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Operation Innovators:
A systematic review of experiential learning opportunities within the Western Washington University Honors Program

Elise Aylward
WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY HONORS STUDENT
Why Innovate?

Service based opportunities are just one example of a method that provides experiential learning\(^1\) within a real world setting that is difficult to replicate within a traditional classroom. The aim of this project is to provide recommendations for the immediate addition of opportunities for this type of learning within the Western Washington University Honors Program as well as to gather research for possible long term changes in Honors curricula in order to strengthen the overall educational experience of the Honors Program.

Western as a Changemakers Campus: What does this designation mean?

“The Changemaker Campus Designation is for the most advanced institutions in social innovation and changemaking who are interested in building the field of social innovation and changemaking in higher education and re-envisioning the role of higher education in society in partnership with the Changemaker Campus Network and Ashoka.”\(^2\) Western Washington University (WWU) is one of 37 universities or colleges across 7 countries receiving this designation. \(^3\) The benefits promoted by the program include strategic advising, institutional change and strategic alignment, peer to peer connections and network expertise, and partnership opportunities. \(^4\)

There is an AS WWU Changemakers club\(^5\) in place, though its available information online (both in OrgSync\(^6\) and its own website\(^7\)) of upcoming events is outdated. Its exposure within the

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1 “Experiential Learning: Extending your Honors experience beyond the classroom”, [https://depts.washington.edu/uwhonors/reqs/exp/](https://depts.washington.edu/uwhonors/reqs/exp/)
3 [http://ashokau.org/changemakercampus/](http://ashokau.org/changemakercampus/)
5 [http://asclubs.wwu.edu/show_profile/48828-changemakers-club-social-entrepreneurs](http://asclubs.wwu.edu/show_profile/48828-changemakers-club-social-entrepreneurs)
6 [https://orgsync.com/48828/chapter](https://orgsync.com/48828/chapter)
7 [http://wwuchangemaker.wixsite.com/home](http://wwuchangemaker.wixsite.com/home)
student body of WWU remains limited. The club ties itself to the IDEA Institute which takes the form of a minor offered at WWU in the discipline of interdisciplinary entrepreneurship and innovation. Self-described, the IDEA Institute program is available to any WWU student from any college and is meant to be combined with the focus of their pre-existing studies, including those interested in social justice and activism. The minor is considered complete after taking courses “in the context of new and existing organizations with varied economic and non-economic purpose”, in which “students will examine opportunity and how to bring innovation to bear on these through bringing together resources and people to effect desired change”, in a series of Entrepreneurship and Innovation courses from introductory to advanced. Their mission is to create more social impact, more on-purpose living, more leadership, more innovation and more community grounded in changemaking and innovation. It is likely that social change activism would be welcomed as a core for study but that an entrepreneurial approach may be emphasized. Like one of the appeals of Changemakers, the IDEA Institute promotes networking and is paired with educational programs and events hosted by the university.

Contacts for the IDEA institute:

Director:
Arthur Sherwood
Professor of Entrepreneurship in the College of Business and Economics

Associate Director:
Danica Kilander
Founder of Western’s Social Entrepreneur Society, former Change Leader

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8 https://www.facebook.com/WWUChangemakers/
9 http://www.wwu.edu/idea/students.shtml
11 http://www.wwu.edu/idea/events.shtml
12 http://www.wwu.edu/idea/idea-team.shtml
13 Danica Kilander is also the campus representative for Changemakers, as noted by Ashoka.
http://ashokau.org/changemakercampus/campuses/ (Under Changemaker Campus Leader tab)
A ‘Changemakers’ style designation within the Honors Program

Involvement with the Changemakers program could prove beneficial to the Honors Program. This engagement could take multiple forms. One could be for Honors staff to form a closer acquaintance with the Changemakers Campus representative, Honors students with the WWU Changemakers Club, and/or connecting with the IDEA Institute. This could solely be considered an extracurricular involvement for students, or a relationship could be built in which the Honors Program accepts projects affiliated with the IDEA Institute as Senior Projects. Even in the simplest case, continued conversations with the Changemakers program and/or IDEA Institute may prove beneficial, such as through faculty recommendation of this program to Honors students that are inclined toward social entrepreneurship. For instance, perhaps an Honors student passionate about social change could take their own initiative to explore a leadership position within the WWU Changemakers club.

Another involvement could be to elaborate on the idea of what it means to be a Changemaker as an Honors student, perhaps using a different word (e.g. Innovator) as a form of program branding. For example, the creation of an “Innovator” track within the Honors Program itself could cater to prospective Honors students with a propensity for leadership and social change. Opportunities could be offered through each of the four years within the Honors Program for engagement in such involvements. This could mean that interested students would be able to take “Innovator” type classes, whether that be from a link to the IDEA institute, or by promoting Service Learning Honors courses, as an example.
Program Stratification into Honors “Tracks”

With this idea of “tracks” in mind, a pertinent question might be to consider how far the reach of these tracks extend. Hypothetically, adopting any new “track” within the Honors Program could foreseeably impact the courses offered in the Freshman Year Sequence as a means of setting up and introducing the options available of routes to take within the Honors Program. For instance, would an “Innovator” student take Honors courses that are predominantly social change themed, or would the implications of “Innovator” status be applicable only in later years of the Honors Program?

Certain other Honors Programs offer involvement in a more theme specific program only after students successfully complete one or two years in the Honors Program, such as at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga. The “Innovations in Honors Program (IIH)”\(^\text{14}\) is a problem-based, community-embedded learning experience designed for students to enter as sophomores or juniors. When considering such an expansion to the Honors Program, one consideration would be whether or not Honors students would experience the same foundation classes during the first or second years and then be allowed to diverge into separate “tracks”, or whether admittance to the Honors Program could take place after a student has already completed some coursework at WWU.

