

Dominican University
of California

The Angel

(an'jel: anjele, fr. L. angelus, fr. Gr. angelos: messenger)

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Honors Senior Theses

Thesis season has arrived! All the hard work has not gone unnoticed. We asked those students completing an Honors Thesis to share their projects, their experiences, and their memories during their undergraduate careers as Scholars in the World.

Starla Virgin is graduating from the nursing program and her thesis investigates the current state of how Registered Nurses are taking the necessary steps to ease the effects of domestic violence. She feels very strongly about the importance of education and awareness in fighting back against domestic violence. After graduating from the program, Starla plans to work in emergency or critical care nursing to eventually become a critical care flight nurse. Although she has found the honors program and thesis challenging, she believes it has made a strong impression in her life. She strives to do the best she can in every aspect of life. Her best advice to future honors students is to "plan, plan, plan. It requires a very high level of motivation and commitment."



Center: Senior Matthea Levin (photo courtesy of Joyce Valencia)

Patricia Regan, Liberal Studies major and Psychology Minor, is completing her thesis, "What are Effective Elementary Mathematics Strategies?" Patricia is using research and her work in local classrooms "to find the most effective teaching strategies to use when teaching elementary age Children mathematics." She states that this process helps to "give more meaning to my own theories and conclusions." Thriving on continual challenges like participating in the Honors program, Patricia is preparing to enter the teaching credential program next year, to find a placement teaching

in an elementary classroom, and to complete her Masters degree.

Diana Hallare is a Biology major completing her senior thesis: "Socioeconomic and Biological Vulnerability of Women to HIV/AIDS in India," which is "an interdisciplinary project focusing on the socioeconomic and biological vulnerability factors of women to HIV/AIDS. Diana's goal is to be a researcher or doctor, and the understanding she has gained through this research process will be helpful in her future career. Immediately after graduation from Dominican, she will apply to graduate school and

travel. In the process of writing her thesis, Diana recognized that students must utilize "the abilities to demonstrate creativity and resourcefulness, to analyze with depth, and to defend the thesis well," a culmination of the whole honors program, which, she describes, "has been an enriching experience."

Graduating with a degree in music and minor in business, Taylor Welty is hoping to use music as a teaching tool and maybe even integrate it into ministry. On May 12th, Taylor will be performing in her Senior Recital. Her thesis "Behind the Music" is an extension, including a short analysis, of the pieces she will be performing, as well as the composers' biographies. This work allowed Taylor to learn more about the creators of the pieces she will be playing and explore the original way the composers intended the pieces to be performed. Taylor has found the Honors program challenging; however, she states: "I am glad to have had the opportunity to really push myself and make the most of the privilege of having a college education."

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Honors Senior Theses (contd. from Page 1)

Melissa Aiello, a Liberal Studies/Teacher Education major, is completing her thesis, "What are Effective Ways to Teach Reading/Language Arts through the Success For All (SFA) Program?" This project includes interviews and observations with Marin County teachers who use a controversial reading program, Success For All, as well as analysis of academic research articles. Melissa's thesis covers "effective ways to teach Reading/Language Arts through the SFA program by making connections between conclusions from the research articles and information I gathered from the observations and interviews." Looking to life after Dominican, the background this project has provided will be useful for any reading program Melissa uses. After graduation, she will apply to elementary schools, and plans to take "graduate school classes during the evening while working during the day," with a future goal of becoming an elementary school principal. Melissa states that she feels the honors thesis "is worth the challenge," not only because it will be an

added bonus to future employers, it will also helped her to learn more within the field she is about to enter.

