

HONORS OUTLOOK*

*PANDEMIC EDITION

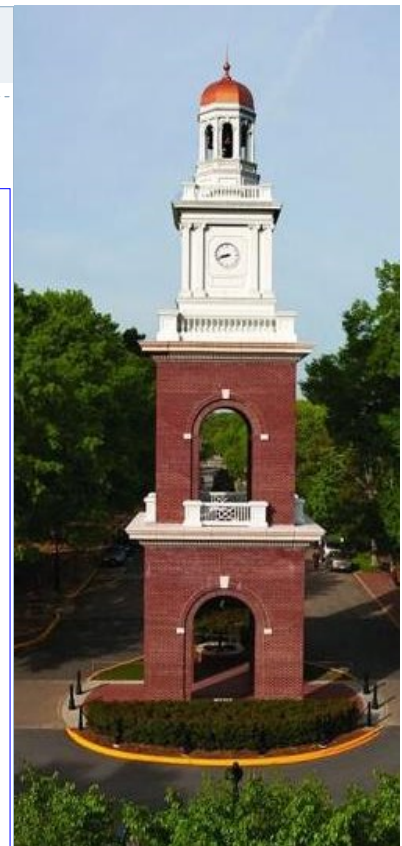
MUCH ADO ABOUT SOMETHING

by Hannah Chester



The cast of *Much Ado* at work. Photo by UMW Theatre.

During this difficult time stuck at home, I had the incredible opportunity through the graciousness and persistence of the UMW Theatre program to continue working and rehearsing in what was supposed to be our spring production of *Much Ado About Nothing* by William Shakespeare. In February, I was cast as the female lead, Beatrice, and it was an incredible first experience with UMW Theatre mainstage work, but I was devastated the day we got the email about leaving campus due to COVID-19. We held our final in-person rehearsal in the Wonder Bread studio, our rehearsal space off campus, and we hoped for not just good health and safety for us all, but for the possibility of our show still being able to go on as planned. Once that wish became a thing of the past, our incredible department and wonderful director Helen Housley decided to not let the show go without having showcased all of our hard work, and this was the beginning of Much A "Zoom" About Nothing! In all honesty, as a cast, we were all extremely hesitant about the idea. It just wasn't going to be the same, but we would much rather have a Zoom performance than no performance at all. We met nearly every night for an hour or two to rehearse our scenes for the show, a process that went on for approximately 5 weeks. It was definitely odd having to emote to a computer screen while alone in your bedroom, but once the awkwardness of that all subsided, we were making some really good art. And really *real* too. I felt sometimes as if I was truly speaking to my scene partners as if we were all back in Wonder Bread again. It was comforting, enjoyable, and made me happy knowing that through a pandemic, I could find joy in knowing I get to see and work with my friends still. It was a sense of normalcy and control that I could have when everything else seemed out of control. Once the performance day came around in mid-April, we had thousands of people tuned in, on Zoom and our overflow platform Youtube Live, to watch us act through little tiny boxes on a screen. It sounds so strange writing it all out, but the excitement people had for our performance and the wave of joy that came from it was the most important part of the process, in my opinion. We gave the community and our friends and family something bright and full of hope to experience and think, "maybe it isn't all bad." Even if my experience as Beatrice was online for the most part, it was truly a blessing to be able to make UMW history alongside my extremely talented friends and cast mates who became a family to me.