These questions lead to thinking more critically about the purpose of the First Year Honors Sequence. As it stands, does the First Year Sequence curricula function as a representative introduction to the Honors Program as a whole or could that be a function of Honors 101? Would these classes lay an effective foundation for the rest of student’s experiences within the Honors Program as an “Innovator”, whether these students are accepted to the Honors Program upon

admission to the university or if they join at a later time? It may be beneficial to observe the equivalent of other First Year Honors Sequences within other Honors Programs.

The HAM LLC also groups students together in what we would consider a FIG style first semester (in our case, quarter) in which students take seven semester credit hours of Honors (three courses). This feature allows incoming freshman to get a better feel of Honors through an intensive (required) live-in community experience, with an emphasis on Honors extracurricular “special programming”, before deciding to engage in further Honors related coursework. One such feature of UTC is the Freshman Honors Studies course, equivalent to Honors 101. Honors 101 could be grouped into cohort style models based on an interest related survey which would be similar to FIG offerings at WWU except in alignment with certain Honors “tracks”. A similar course is mentioned for the Honors Program at the University of Washington in which students receive specific orientation as to the nature of their culminating senior project, a portfolio.\textsuperscript{15} The UTC course is described as:

\begin{quote}
\textit{“An introduction to the nature of University Honors education and a general orientation to the functions and resources of the University and the honors program. Designed to help University Honors freshmen better understand the Honors program curriculum, requirements, expectations, and procedures, to be familiar with University resources, and to prepare them to enter effectively into the intellectual life of the University.”}\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

This could be considered in contrast to the current Honors 101 course curriculum.

**Program Expansion**

If not the creation of an entire Honors track within the program is feasible, perhaps the addition of different Honors courses for the freshman sequence will be possible in coming years.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{15} http://depts.washington.edu/uwhonors/reqs/portfolio/
\textsuperscript{16} UHON 1000r, http://catalog.utc.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=6&poid=791&returnto=118
\end{footnotesize}
to encourage the diverse interests of Honors students. One thought experiment regarding the purpose of this sequence could be to consider whether the emphasis within the First Year Honors Sequence is to require students to be familiar with classics of predominantly Western society (referencing the “dead white guys” argument). Are these writing intense courses successful in preparing Honors students for future involvement in facilitated discussion based classes? Could this same goal be achieved if the subject matter available for the First Year Sequence is expanded to other themes and more diverse others? If the latter, paying close attention to the useful alignment of this series with GUR requirements for the university would still be critical, such as Honors 103 turning towards “The Roots of Justice” from more diverse cultural perspectives as is implemented in Honors 105 and Honor 106.

Another available option could be to consider this “Innovator” designation as an option for enhanced extracurricular activities for Honors Program students. This can be considered another positive feature for recruitment when prospective students inquire about social life. An “Innovator” option could be utilized as a weekly, monthly, or quarterly community involvement in a selected local organization for example. Special attention would need to be taken to ensure that these efforts would not fall into the category of “drive by volunteerism” in which well-meaning volunteers actually do a disservice to those they are desiring to serve by taking up valuable training resources from an organization while returning minimal work to the organization.

With this in mind, it could be advisable to partner with organizations for a concentrated and allotted period of time, such as for a quarter or year-long involvement. The Honors Program or Honors Board could pick the organization slated for a yearlong involvement and a student board or group could be responsible for the details of the involvement. This would be like taking the out of classroom component of a Service Learning course and turning it into an extra-curricular
opportunity. Depending on the needs of the partner organization and the quality and quantity of work provided by participants from the Honors Program, it is possible that these connections could lead to extended paid or unpaid work, and/or internship opportunities for specific students.

The “Innovator” Model

Depending on the response to the idea of adopting “tracks” within the Honors Program, one could consider the possibility of denoting specific “Innovator” tracks. In explanation, Global Engagement Innovators could diversely come from university backgrounds from majors such as Environment Science (e.g. climate change effect on developing nations) or Community Health (e.g. healthcare in developing nations). Another viable option could be Entrepreneurial Innovators who utilize business and problem solving strategies for affecting change in target communities even at the local level. For this track, specific involvement with the IDEA Institute may be recommended. Another track could be Innovators for Sustainability, possibly for students who are involved in Huxley or even the chemistry department who are involved with plastics fabrication.

As it stands, many students involved in the Honors Program are involved in research projects for their respective departments that often double as fulfilling the requirement for the Honors Senior Project. If the idea of being an Innovator is discussed early enough with students, it is foreseeable that they could choose a service oriented project when given the choice of what to research. This could even be connected to the affiliations made with community partners mentioned earlier in this section, where Honors students work could directly fulfill a need of a local organization. Even with this basic thought experiment, there are ample possibilities present and few limitations as to what type of Innovators could represent the Honors Department.
**WWU Service Programs At-Large**

Service Learning, as an important form of experiential learning, can create an environment for students to better understand course content and gain a broader appreciation of the discipline, as well as garner an enhanced sense of civic responsibility and commitment. The most immediately available entry point for Service Learning within the Honors Program framework is apparent during the Second Year Colloquia Series. The occurrence of Honors 218 as a Service Learning course is a testament to this possibility. An interview conducted in early November of 2016 with Mary Metzger regarding her Honors 218 Intro to Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies course provides insight into the challenges and opportunities of a Service Learning-style Honors class. A sample syllabus of this course is provided at the end of the report.

This class of 30 partnered with Northwest Youth Services for the duration of the quarter. Professor Metzger explained that for a course with such a demanding workload and intense subject matter, this bordered on being too many students for the class to be as successful as foreseeably possible. In this way, future Honors Service Learning courses may want to consider a lower class count, even as a colloquium course. This may warrant having an extra colloquia course offered during a Service Learning quarter in order to provide enough class spots to meet the needs of students.

Professor Metzger explained that this class became extremely independent and self-motivated, as course involvement often took place off campus. Groups were self-directed, thus Honors students had to work cohesively to fulfill the requirements of the class while keeping service agreements with Northwest Youth Services. In this way, a Service Learning course may differ from the normal Honors colloquium course curriculum. However, this course is also similar

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17 Service Learning, [https://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/teaching/strategies/overview/experiential-learning](https://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/teaching/strategies/overview/experiential-learning)
in that students were assigned readings to orient their involvement with the partner organization and in that the class was discussion and not lecture based.

