The Changing Public Transportation Scene in Senegal

By Ginger Cline

Honors History concentrator Ginger Cline spent the summer of 2009 in Senegal gathering information for her Honors thesis on the vanishing car rapide public transportation system there. Her research was supported by grants from the Honors Program and the History Department.

Featured on post cards and crafted in miniature form for the tourist trade, the car rapide is a symbol of Senegalese urban society. Senegal’s most commonly used mode of transportation, they are colorful minibuses, originally designed to transport commercial merchandise. These ubiquitous vehicles are painted vibrant yellow and blue and are adorned with religious sayings and colorful artwork. Inside, there are almost always pictures of marabouts, Muslim religious leaders, as well as famous athletes, especially wrestlers. Cars rapides provide transportation around cities, and the routes are at the driver’s discretion. They are generally crammed with people and can comfortably seat about 18-20. Fares are collected by an apprenti, often a teenage boy, sometimes younger, who hangs off the back of the vehicle, shouting out destinations and signaling to the chauffeur when to stop. When a passenger wants to get off, he or she can tap on the metal wall or roof of the car rapide, and the apprenti will tap loudly with a coin or a ring so that the driver will slow down and let the client alight. If there are a lot of people around, the apprenti will often get out and encourage more people to climb aboard. Typically, fares range from 50-150 francs cfa or about 10-30 cents American.

Cars rapides were introduced in Dakar around 1947, over a decade before the country’s independence. Today, there are 1,390 cars rapides and 1,161 Ndiaga ndiayes (a larger, white vehicle similar to the car rapide) in Dakar. They are privately owned but regulated to some extent by the state. President Abdoulaye Wade’s administration is currently in the process of phasing out both the car rapide and the Ndiaga ndiaye as the vehicles are aging, unsafe, and create a great deal of pollution. It only takes a look through the newspaper archives dating back to the 1980s to find slews of stories detailing tragic accidents involving these vehicles. President Wade hopes to replace all of the car rapides and Ndiaga ndiayes with new minibuses, though the expected date for the completion of this project is unknown.

This summer, thanks to grants from the Honors Program and the History Department, I had the opportunity to return to Dakar to conduct the field research for my undergraduate Honors thesis in history. I had spent five months early this year studying in Dakar, all the while relying on the car rapide to take me from my home in the village of Ouakam to the West African.
HONORS PROGRAM AWARDS

Thanks to the generosity of Honors alumni and friends, we are able to reward our outstanding students for their accomplishments. Some are given at our graduation ceremony, and others at other times in the year.

Goldstein Prizes, made possible by the Goldstein family, Ellen, Joseph, Laura Bassichis and Paul, reward excellence in humanities, arts, natural sciences and mathematics, social sciences, public service, humanitarianism and teaching. Students are nominated by their departments for these awards, which are named for distinguished UM alumni and associates.

The Robert Hayden Humanities Award was presented to Bryan Klausmeyer, who earned Highest Honors in History. His recommenders called his thesis “a work of stunning erudition and creativity.”

The Arthur Miller Arts Award went to Tara Mulder, who in addition to her thesis created a stop-action film of the story of Philomela that, according to the Classics faculty, “turned out to be an astonishing work of art.”

The Jerome and Isabella Karle Award for Natural Sciences and Mathematics was given to Timothy Heath, who earned Highest Honors in Mathematics. Six faculty wrote on his behalf, commenting on his creativity and his intuitive grasp of highly complex mathematics.

Two students shared this year’s Marshall Sahlins Social Science Award. Thomas Hooker (History) did research on early 20th century history in the archives of Moscow. Alan Mishler (Linguistics) carried out a sophisticated analysis of a complex topic in Japanese Linguistics.

The Gerald Ford Public Service Award was given to Allison Davido (Economics), who has worked on real world issues. Her thesis, described as “path-breaking,” demonstrates flaws in current economic literature on the relationship between the legalization of abortion and economic outcomes for children.

The winner of the Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Award, Amanda Swain, wrote an English thesis analyzing depictions of torture from Abu Ghraib and elsewhere in the context of television and movies, exploring the American public reaction to both. One reader said, “Her work is located at the intersection of the humanities…and humanitarian commitment.”