Matthea Levin's thesis on "Physical Activity Level and the Stroop Task Performance Among Elderly Individuals," assessed the general health, aerobic and anaerobic activity, and three different cognitive tasks of 20 Dominican students and 30 seniors (ages 65-96) to see any significant effects of exercise and if they are dependent on exercise type. After graduating, Matthea will continue her education at the University of Rochester in New York, where she will pursue a Ph. D in Neuroscience. After finishing school, she plans to do research in brain plasticity, particularly as it relates to injury and aging. Her advice to current Honors students would be to take advantage of the contracts, "although it can be hard, it's a great opportunity to explore interests more fully." Matthea attended Dominican not only for the small college atmosphere, but also for the Honors program. She thinks "that both Dominican's size and the honors program have been fantastic in terms

of my education – I definitely feel prepared for graduate school this fall."

Amy Neff, a Liberal Studies/ Teacher Education major, is working on her thesis titled, "What are Effective Strategies for Teaching Mathematics in Multiage Classrooms?" Through interviews with three multiage teachers, classroom observation, and research on the topic, Amy states, she is "more aware of strategies I can use in my future classroom... how a multiage class functions and the necessary modifications needed to successfully teach in this classroom setting." She states that the honors thesis "is worth the challenge because I know that I am going to be proud of the work I have done for this thesis." The impressive breadth and the depth of her own project stunned herself: "I never thought I was going to be able to do that." Amy is excited to begin student teaching next year. After she graduates, she expects to teach part-time at a school within California and concurrently earn her Masters in Education.

Monika Alas plans to attend medical school after graduation from Dominican.

Her senior thesis involves determining the effects of gravity on bones. "Effects of Inhibitors on Cytoskeleton of Bone Cell Line MC3T3E1 under Varying Gravity Conditions" may sound like a foreign language, but the research involved relates to osteoporosis. Monika says that the Honors classes have definitely enhanced her experience at Dominican and allowed her to "think outside the box." Her advice for current honors students is "to start working on your thesis early!"

- Dana Rae Gross
& Anna Lai Mark



Phi Alpha Theta Conference

On April 12, 2008, Dana Gross presented a paper titled "The Chinese Cultural Revolution: Experience through Art" at the Northern California Regional Conference of Phi Alpha Theta at California State University at Chico. Phi Alpha Theta is a nationwide honors society for undergraduate and graduate history students, as well as professors. Dominican began a chapter of Phi Alpha Theta just last year. About fifty students from around ten Northern Californian Universities presented at the conference. Dana's paper was the culmination of a research project she has been working on this semester for an honors contract.

Senior Thesis Defenses

Each year, Honors Seniors must defend their thesis work in a presentation before a panel that includes the Program Director Dr. Jayati Ghosh, the two readers, and any students or family members who wish to be present. Students must demonstrate that they have completed work that holds up to the standards of the Honors Thesis. This year's defense presentations took place from April 28 to May 1 in the Science Center and the Creekside Room.

Many congratulations to these students on the completion and dedication of the challenge of creating an Honors thesis and all the extra time they put in to prepare for these presentations.

Honors Thesis Titles**MATTHEA LEVIN**

Readers: Gail Matthews & William Phillips

Title: Physical Activity Level and Stroop Task Performance Among Elderly Individuals

NATALIE NOVOA

Readers: Pat Dougherty & Martin Anderson

Title: Malcom X: Transition from Nation of Islam to Islam

MARTHA STODDARD

Readers: Luanne-Linnard Palmer & Mary Ann Haeuser

Title: Evaluation of the effect of an evidence-based curriculum on knowledge and anxiety levels of individuals who have a relative with memory impairment

TAYLOR WELTY

Readers: June Oh & Sr. Marie Sagues

Title: Behind the Music

CLAIRE MUNZER

Readers: Steven Polacco & Lynn Sondag

Title: The Connection an Artist makes with their audience on an emotional level through the use of both traditional and digital medium

SERIANNA PEARSON

Readers: Joan Baranow & Penny Jackson

Title: The Setting Sun

DIANA HALLARE

Readers: Jayati Ghosh & Christelle Sabatier

Title: Socioeconomic and Biological Vulnerability of Women to HIV/AIDS in India

STARLA VIRGEN

Readers: Luanne Linnard-Palmer & Christine Bolla

Project Title: Domestic Violence: A Public Health & Human Rights Challenge for Nurses