As a pilot class, the quarter did not proceed entirely free of difficulties, according to Professor Metzger, but that this led to valuable insights on how to make the next course better. She explained that her students expressed frustration with the unknown elements of being involved in a real-world organization. Even with an attentive syllabus for guidance and appropriate readings, students were not always prepared for the challenges they faced in real time or emotionally after involvement with Northwest Youth Services. While this is an important component to be aware of, arguably it is also the root cause of one of the most potent strengths of a Service Learning course.

Professor Metzger explained that despite the heavy time commitment required of students in this course, she reported a “profound” level of learning from the students. These were most evident in final reflection commentary papers she received at the end of the term, along with the final presentations given by the respective student groups. At the outset, groups were assigned to various tasks requested by Northwest Youth Services. Observantly, Professor Metzger explained that those who approached involvement with the community partner as merely fulfilling a “check off box” for the course were much less satisfied with the overall experience and experienced project envy towards those who invested more whole heartedly in their project. The latter group was described as having “transformative” educational experiences.

Another source of malcontent for the students which reflected poorly in the overall course evaluations was that students claimed they did not anticipate how much work this class ended up being and how much time would be necessary to meet these expectations. Professor Metzger acknowledged this complaint and reiterated that strong communication must be apparent as early
as possible between the professor and students for outlining how a Service Learning course would differ from a traditional course. In this way, a worst case scenario could be that a student withdraws from the course before they become too involved in their group or with the community partner. She went on to emphasize that students should be aware that they are fulfilling a GUR requirement, in that this course will be useful for their overall academic progress, but that a Service Learning course requires personal investment of time and energy, more so than a traditional class.

The intensity and ambiguity of day to day experiences renders this class nontraditional by current standards. Special challenges are present in leading one of these types of classes, as Professor Metzger pointed out. The career impact a Service Learning course could have on an untenured professor if student course evaluations are low at the end of the quarter is a concern that all involved faculty need to be aware of. It is important to have prospective Service Learning staff be fully aware of their involvement and the risk they assume being involved in an evolutionary style course, before they can effectively communicate to their students the rigor of the course. This is where yearlong training as a Community Engagement Fellows with the Center for Service Learning is crucial.\(^\text{18}\) Another logistical and financial consideration discussed earlier this quarter is the possibility of changing the original four credit Honors colloquium class to a five credit course when Service Learning is involved.

Other possible needed research includes discussing with current Honors professors their interest in becoming a Community Engagement Fellow in the first place so that existing Honors colloquia or other courses could become Service Learning classes. While Honors staff or a student assistant could help prepare the framework for inviting Honors faculty to offer Service Learning classes, the bottom line initiative would need to come from the professors themselves in order to

\(^{18}\) [http://www.wwu.edu/csl/Community%20Engagement%20Fellows.shtml](http://www.wwu.edu/csl/Community%20Engagement%20Fellows.shtml)
open up this option to Honors students. Early inquiries of faculty interest yielded positive results. As of fall of 2016, Anika Tilland-Stafford and Kathleen Saunders expressed interest in developing a Service Learning Honors course to be initiated as early as next year.

There are two other professors that have a history of involvement teaching in the Honors Program, as well as being Community Engagement Fellows for this year. These prospects include Greg Youmans and Sheila Webb. Their role as potential Service Learning professors within the Honors Program may need further development only because their involvement with the Honors Program in the past has been at the seminar level, not with colloquia. This creates another possibility for adding a service component to the Honors Program. Since seminar abstracts are solicited from professors, the abstract invitation could be directed towards this year’s Community Engagement Fellows in particular with the hopes of drawing more service oriented classes into Honors curricula. A seminar level Service Learning class is feasible, though this too may function as more of a pilot experience the first quarter it is initiated.

Depending on the response generated by these invitations, Honors staff could even consider assigning priority or a special consideration to submitted course proposals that take on a Service Learning component. In this way, faculty members that are extremely interested in launching a Service Learning course could be identified. Even if they are not selected immediately for seminar considerations, perhaps they could be a reference for further colloquia Service Learning course developments and proposals instead. The opportunity for Service Learning courses is a unique feature of course offerings at WWU that goes underrepresented within the Honors Department. Other programs that could enhance the opportunities available to Honors students are available as well.

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19 https://wp.wwu.edu/honors/associated-faculty/
Center for Service Learning

Among other strengths, the Center for Service Learning (CSL) offers summer programs that follow a community based learning model that emphasize field experiences and service activities. Thankfully, the summer programs to Kenya and Rwanda are not based on “an academic tourism model or a ‘feel good’ experience for our students, but a commitment to social responsibility and change, authentic intercultural relationships, and deep personal learning offer a global component for worldly service engagements.” In these respects, it is clear that mature and willing individuals are the ideal candidates for these trips. The Rwanda trip is specifically geared toward learning about cultures, politics and development in rural Rwanda taken in 12 credits and could be an excellent model to pair with the Global Engagement Innovators track. If such a union were to exist between the CSL and the Honors Program, conversations would need to occur discussing whether or not credits from these programs could count towards fulfilling an Honors Program requirement. For example, could some of the 12 credits earned in the program in Rwanda fulfill one of the seminar requirements or could it count in fulfilling colloquia departmental foundation courses?

Involvement with the CSL could create dividends for recruitment purposes as well for prospective Honors students interested in study abroad opportunities. Another possible option is encouraging faculty led study abroad trips within the Honors Program that are oriented towards community engagement purposes in order to strengthen the quality of study options available to the Honors Program. Special consideration could be taken in the creation of the curriculum for faculty led programs in collaboration with the CSL in order to avoid the creation of cultural tourism

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or “drive by” style service practices. Opportunities such as these could immediately elevate the experience of Honors students in practice, as well as providing the groundwork for further service work abroad or locally for students. In turn, this could lay a foundation for a student’s Senior Project.