HONORS PROGRAM STAFF

Dr. Kelli Slunt

Director, Honors Program

Professor of Chemistry

Dr. Mara Scanlon

Assoc. Director, Honors Program

Professor of English

Ms. Amanda Ronay

Honors Program Coordinator

CONTACT US

HONORSPROGRAM@UMW.EDU

FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Instagram – @umwhonors

FACEBOOK: [HTTPS://
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/
MARYWASHHONORS/](https://www.facebook.com/marywashhonors/)

A WORD ON THE PANDEMIC EDITION

HONORS OUTLOOK strives to represent some of what the Honors scholars at UMW do each semester, much of it focused on events in the Honors Program itself: professional and personal development workshops; community events like the Honors Lottery Dinners we host at the Slunts' home just off campus; on- and off-campus involvement of the students in various venues and organizations. When COVID-19 sent Honors and the rest of UMW scrambling in March, we suddenly lost the opportunity for many scheduled programs and events for the semester. The community service and engagement that is the foundation of HONOR 201 was truncated or radically changed; students who were reflecting on their roles as campus leaders this semester were faced with unexpected leadership challenges.

Though we initially planned to simply scrap the Spring 2020 *Honors Outlook*, on a whim (not knowing if we'd get any replies at all since, like all of us, the Honors scholars were grappling with much pressure and change), we asked our students: *what are you up to now?* And so this issue represents some of their work, both academic and personal. Many thanks to all who took the time to reply or graciously accepted our requests to use their work.

— mns

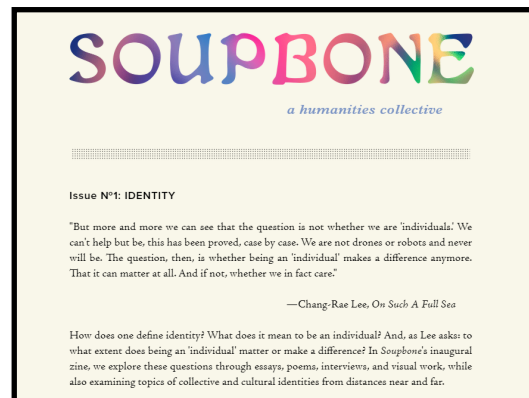
SAVORING GLOBAL HUMANITIES

by Rebecca Young

Last summer, I was lucky enough to spend five weeks studying abroad in Bath, England, with the program Advanced Studies in England. While there, I got to learn and work with other students from across the country, including some of the most brilliant scholars I know. After we left Bath, our working and learning relationships thankfully continued to grow. Last fall, my roommate from that trip—a student from Oberlin College in Ohio—asked me to join her in creating a “humanities collective.”

This was to be a group of young academics from multiple fields across the globe who share an interest in the humanities, all of us coming together to discuss related topics in an interdisciplinary fashion. A little apprehensively, I agreed, and we founded *Soupbone* with a dozen other members. We hold running, informal discussions on everything from Russian folk songs to remote learning in a global pandemic, and we combine our creative

knowledge to publish an online zine of our creative and critical works online at soupbonecollective.com. This spring, while our lives radically changed, our first issue was completed and published, focusing on the theme of identity. At first, the idea of creating the “Soupbone Humanities Collective” sounded pretentious and pointless to me, but this is an experience which has truly enriched my life within and beyond academics.



A PAINTING BY CAT ZWEMER FOR HER FATHER, DR. FRANK ZWEMER, EMERGENCY MEDICINE



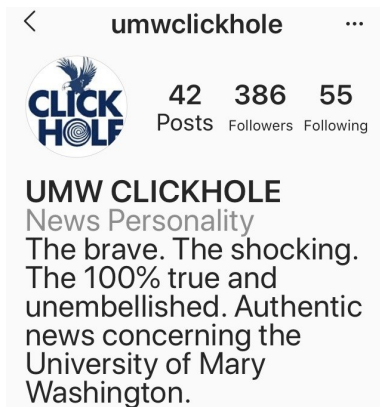


Sophomore Honors scholar Thomas Blackburn joined other Americans in recreating famous works of art— here, Norman Rockwell’s “The Discovery.”

Yikes! I Started An Ostensibly Funny Instagram Column Right Before A Global Pandemic

by Anonymous

At the end of February, a conversation with a friend gave me the idea of starting a Mary Washington-centric Instagram account that imitated the writing style of *Clickhole*, a comedic online news outlet. I began the account, @umwclickhole, over spring break, starting with headlines such as “Plan to Replace Virginia Hall With A Massive Glass Cube Presented To Board of Visitors.”



