is also showing significant growth, with a 20% increase in capacity in 2018.

Safety Concerns
Nuclear energy has a long history of safety concerns. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in 2011 was a major event, leading to a global re-evaluation of nuclear safety. Other concerns include the risk of nuclear terrorism and the potential for nuclear war.

Smaller Reactors and Cost-Effectiveness
Small modular reactors (SMRs) are being developed as a safer and more cost-effective alternative to large nuclear reactors. SMRs are smaller, more flexible, and can be built in a factory setting, which could reduce costs and improve safety.

What are the safest and cleanest sources of energy?
This chart compares the environmental impact of different energy sources. Wind and solar are the cleanest and safest, with the lowest carbon emissions and no air pollution. Nuclear energy is also a clean source of energy, but it has a higher carbon footprint than wind and solar. Coal and natural gas are the dirtiest and least safe, with high carbon emissions and air pollution.

Nuclear Energy and the Public
Public opinion on nuclear energy is mixed. While some people support nuclear energy as a clean and safe source of energy, others are concerned about safety and the risk of nuclear accidents. Public opinion is often shaped by media coverage and political rhetoric.

Conclusions
Nuclear energy is a complex issue. While it has the potential to be a clean and safe source of energy, it also has significant safety and environmental concerns. Wind and solar are the cleanest and safest sources of energy, but they are not yet able to meet the world's growing energy needs. Nuclear energy may be a necessary part of a clean energy future, but it must be developed safely and responsibly.

Providing Unique Experiences

Another experience that stood out to me was a project I did for International Relations. Rather than taking a final exam, we had to complete a research poster about a problem involving politics. At the beginning of the semester, I was struggling in this course as I tried to understand what international relations really is and what it entails; for that reason, choosing a topic for this project was difficult. After reaching out to my instructor, Professor Evans, he called and explained some concepts to me. I was able to do well in the course and the final project as a result.

Throughout the semester, I set aside time to piece together this poster. Instead of studying for an exam, I was able to enjoy

researching what I was interested in while being creative with the a design. With plenty of time and invaluable feedback from the instructor, the poster finally came together.

Advice for New Members

Take as many honors courses as you can! Although my options were limited because I was studying abroad, I know that I would have taken more of these courses if they were available online. I had never experienced instructors who did as much work as their students, meaning that they took the time to write lengthy, detailed summaries of weekly content, as well as long explanations of where I was struggling and how I could improve. There was never a vague response. It was all detailed and carefully written. I could see the time and effort these instructors put into their responses and how much they genuinely cared for their students. They were ready to give you their time, listen to your questions and concerns, and I do not regret taking any of their classes; I only wish I could have taken more.