**Compass to Campus**

Compass to Campus (C2C) has longstanding involvement in the Bellingham community and the consistent favor of Western students. When considering service or community engagements as a way to enhance the Honors Program, a logical bridge building action would be to form a closer partnership with the Compass to Campus heads from Woodring. There is the potential for an Honors course to be drafted after the introductory C2C class as a model. Obvious changes would need to occur in C2C curriculum in order to make the class a true Honors experience. In essence, the class would need to be shifted from routine lecture style to more discussion based classroom experiences for students, while at the same time preparing students to engage with community partners at local schools. In this way, the C2C Honors designation could be compared to Service Learning courses at the second year colloquium level, in that students would be involved in off-campus engagements as part of the class experience. It is also likely that in order to facilitate a successful discussion environment, class sizes would need to be smaller than normal C2C proportions.

Though initial meetings with Compass to Campus representatives revealed that there are many logistical details to be worked out in order to form an alliance between this program and the Honors Program, the opportunity to complete such a partnership is hopeful. One such prospect is Melissa Van Straten, who expressed marked interest in developing a hybrid Honors-Compass to
Campus course in an upcoming quarter, possibly as early as next year. Potential challenges for forming this opportunity may arise from curriculum development, as Compass to Campus curriculum is created by a board and not generally by individual professors. However, a professor with a strong initiative may be able to work around this normalcy and develop their own curriculum for Honors students.

**Fourth-Year Considerations**

A result of these suggestions or any impending change to the Honors Program could be the creation of more work than there is staff or time, in order to initiate the necessary steps for a change. Curriculum writing, soliciting professors for courses, or rebranding a program takes a substantial amount of work. Work that, likely, is not slated into normal quarterly agendas for staff or even for student leaders. One option to distribute this workload could be to create additional members to the Student Honors Board such as a Civic Engagement Liaison or Cultural Experiences and Diversity Advocate, such as is displayed by the Honors Program at the University of Alabama.21

The fluid nature of the capstone project could serve as a tool for helping students make lasting impacts in the Honors Program, while tightening requirements could contribute to more clarity in students’ products. For students who are particularly interested in curriculum writing or policy change, perhaps their efforts for Honors 490 could be best used to in serving the program they are part of. Whether this looks like creating and implementing a pilot study of a new Honors track or focusing on the development of curricula, Honors students could become empowered to serve the very program they are part of.

21 Leadership Officers, [http://honors.ua.edu/honors-college-assembly/hca-leadership/](http://honors.ua.edu/honors-college-assembly/hca-leadership/)
Furthermore, if there is a need within the department for certain tasks that fall outside the scope and reach of the Honors Board, or outside the reach of Honors staff, these needs could be advertised to Honors students or students could be sought out by staff recommendation to engage in the work. Depending on the length and involvement of student’s tasks, perhaps their work could be attributed to an Honors Senior Project. This is not to say that a simple, one time involvement would complete the Honors 490 requirement, but perhaps it could be the basis for a larger project (relating to the Honors Program or not). For example, if the Honors Program needs maintenance done on the Honors website or the creation of new web content, apps, or features on the site, perhaps some of these duties could be delegated to willing students. Increased participation and involvement within the Honors Program in this way could have a ripple effect on increased involvement by students in the Honors Program as a whole.

**Portfolio Possibilities**

In one meeting earlier this quarter between Dr. Linneman and myself, a discussion took place about offering a Portfolio requirement either as a replacement for the current Honors Project, or as an option to fulfill it. Assuming that the goal of the Senior Project is for students to facilitate “synthesizing what you have done in your entire education, including but not limited to your work in the major and in Honors”\(^{22}\) and to produce “a clearly focused effort, approaching professional level work, either in your major, or in some cases, in your minor or an allied area”\(^ {23}\), it is clear that a portfolio could fulfill this requirement. An important question to ask could be, would a portfolio be more useful to student’s synthesizing their undergraduate experiences? Does a portfolio requirement reflect the desired outcomes the Honors Program expects from Honors students? To

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\(^{22}\)Honors Program Senior Project Guidelines PDF, available at [https://wp.wwu.edu/honors/301-2/](https://wp.wwu.edu/honors/301-2/)
clarify the meaning of “portfolio”, consider this working definition from the University of Washington in describing a portfolio:

“Interdisciplinary Honors students engage in reflection in many different ways, and the portfolio serves as integrative tool to examine and archive significant examples of students’ undergraduate educational experiences... Reflection is one of the core tenets of Interdisciplinary Honors. The Honors Portfolio is a web-based collection of artifacts and reflective writing that documents and contextualizes your undergraduate experience, allowing you to tell your UW Honors story to your peers, friends, family, current and future mentors and employers, and graduate school admissions board.”

The University of Washington explicitly details final portfolio requirements publicly for their students, as well as assuring students that they will receive a portfolio orientation in one of their introductory Honors classes for adding artifacts to their portfolio throughout their time at the university. As our Honors Project requirement currently stands, there is much emphasis placed on the achievement of some “product”, but that this product could take many forms. From looking at examples of final portfolio products of Honors students at UW (also public domain), it is clear that their websites could be considered such a product. An admirable feature of this portfolio requirement is that the results of students work are easily and accessibly displayed in public websites with a personal and shareable link. This could be useful in addition to creating a master list of student products, such as what is already in place with the Cedar Archives. Student examples from the University of Washington honors student’s portfolios:

25 “Creating your portfolio” + link to student examples http://depts.washington.edu/uwhonors/reqs/portfolio/
26 http://cedar.wwu.edu/wwu_honors/
Memories fade quickly, but there are a few things that stand out when I think back to my very first days at UW. I remember feeling unbelievably excited, wondering what would be in store for the next few months, not to mention the next few years. The sheer size of the school and its subsequent huge number of resources astounded me, and I couldn’t imagine how I could possibly start to utilize all of them. Living on the Honors themed floor in Pucall was the best part of it all, as I got to know a small cohort of students placed in exactly the same situation as me. We bonded so fast that year, keeping our doors wide open regardless of where we were. The one main stressor I remember regarding majors however – kept second guessing my decision to study a non-STEM major (sustainable environmental science falls somewhere between STEM and non-STEM in my opinion). So many other honors students were pursuing degrees like biochemistry, physics, biomedical engineering, etc. While it’s true that many students end up switching to non-STEM majors, my group of friends pretty much stuck with their ambitions for their entire UW career – which is awesome! However, being in the minority really made me question whether I would be making the most of my time here.