Sidney Fine Teaching Award is given to students who show exceptional promise as future educators. Inna Dykman (Classical Civilization) and Maia Dedrick (Anthropology and Cello Performance) shared the award this year. Inna plans to teach Latin and Greek in secondary school. Maia taught a section of “Ideas in Honors” and also served as a resource for students interested in archaeology at UM and on several digs. You may remember her article in the 2008 issue of Forum.

The Honors Alumni Prize for outstanding achievement and service to the Honors Program and the university was presented to Caitlin O’Rourke (English, Theater and Drama), who has been a lead member of both the peer advising and student employee teams. She taught a very popular section of “Ideas in Honors” on the history of rock and roll.
Virginia Voss Memorial Scholarships are awarded each year to senior Honors women for excellence in writing; they are given by her family in memory of the late Virginia Voss, who graduated from Michigan in the 1950s and became College Editor of Mademoiselle magazine. For the second year, Virginia Voss's twin sisters, June Everett and Jo Van Boven, and Jo's husband Sam were able to attend our graduation ceremony, where they assisted in the presentation of the Voss awards and had lunch with a group of recipients. This year's winners, their departments of concentration and their thesis topics are listed below.

**For Academic Writing:**

Jamie Budnick (Sociology, Women's Studies), *Subversive Stories/Hegemonic Tales: Conversations with Non-heterosexual College Women on Sexuality, Society, and Self*

Tracy Ederer (Psychology), *Revealing Individual Differences in Decision Making Behavior*

Rosalie Edmonds (Anthropology and Linguistics), "They'll be doing away with those buffalo": Language, Culture and History in a Salish-Pend D'Oreille Narrative

Lauren Humphrey (Medieval and Early Modern Studies), *St. Patrick and the Druids: A Window into Seventh-Century Irish Church Politics*

Emily Wilson (English and Individualized Concentration Program in Sacred Text as Literature), *The Story of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife: Thomas Mann's 'Joseph and his Brothers' and his Early Jewish and Christian Sources*

**For Creative Writing:**

Megan Cummins (Residential College Creative Writing-Literature Program), *Dust Child*

Rebecca Shafer (English-Creative Writing), *Games Children Play*

The Honors Program also has endowments to provide annual grants to outstanding Honors juniors. The **Otto Graf Scholarships and Prizes** recognize academic excellence and commitment. The Otto Graf Scholarship went to Daniel Echlin (Mathematics), and Graf Prizes were awarded to Jeffrey May (Sociology), and Julie Bordato (Spanish and Organizational Studies). The **Jack Meiland Prize** is given to a student whose academic program is outstanding in depth and breadth. This year, the award went to Paula Muldoon, who pursues both Medieval and Early Modern Studies and Violin Performance.

Through a generous gift from Honors alumnus Kenneth Buckfire, co-founder and Managing Director of the Wall Street consulting firm, Miller Buckfire, Honors was able to provide scholarship support to four exceptional students whose ambitious programs require a fifth undergraduate year at Michigan. Recipients of the **Buckfire Scholarship for Fifth-year Studies** are Richard (Kent) Caldwell (Biopsychology and Art and Design), Kenneth Chen (Biochemistry and Economics), Katherine Fontichiaro (Biography), and Maggie Wagner (Plant Biology).