MONIKA ALAS

Readers: Mohammed El Majdoubi & Mietek Kolipinski

Title: Effects of Inhibitors on Cytoskeleton Of Bone Cell Line Mc3t3e1 Under Varying Gravity Conditions

BRIDGET GENGLER

Readers: Maggie Louie & Greg Szot

Title: The role of VDR expression in Tamoxifen Resistance

MELISSA AIELLO

Readers: Mary Ann Sinkkonen & Jennifer Lucko

Title: What Are Effective Strategies For Teaching Reading/Language Arts Through the Success For All Program?

AMY NEFF

Readers: Mary Ann Sinkkonen & Jennifer Lucko

Project Title: What are Effective Strategies for Teaching Mathematics in Multiage Classrooms?

PATRICIA REGAN

Readers: Mary Ann Sinkkonen & Jennifer Lucko

Project Title: What are Effective Mathematics Teaching Strategies for All Elementary Students?

ASHLEY FALE

Readers: Mohammed El Majdoubi & Diara Spain

Title: Neurobiological Basis of Gender-Specific Behavior

Women of the Veil

The Honors Program sponsored a unique event in Archbishop Alemany Library on March 28th this year which allowed three Honors students to share their knowledge and experiences of Islamic understanding in a public presentation. These three young women were Asta Haman-Dicko, Harasyn Sandell, and myself. We comprised a panel that presented “Women and the Veil” in Islam, its ori-

gin, meanings, and acceptance in the world today. With the help of our instructor, Dr. Nahid Angha, we prepared information about the *hijab* (the veil) as worn in both past and present, learned in part through an Honors colloquium course focusing on Muslim women.

The presentation was in two parts. First, I introduced a brief history of religious head coverings, followed by more detailed descriptions about

the different styles worn, opinions and feelings expressed by people of many nations regarding the head scarf in Islam as it relates to fashion, rights, law, and faith. The second portion was a surprising recapitulation of the reactions of local people to the *hijab*, as worn by Asta and Harasyn for one full day in downtown San Rafael.

and non-Muslim of all nations who choose to wear it, adding that “the opportunity also allowed me to learn some things about human nature, and how something so little as covering your hair can change the way a society views and treats you.”

Asta felt that the experience wearing the veil gave her a deeper respect for women, Muslim

- Angela Giertych

LINES Ballet BFA Goes National

Recently, the LINES Ballet BFA program was one of three groups, out of thirty-three other participating college programs, selected to represent the Southwest Region of the American College Dance Festival Association Conference. The regional conference was held March 26 - 29 at UC Irvine. There were forty-seven choreographic works submitted from the participating institutions that were adjudicated. Twelve schools were then selected to perform at the Gala the last evening, and three of these were chosen to represent the southwest region at the National Festival in New York City in June, held at Columbia University and Barnard College. There were approximately 500 students that participated in the southwest regional conference, and of

these 500, freshmen BFA student Michael Montgomery was awarded Best Performer. Fifteen of the BFA students participated in the conference. Gregory Dawson choreographed the piece the students performed titled, “Solid Soil Under Our Feet.” The judges commented “on the exceptional balance of excellent technique and expressiveness of the dancers.” The judges also commended the excellent training and teaching of the teachers of the program.

The participating BFA students will be heading to New York the first week of June! The piece performed for the conference, “Solid Soil Under Our Feet,” will be performed at the BFA Spring Shows May 12th and 13th at Marin Ballet along with several other original works.

- Elisabeth Schiffbauer



Some of the LINES BFA program dancers

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By the way...

If you are interested in joining the Angel staff, please contact Dr.

Jayati Ghosh. Writers are always welcome!

“If opportunity doesn’t knock, build a door.” —Milton Berle

“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.” —Ben Franklin

“The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.” —Aristotle

Congratulations Class of 2008!