I still don’t know what I could’ve done to utilize my time as a student any better than I have, at least not realistically, but overall I’m extremely happy with my entire UW experience. I’ve met amazing people, tried many new activities, learned more outside of class than inside it, and stepped outside my comfort zone multiple times. Part of me wishes it would last longer, but part of me feels ready to move on to new adventures.

In the middle of my sophomore year, I was finally able to take a UW student tour guide. This was already an accomplishment on its own for me, as I had avoided the tour prior and was immediately denied. Remember giving my first tour to an excited group on a sunny day, describing all the various parts of campus and relaying some of my experiences. My tour is now a little bit different – they have an air of reminiscing replacing wonder. I talk more about the career center and less about my freshman. But nonetheless, my time at the University has given me stays the same.

Rachel Decordoba27, homepage and study abroad page pictured

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27 http://rdec80.wixsite.com/honorsportfolio/welcome
Anna Mikelborg\textsuperscript{28}, Washington State Legislature involvement page with “Experiential Learning” tab highlighted in upper right dropdown list

It could be argued that one of the benefits of a portfolio requirement is that inherently, no two portfolios would look the same because no two students have the same experience. Similarly, a portfolio may most appropriately highlight involvements with experiential learning models. The portfolio is structured enough that there is a consistent rubric for evaluation that could be completed by Honors faculty to determine if the requirement has been fully completed, but also open ended enough that students can completely personalize their finished product and highlight the areas of their WWU career that were most meaningful, memorable, or challenging to them. In this way, retained artifacts could be tied to specific program outcomes and even categorized by “track”. It also gives students the ability to include involvements they have outside of school, such as through a job, internship, study abroad opportunity, or other form of learning, not to mention gaining a general skill of website development and design for content.

\textsuperscript{28} http://annacmikelborg.weebly.com/washington-state-legislature-winter-2016
Impact of Service Involvement on the Senior Project

Examining any number of other Honors Programs or other Honors Colleges provides the framework for project outlines. It could be as simple as requiring students to engage in their Senior Project experience with at least two quarters before graduation, though longer term engagement with projects could be encouraged or encouraging that service involvement be looked at as possible subject material for a Senior Project. Discussion of Senior Project involvement could begin as early as at Summerstart when Honors classes are first explained, or there could even be brainstorming activities completed within the residential Hall experience at Edens during a one on one with student RAs, or even in Honors 101. This would be consistent to the introduction given to the students at the University of Washington regarding their final portfolio requirement.29

As an example, the outline proposed for receiving departmental honors at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga requires30:

- An approved thesis proposal
- Student to work for two semesters under the supervision of a selected professor in the major
- Student prepares a progress report to be approved by an Examination Committee at a formal progress review meeting to allow for guidance and feedback mid-way through the thesis work
- Student defends the final thesis before the Examination Committee near end of second semester

These steps are required before the committee makes a final determination about whether or not to recommend the candidate for Departmental Honors. This is example was chosen both for its similarity to preexisting Senior Project requirements in the WWU Honors Program and because it takes the process a step further by boldly and clearly stating the requirements associated with the

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30 See Departmental Honors, UTC [https://www.utc.edu/honors-college/dhon.php](https://www.utc.edu/honors-college/dhon.php)
project. The exception of the midcourse evaluation is a feature not included in the current Senior Project requirements, but could prove to be beneficial should new project conditions require it.

For those students involved in an Innovators track, perhaps adding a compulsory service related element to the Senior Project would help inspire service oriented project work in the first place. If students know that they will need to relate their work to the larger community or student body in some way before they begin working, it is likely that this will factor into thinking earlier on, as opposed to tacking on an extra community presentation or outreach event just to fulfill a check box. Redefining and clarifying the requirements of the Senior Project does not automatically hinder student creativity. Instead, it could contribute to more increased project organization and more service-oriented project outcomes.

The implication of a new service requirement could create large benefits to our own Honors community and the community of Bellingham as a whole. This “outreach” or “community involvement” criteria could manifest itself in multiple ways. The goal would be to have students apply their new understanding or product in a way that could benefit those around them, as well as reinforcing their newfound understanding by teaching others what they have learned.  

In an effort to regulate possible community engagement events that come from well-meaning hearts but that could be harmful to communities in practice, students could be required to check in with their Senior Project advisor or even an Honors Community Engagement Fellow to specifically have their community involvement criteria evaluated and screened. The possibility for community engagement could be as simple as asking to give a guest presentation in a local elementary, middle, or high school class on a certain topic (i.e. in a science class, or doing a reading of poetry at the library). If students’ ideas are not feasible for immediate execution within the

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community, advisors could approve their proposals (even if they remain only in written form) on a case by case basis. The standard behind this component would be challenge students to think beyond and outside of themselves and their own learning norms, in order to gain a wider understanding of their community and peers by experience. This, in essence, is representative of the “Active Minds” component of being a Western student that leads to “Changing Lives”.

Rewording, Repurposing, Rebranding for Service

Active Minds, Changing Lives constitutes the tagline of WWU. What does the Honor Program stand for? What does it strive for? According to the website:

“An inspiring intellectual community that brings together students and faculty, the Honors Program complements the superior undergraduate education available at Western Washington University.”