The **Morris Wasserstein Award** is made possible by a generous gift from investment banker Bruce Wasserstein to honor his father. Bruce Wasserstein is an Honors graduate who has a great affection for the University of Michigan, the Honors Program and the Michigan Daily. Students who write or edit for the Daily are eligible to apply. This year’s winners were Courtney Ratkowiak, Benjamin Block, Mallory Jones, Stephanie Berliant, Gary Graca, and Nicole Auerbach. Because of alumni giving, we are also able to provide grants to support thesis research, to enable presentations at conferences, to assist with the cost of special study abroad programs or to subsidize the cost of unpaid internships. You will find an article by one of our grant recipients, Ginger Cline, on the cover of this issue. We congratulate all of them for their excellent work.
Eszter Zavodszky, who completed her neuroscience degree in May with High Honors, was the recipient of a **Winston Churchill Scholarship** for a year of graduate study at Churchill College, Cambridge. An ethnic Hungarian born in Romania, Ms. Zavodszky graduated from high school in Okemos, Michigan. One of only fourteen Churchill Scholars nationwide this year, Eszter will conduct research in the laboratory of Dr. David Rubensztein in the Department of Medical Genetics. She is primarily interested in the mechanisms that result in neurodegenerative disorders such as Huntington’s disease. As an undergraduate, Eszter not only compiled an impeccable academic record but also served as section leader for the Michigan Marching Band’s flag line and participated in research projects in Ann Arbor, at the University of Texas, and at Jacobs University in Bremen, Germany. She won a Goldwater Scholarship during her sophomore year at Michigan.

**Barry M. Goldwater Scholarships** for Excellence in Mathematics, the Natural Sciences, and Engineering are awarded to approximately 300 college sophomores and juniors nationwide each year. This year, the University of Michigan nominees have had tremendous success, winning three scholarships and one honorable mention. This year’s Goldwater Scholars are Daniel Hermes (2010), an Honors Mathematics and Honors Economics concentrator from Dixon, Illinois; Sarah Kostinski (2010), Honors Physics and Violin Performance student from Houghton, Michigan; and Katherine Bouman (2011), an Electrical Engineering major from West Lafayette, Indiana. David Montague (2011), an Honors Mathematics major from Brighton, Michigan, was awarded Honorable Mention.

**University of Michigan Awards**

Moustafa Moustafa (2010), leader and tireless worker for the UM chapter of Children of Abraham, an organization that collects surplus medical equipment and supplies and arranges to have them shipped to parts of the world where they are desperately needed, was one of six students honored on Jan. 31, 2009, with a Central Campus **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Spirit Award**. The awards honor undergraduates who best exemplify the leadership and vision of Dr. King. Moustafa was also chosen a 2009 Student of the Year and given a Michigan Leadership Award. He is pursuing an Honors Individualized Concentration in Medieval Spain, and he plans to attend medical school after graduation.
Daniel Levin
From Great Books to the Fiction Shelf

The Last Ember, an archaeological thriller written by 1997 Honors alum Daniel Levin, has just been released by Riverhead Press, a division of Penguin Books. “Archaeology is politics in this novel,” as Danny put it, “and history is more fragile than we think.”

At Michigan, Danny studied Classical Civilization and Philosophy. After graduation he earned a law degree at Harvard and then clerked for the Supreme Court of Israel. He returned to the US and practiced litigation at Debevoise and Plimpton in New York, working primarily on international law cases where he discovered that he especially enjoyed the occasional pro bono case that involved research on museum law and antiquities provenance. He says, “The stories of the artifacts themselves – the collision of the ancient and modern worlds – interested me as much as the legal precedents.” All of those experiences set the stage for his first novel.

Danny explains the title of the book and its connection to UM and Honors:

When I began working on a thriller about a conflicted young antiquities lawyer, I hadn’t the faintest idea where it was going. Then I remembered a case I worked on in Jerusalem where Islamic fundamentalists were erasing Judeo-Christian ruins beneath the Temple Mount in order to deny any biblical history in Jerusalem. Suddenly, I imagined a world from the labyrinths beneath the Colosseum to the tunnels of Jerusalem, where historical revisionists would do anything to control not just the future but the past. As the book’s theme of history’s fragility became clear to me – so did the title. I remembered a quote in Virgil which I first saw in Professor Cameron’s Great Books class. I always thought Virgil was speaking about history in Aeneid Book IV when he wrote “I feel the last ember of an ancient flame.”

After writing for a few months, Daniel submitted the piece for consideration by the American Academy in Rome. They invited him to join the academy as a Visiting Scholar and, he said, “With Renaissance manuscripts at my fingertips, the novel’s research took flight.”

On a personal front, Danny reports, “As for more important matters, I have been married for little over a year. My wife, Laura, is finishing up medical school. Although she is a Brown graduate, the way I speak of the close-knit nature of Michigan Honors mystifies her.”