Then, on Wednesday, March 12th, I found myself trying to figure out what funny thing there was to say about the threat that we’d all get sent home. This article (“Virginia Colleges Found Shiftily Looking Around At Each Other To See Who Cancels First”) was uploaded only a few hours before UMW was officially shut down.

Eventually, my updates became less frequent as the lack of on-campus content meant that every joke began to sound repetitive. Still, throughout March, I tried my best to laugh at what we were facing, and to make others laugh with me.

The response to these articles - the frequent note of *this is a little too close to home for a joke* - made me realize something: there is still a place for absurdism in the face of the absurd. Within reason, laughing at the unbelievable might not help us in the long term, but it connects us in the day-to-day. And if the page made even one person laugh in the last two months, I’m glad I started it now.



Like many senior Honors scholars, Emily Matuczinski was sorry to face cap and gown pictures without the stole that indicates the earning of University Honors. Enter her sister Erin, a first-year UMW Honors student, who created a digital stole that was distributed to all Honors graduates! Erin’s genius is modeled here by Emily.





Though we didn't get to witness it in person, in Spring 2020 the UMW Honors Program graduated its largest class of scholars. We plan a celebration with and of those amazing students in October, to coincide with the rescheduled UMW Commencement Ceremony. Meanwhile, in Fall 2020, we also prepare to welcome our largest group of new scholars ever with City as Text, the Socially Distanced Reboot.

STUDENTS BUILD SITE ON WOMEN OF LOCAL FAMILY

by Mady May

In [Dr. Jeff McClurken's Adventures in Digital History seminar](#) this past semester, Piper Giannini, Erin Madden, Glynnis Farleigh, Emily Johnson, and I scanned, organized, and archived scrapbooks from three generations of women in the Rowe family, who have been prominent and active in Fredericksburg for nearly as long as it's existed. A few of us had the opportunity to meet Florence Barnick and Jeanette Cadwallender, two of the Rowe sisters, who were able to provide us with information on their family.



We created a website that details and explains the family's genealogy and history, the three women whom we chose to focus on, each scanned item, and our overall process. We also spent time boosting traffic to our site by advertising it, managing an Instagram account and email address, and creating a TwitterBot. Our hope is that our new site, focused on this prominent Fredericksburg family, will become a piece of local digital history. Our site is available at <https://rowefxbg.umwhistory.org>, if you'd like to check it out!



A Meditation on Meditation

by Liliana Ramirez

After I attended one of the weekly Honors Community Meditation sessions led by Drs. Scanlon and Slunt on campus, they became a highlight of my routine. Entering the dim room of the Leidecker Center, comfortable cushions and the fragrance of essential oils soothed the stress of the week, and the company was equally calming. I never left the room without feeling reconnected with myself and my meditation companions with whom this little community was made whole. So when the Coronavirus bowled through the United States and sent us all packing, the loss of my Thursday meditation sessions felt like an abrupt end to weekly therapy. I tried meditating on my own—which I highly recommend—but it lacked the collective air of silence and introspection that made our Honors sessions special. The same occurred when I dialed into the phone call replacement led by an unseen guru; the dusty crackle of his voice made me feel as if I were attending a class meeting, and I was distracted wondering how many other people were listening in, if any. All in all, I have found that this aspect of campus life, like many others, is irreplaceable. Until we return to the University of Mary Washington, we must focus not on the things that we have lost, but the unique opportunity that we have now to discover new hobbies, lend our time to altruistic pursuits and self-betterment, and come out of this pandemic with a stronger understanding of what matters to us, whether this is a weekly meditation session with friends or the simple enjoyment of eating lunch at our favorite restaurant.



UMW HONORS PROGRAM
BE MORE