The above quotation is the keystone phrase that appears at the top of the homepage of the Honors Program website. This is likely the first statement a reader will see upon reaching the Honors Program website. While comfortably worded, the statement is nonspecific and not communicative in terms of the Honors Program’s actual role in student’s lives. Mission or vision statements do not appear elsewhere on the website in explicit terms. The addition of a similar “Values Statement” could greatly contribute to the overall branding of the Honors Program and give prospective students a clearer idea of what they can expect in being part of this community, as well as what can be expected from themselves.

As it currently stands, it is important to note that the Honors Program statement seemingly emphasizes two things: one, being that the Honors Program focuses on a community that meshes faculty and staff at Western to work together. The other being that it is supplementary to the normal

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32 Honors Program Homepage, [https://wp.wwu.edu/honors/](https://wp.wwu.edu/honors/)
undergraduate education track available at WWU. Both of these points are apt descriptions, however it may be beneficial to tighten and strengthen the statement by perhaps elaborating on how the Honors Program constitutes an “inspiring” and complementary approach to a student’s experience, especially in terms of the importance of experiential learning during the undergraduate experience.33

Working from these ideas as well as building off of other goals for the Honors Program, the completion of a values statement could take on a community aspect in itself. In this way, creating drafts of these statements could be a task delegated to the Honors Board, be the responsibility of a new coalition of Honors students and Honors faculty, or could be an Honors Program-wide effort with the use of surveys, polls, or write in submissions. If the aim is to inspire a tighter sense of community and a clarified program goal, even setting out to create positively representative statements could be beneficial to achieving this goal.

Final Considerations

Being part of WWU, the Honors community is already considered to be comprised of individuals geared towards being “Changemakers”. As Honors students specifically, these same individuals have the aptitude to commit to this distinction through experiential learning practices as “Innovators”. By expanding the service opportunities available to Honors students, the Honors Program will help support Honors students to reach the pinnacle of their potential as active and capable leaders within the university and within the larger communities of the world.

33 “Why is experiential learning important?”
https://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/teaching/strategies/overview/experiential-learning
Intro to Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies

Course Description: Together we will explore the history and significance of representations of sex, gender and sexuality. We will emphasize the analysis of these concepts and the forms of experience they aim to represent in light of their intersections with those of race, class, and culture and try out their utility in our classroom community and in our community engagement with Northwest Youth Services, our local advocacy organization for spaces in which youth may be safe, heard and valued. Our goal is to develop our capacities as critical readers, thinkers, writers and actors in order to respond to the ways in which the interlocking systems we study shape the historical, cultural, social, political, and economic contexts of our own and others’ lives.

What We Are Aiming For: As you can see from the complex and inevitably affective nature of our work, and the emphasis on practice, this course seeks to develop your engagement with a wide variety of ideas and experiences as they suggest the systems that tell us what sex, gender and sexuality mean. In the process, we’ll aim to respect the writers we read by attending carefully to their arguments, & listen carefully to and learn from each other. As honors students, I consider you all adept scholars & writers and myself your coach. Consequently, though I will offer historical information, explain concepts and outline critical approaches to you and challenge and support you, as an Honors student within the
Colloquium your job is to develop your understanding of the material and professional abilities, no matter where you take them after our time together. Thus, though we all have different styles of being in the world, **active and respectful participation is required. Be ready to speak thoughtfully and listen carefully! Plan ahead!** Because the work we are reading may present special difficulties depending on your previous experience even short readings may be time-consuming. **Whatever your own methods of preparation, you must come prepared to address the assigned readings and have them in hand in hard copy & annotated with your own inquiries and responses.** Attempt to identify how the writer's use of language, disciplinary conventions and working assumptions, generate the particular meanings you identify with the text. The cheat sheet assignments will help, but develop the habit of noting your responses and questions in the margins of your text: what is the writer arguing? What strikes you as important? Why? What stymies you? Such questions are crucial to discerning your own, grounded arguments about the texts we'll read. *(Tips on skimming dense texts and note-taking offered at end of syllabus).* Always bring the text with you to class; we will read aloud from them regularly. *(Note: We need prepared colleagues so, unless you have a photographic memory, if you do not bring your text you are asked to remain silent given your inability to help us reference your claims in the text).*

**What's needed:** Given the collaborative nature of our enterprise **everyone's presence** is needed to make the class as productive as possible. If you are absent consult the syllabus, then a classmate for review. Follow up with me after you have done the latter, if you have further questions. **Everyone has two absences to use if they choose to do so. Following two absences your grade will fall by one letter grade for each further absence until four are reached: more than four absences without official leave from the Dean of Students will result in a failing grade.** Do note that no late work will be accepted without prior approval. *If you are experiencing serious problems the sooner you talk to me the better.* After the fact rarely works and will require higher authorities. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. You've got two to spend; I recommend you save them for when life just happens.

Together we will work to establish a supportive and hardworking community, whose members offer each other a challenging and respectful conversation about the construction and experience of women, gender, and sexuality today. Significantly, this course is rooted in a form of revolutionary consciousness: the recognition, acceptance and celebration of difference. Differences of many kinds will be explored and the theoretical perspectives and life experience that shape our notions of them are necessarily significant. Negotiating such differences is never easy. It demands that we listen to each other with care, work hard to hear what each other is saying (not necessarily what we hear), take responsibility for our own responses, and realize the inevitable tensions produced by studying revolutionary practice within an institutional setting. Revolutions are inevitably messy affairs. Institutions love order. We are trying to have it both ways. So bring your patience and your sense of humor. We'll need both.

**HEADS UP:** The working assumption of this course is that categories of identity and politics -- that is, the effects of social and collective forms of meaning making -- matter a great deal. Our
aim is to consider how and why specific forms of human experience and discourse shape our understanding and judgment of the nature of women, gender, & sexuality and to respond effectively to those views. Consequently, we will explore representations of a range of social and cultural experiences and values, some of which may conflict with your own. As well, though I will explain terms, concepts and historical movements from time to time, this will not be a lecture course. Large and small group discussion will be a regular feature of this class. You will need to think hard, listen well and often speak for yourself. Such work is often challenging but oh so rewarding.