On November 16, Danny will meet with Honors students to talk about this unusual twist in his career path.

Annie Maxwell
White House Bound

Chief Operating Officer of Direct Relief International, Annie Maxwell, has been chosen as a 2009-2010 White House Fellow where she will work in the Office of the Vice President. Annie earned her BA in English and Political Science in 2000 and her Masters in Public Policy in 2002. Throughout she was on full athletic scholarship and she captained the UM women’s
Division I volleyball team while completing her graduate program.  

After graduation, Annie returned home to Santa Barbara, CA, with a plan to relocate to Washington, D. C., in the fall and to intern as a policy analyst at Direct Relief over the summer. She was offered a regular position at the end of her internship, and now, seven years later, she is responsible for the day-to-day activities and strategic planning of the organization. Founded in 1948, Direct Relief is a non-profit, non-sectarian, nongovernmental, apolitical organization that provides medical assistance to people worldwide who have been victims of poverty, civil unrest, or disaster. Annie spent the 2005-2006 year at the United Nation’s Office of the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery led by Special Envoy President Bill Clinton.

While she was at Michigan, Annie was one of those special students who seem to be able to balance multiple responsibilities while maintaining their composure, balance, and sense of humor. There was never any doubt in our minds that she would find a career that allows her to exercise her leadership and many skills to make a substantial difference in the world. We congratulate Annie and wish her a very productive year in the nation’s capital.

To find out more about The White House Fellowship visit www.whitehouse.gov/fellows/. Applications for the next class of fellows are due in February.

Kendal Sparks  
Biking Coast to Coast

In the summer of 2007, shortly after Kendal Sparks graduated from the University of Michigan with Highest Honors in both Ancient Civilizations and Biblical Studies and Musical Theater, he and classmate Greg Battista hatched a plan for a three-month cycling trip across the country to raise awareness and money for the Alzheimer’s Association. The trip had to wait until after Kendal returned from a fifteen-month volunteer assignment in Nicaragua where he taught drama, music, and reading classes. They were joined by Rachel Graber, a voice student at Lawrence University, Amelia Graber, an English teacher at the International School of Louisiana in New Orleans, and Stephanie Kleven, an avid dancer and aspiring photographer who is currently in her first year at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. The journey began in April, 2009 in Seattle and Kendal completed his cross-country adventure with a September 6 welcome home celebration at his parents’ home in Washington DC. His friends could not finish the trip with him, so he biked alone from Wichita, KS, to DC, accompanied for a short time by his father in a car and occasionally riding with fellow travelers he met along the way. Throughout their unforgettable journey, the friends visited nursing homes and assisted living facilities to share their love of entertainment with Alzheimer’s patients. They toured landmarks and had amazing encounters with people wherever they went. They learned how to deal with a variety of wildlife from snakes to ticks. Everywhere they went, they discovered how generous people can be in their hospitality and their support of the cause for which they made the trip.

You can read about their adventures on their blog, www.TheUnforgettableJourney.org.

Perry Teicher  
Peace Corps in Aktobe

Honors alum Perry Teicher finishes a two-year stint in the Peace Corps in Kazakhstan in November, 2009. He sent us the following report of his experiences there.

The views expressed below are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the U.S. Peace Corps or the U.S. government.

The fresh milk-and-eggs woman shouts delivery options from the streets in the morning. More Porsche Cayennes, Lexus LX470s, and Hummers roam the roads of Aktobe,
Kazakhstan than the highways of Southeastern Michigan. Yet horses sometimes graze on the sides of the same Kazakh roads. Multibillion dollar oil companies have big offices near Aktobe while many people have no running water and inconsistent electricity in houses that haven’t been renovated for over 20 years.

I work at a disabled persons’ organization that focuses on helping the disabled become active members of the community. The wheelchairs that people receive from the government are not meant for outdoor use so they make it hard for the disabled to leave their homes. One project that I worked on is the organization’s wheelchair factory which produces chairs able to handle the rough roads and sidewalks of the region. The factory will employ about 16 disabled individuals and will be self-sustaining, helping to support the NGO and provide salaries for the employees, following the start-up costs.