**Assignments (details below):** In addition to a Class Presentation, Canvas Discussion, there are Cheat Sheets, and a Community Engagement Project. For more about these assignments, see below. Please note that deadlines for your Canvas posts will be strictly observed but that said, participation is its own reward and encouraged even if a little late.

**GUR Academic Competencies that will be developed in this course include:**
1. Analyze and communicate ideas effectively in oral, written, and visual forms.
2. Analyze and interpret information from varied sources, including print and visual media.
4. Identify and analyze complex problems.
6. Explore, imagine and create.
7. Recognize the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of participating in, and contributing as a citizen in, a diverse society.
8. Understand and evaluate assumptions, values, and beliefs in context of diverse local, national and global communities.
10. Reflect on one's own work and on the ethical dimensions of academic pursuits.

**Texts:**
- Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*
- Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism*
- Coates, *Between the World and Me*
- Pascoe, *Dude, You’re a Fag*

Articles on in Canvas Modules.
SCHEDULE OF READING AND ASSIGNMENTS

(Please note: This schedule is subject to change given the needs of the class: all changes will be announced in class. Whether or not you are present when such changes occur, you are responsible for the day's assigned readings).

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<td>April</td>
<td>T/5</td>
<td>Halberstam, preface – pg. 29.</td>
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<td>Halbstam, Chapter 4-end.</td>
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<td>Team Update Due</td>
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Preferences for article summary, presentation and discussion drawn from *Feminist Theory and the Body* due. See requirements for submitting preferences in assignments below.

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<td>4</td>
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<td>T/19</td>
<td>Pascoe, Chapter 3.</td>
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<td>R/21</td>
<td>Team Update Due</td>
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Honors 218 Intro to Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies
Updated Final Syllabus.

5  T/26  In preparation for class students must view “An introduction to Homelessness in Bellingham” and “Companions on My Journey” online at http://www.whatcomhsc.org/homeless-in-bellingham-film-project/
Link also available in Canvas modules resources.
In-class NWYS Training
R/28  In-class NWYS Training

6  May  T/3  NWYS LGBTQ Resiliency Training: NWYS April
R/5  No Class. Team Meeting Time & Space Available.

7  T/10  Pascoe, Chapters 4-6.
Team Update Due
R/12  Coates, pages 1-39 middle.
Team Update Due

8  T/17  Coates, 39-71.
R/19  Coates, 75-108 middle.
Team Update Due

9  T/24  Coates, 108 middle--end.
R/26  TBA

10  T/31  Class Presentations
June  R/2  Class Conclusion. Final Reports Due.
Course Projects:

**Sample Cultural Analysis: 15%**  
Everyone in the class will provide a handout with “a sample of significance” drawn from our present historical moment that represents sex, gender, and/or sexuality in terms significant for our analyses of the same. You will share the sample of this representation, suggest some questions it raises, and explain its significance for you (and by extension us) – and all in less than five minutes! Those who go over will be cut off to preserve class discussion time so please time yourself. We will begin each class with these samplings, so if it’s your day, you MUST be on time or lose the opportunity. We will move in alphabetical order so start looking now! The presentations will start next Tuesday with two presentations a day excepting the days NWYS is in class to offer trainings, 4/26, 28, and 5/3.

**In-Class Activities: 15%**  
Our activities will include large and small group discussion, group projects, presentations in class, in-class writing, individual & collective contributions to discussion, collaboration with others, & ally building. Indeed, the heart and soul of the class is the culture we create together because there is no movement for social change without collaboration and allies. To earn this credit, you’ll need to be involved in that work, which means you’ll need to be in class and engaged every day. By engaged I mean working on the issues/text/project at hand in class and being open to learn from the class materials, process and others. Being open also means willing to try out, change and or revise your work based on the feedback you receive from others. I do not evaluate the quality of your class activities. All I look for is that you remain engaged, listen, speak thoughtfully to others without dominating discussion, and do the work of the class.
Canvas Posts: 20%
Each week you will write about what we’ve read. These responses will be posted on Canvas and accessible to all. I will occasionally read them aloud in class. The responses should be no longer than one single spaced page (500 words) and no shorter than one double spaced page (250 words). If you need to summarize to grapple with the reading that’s fine, but try to foreground your own ideas, responses and connections without giving over too much to reiteration of the text. This writing need not be formal or overwhelmingly serious, so try to read carefully enough that you can introduce wit and play into your responses. You know what Emma Goldman said, “If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution.”

Community Engagement: Northwest Youth Services 50%
This assignment is designed to help you develop your understanding of the structural nature of structural inequality as it intersects with concepts of women, gender and sexuality. It will help you develop personally and professionally, and will enhance your organizational, interpersonal and professional communication skills in ways too complex to capture in a one-sentence summary. Experience with civic engagement is a vital part of a complete liberal arts education, as well as an powerful component of reckoning with the materials we are studying. Engaging in your community is one of the best ways to both absorb and practice course content because it also benefits the organizations you serve and the University reputation as well. Additionally, it contributes positively to the growth your personal network. Teams will be formed following the completion of an in-class orientation survey. The complete assignment details are located in canvas modules and at the end of this syllabus.

Extra Credit
Should you miss a canvas post, you may replace these on a one for one basis by attending one or more of the following events which will be happening on campus and off this term and writing a 250 word summary review of the presentation due the class following the event.

APRIL 13th, WED, noon-1:20, Fairhaven College Auditorium
Priscilla Yamin, Associate Professor and Daniel HoSang, Associate Professor, Political Science Dept., University of Oregon, “WHAT’S LOST IN CAMPAIGNS AGAINST SEX TRAFFICKING?”

More on next page...
Wed. May 5, 5:30 p.m. in VU55. Film Screening: The Vessel. Discussion to follow. http://vesselthefilm.com/

MAY 12th, THURS, 4pm, Communication Facility 115
Sara Rushing, Dept. of Political Science, Montana State University
GUEST LECTURE: "RE-RADICALIZING EMPOWERMENT WITH NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONS: HUMILITY, AUTONOMY AND CITIZENSHIP"

Wednesday, May 15 noon-1:20, Fairhaven College Auditorium
**Collaboration is Sharing**: This is just a start in what I hope will be ten weeks of fabulous sharing of sites and sources for us all. We need those that instruct us, that teach us to see and think clearly about sex, gender and sexuality, and those that help us survive the weight of how much work there is to do by giving us hope and making us laugh.

Here’s some sites I frequent when I have time. Add your own to the links on Canvas where I will post these. If you can’t post them let me know and I will do so.

https://chss.wwu.edu/wgss

http://www.feministfrequency.com

https://www.youtube.com/user/feministfrequency

https://www.facebook.com/MissRepresentationCampaign

https://www.facebook.com/groups/445317630245/

https://www.facebook.com/feministing

https://www.facebook.com/TheFeministWire

http://mediasmarts.ca/gender-representation/women-and-girls/media-and-girls

http://msmagazine.com/blog/

http://community.pflag.org
Other Important Information About This Class and Resources at WWU:

Please consider the resources listed below. But as well, if you are struggling in the class or experiencing a crisis outside of class, please let me know as soon as possible. I will be better able to advise and assist you if you communicate your difficulties sooner rather than later. And if you are uncomfortable speaking with me you may contact the Dean of students, Ted Pratt at (360) 650-3775. He’s really awesome.

If you need an accommodation: Reasonable accommodation for persons with documented disabilities should be established within the first week of class and arranged through Disability Resources for Students: telephone 650-3083; email drs@wwu.edu; and on the web at http://www.wwu.edu/depts/drs/

If you experience discrimination, harassment or sexual assault, please see this handbook on your resources http://www.wwu.edu/eoo/docs/brochure.pdf

CASAS offers a safe, confidential resource to students who have been the victim of violence. http://www.wwu.edu/pws/about_casas.shtml

Do you know that free counseling is available? You can contact the Counseling Center at 650-3400 and at http://www.wwu.edu/counseling/

In the case of an immediate health and safety concern, please contact the University Police: 650-3555.

Other helpful services and communities include:

LGBTQ Resources http://libguides.wwu.edu/lgbtq_resources

Ethnic Students Center http://as.wwu.edu/esc/

Western Women’s Center http://as.wwu.edu/women/

Tutoring Center http://www.wwu.edu/tutoring/

Writing Center http://library.wwu.edu/writingcenter

Community Engagement Team Project: Northwest Youth Services

This assignment is designed to help you develop your understanding of the structural nature of structural inequality as it intersects with concepts of women, gender and sexuality. It will help you develop personally and professionally, and will enhance your organizational, interpersonal and professional communication skills in ways too complex to capture in a one-sentence summary. Experience with civic engagement is a vital part of a complete liberal arts education,
as well as a powerful component of reckoning with the materials we are studying. Engaging in your community is one of the best ways to both absorb and practice course content because it also benefits the organizations you serve and the University reputation as well. Additionally, it contributes positively to the growth your personal network. All that said, please act accordingly when working with team members and community partners!

**Teams will be formed following the completion of an in-class orientation survey.** Once formed, it is your responsibility to connect and begin working with NWYS to complete the project. The type of project(s) will vary by organizational needs and team skill sets, but you should find connections between course content and your project and be able to articulate these connections in the various components of this assignment. The individual expectation is approximately 18hrs of work by each student, though how that breaks down will depend on the team's needs. You can begin planning as a group as soon as you are formed but your actual activities at NWYS will need to take place after May 5th so that training and paperwork can be completed.

The shape of this assignment will vary according to team tasks, however, **each team will need to complete the following:**

- **Individual contact sheet (in class)**
- **Team contact sheet w/ signatures (in class)**
- **Team calendar**
- **Presence, reporting, and collaboration at group meetings.**
- **Team Written Report.** This 7-8pg double-spaced co-authored paper should include the following:
  - **Team Overview:** This is a brief (<1pg) introduction to the members of your team. It should include a blurb about each member, as well as their proposed roles in the project completion.
  - **Team Tasks for Current and Future of Project:** This segment should focus on the history, current status, and future goals relating to the tasks your team tackled. Provide insight into the vision your team worked with, the techniques you used to complete current projects, and how you have helped set the organization up for continued success in the future. Use APA citations, and reference three or more course lessons, guests, activities, or readings.
  - **Team Updates (5):** These are updates in memo form. They should include the current status of your work, challenges you are facing, and your steps for the following week. There are five updates due on the calendar. Each should be written and submitted by a different team member, but the order is up to the team. You will submit each update on Canvas, and email it to your Community Lead when due. **If your team has greater or fewer than 5 members, you will need to navigate the submission or lack thereof as a team.**
- **Team Showcase:** At the end of the quarter your team will give a 10min presentation based on your team tasks and learning outcomes. Whether you created promo videos, conducted community outreach, or participated in hands-on event day tasks, this is your time to show how you fulfilled the assignment. Using any (pre-approved) presentation style you choose your team will showcase your work and talk about your experiences in relation to course materials from the quarter. Be sure to include quality visual media.

- **Individual Reflection Statement:** This 4-5pg double-spaced statement will focus specifically on your personal growth through the assignment, and include an honest evaluation of each of your teammates. Whether you explore your growth in interpersonal communication skills, technological skills, presentation confidence or career pathways, this capstone piece should highlight and demonstrate your newfound understandings. If things were great, I want to know; if they weren't, I want to know what you learned from it. Be sure to reference a minimum of two course readings, activities, guests or presentations in relation your reflection. As in the real world, not everyone you work with will be your favorite or most reliable coworker; others will be outstanding and teach you many unexpected lessons. This is the space wherein you can share these impacts. These reflections are not meant to be read by your teammates and should be submitted on Canvas to me in a word document.