Once the disabled get out of their homes, they face difficulties getting in and out of many buildings. The organization monitors ramp compliance on buildings and advocates for changes before the Kazakhstan government so that the disabled have access. Our group has also worked to improve the self-esteem of the disabled, organizing festivals that showcase successful individuals with disabilities, such as a beauty competition for disabled girls. I’ve spent much of my time working with the Volunteer Club: we now have over 120 students who spend time with disabled youth, visiting them in their homes, going for walks, assisting with hippotherapy and teaching English. These students develop real friendships and help to break down the stigma that surrounds disability. One of the most surprising parts of my service is people’s understanding. I arrived in Kazakhstan knowing no Russian. My first six months in Aktobe must have been extremely frustrating for all of my colleagues, friends, and host family here. But, they welcomed me like family. Leaving is very difficult; the work has been good, rewarding, and will continue without me there. Friends have been great. November 6 will not be my last time in Aktobe.

If you’d like to read more about my experiences in Aktobe, please see my blog: pteicher.wordpress.com.

Also, you can see a handbook on how to develop and manage volunteer organizations for Kazakhstani organizations that I helped edit with several Kazakhstansis and Peace Corps Volunteers: http://www.scribd.com/doc/19492259/Kazakhstan-Volunteer-Handbook.

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Honors Fellows are graduate students and faculty members who offer extra-curricular events for students, review Honors admissions applications, and maintain a presence in the Program that helps us build the intellectual community we want Honors to be. Graduate students find the fellowship to be useful training as future faculty members. We value their energy and their expertise in unusual areas.

For example: Marc Krawitz, a mathematician from South Africa, hosted a presentation about Desmond Tutu and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission just before the Archbishop came to campus to receive the Raoul Wallenberg Medal. Kairos Marquardt of Anthropology created a round table discussion on social movements in Peru, introducing Honors students to guest scholars who could shed light on recent events in the region. Katherine Sledge Moore, a Ph.D. candidate in Psychology, led a workshop on cognitive science called “How the Mind Really Works.” Kharis Templeman made use of the intense interest in the presidential election for a timely pair of events (before and after the vote) on the effects that ballot design and other practices have on American election outcomes. Craig Tyson of Near Eastern Studies led a seminar exploring stories of violence in the Bible and the ethical questions they raise.

We’re looking forward to a new group of Fellows: among the programs for the upcoming year are an ongoing group discussion based on The New Yorker and field trips to Ann Arbor’s Food Gatherers, to the Detroit election debates, and to the Opera.
From the Director  TIMOTHY MCKAY, LS&A HONORS DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As the 2013 class of the LSA Honors Program arrives on campus this fall, we find ourselves in interesting times. Much of the news is good. Our incoming class is, as ever, bright and enthusiastic. The college of LSA, in recognition of major expansions in the Museum of Art and the Kelsey Museum, is hosting a fascinating theme year focusing on museums in the academy.

Amidst spectacular late summer weather, the diag is awash in student groups competing for the attention of the first years.

But there is hard news as well. The global economic crisis has had a terrible impact on the State of Michigan. Careful financial planning and substantial cost-cutting have helped to keep the University’s finances relatively stable. Many of our peers are in much more serious trouble. But our students are not so easily protected; many have lost expected sources of tuition support. In response, the University has increased financial aid by 11.7%, the largest jump in history. Michigan’s research activity continues to grow, with annual expenditures surpassing $1 billion for the first time ever, providing crucial economic support to Southeast Michigan. No one expects these challenges to lessen soon, and all University programs, including Honors, are planning for budget cuts in each of the next three years.

These challenges press us to make the most of every resource. In a way, this is an opportunity. I plan to spend this year working with the Honors Faculty and Alumni Councils focusing on what makes the Honors Program a success. Honors is a four-year program with two principal components. For students in their first years, Honors is a learning-learning community and a rich suite of enhanced lower-division courses. As students progress through their sophomore year, they declare concentrations and work toward graduation with Honors in one or more disciplines. Honors students are supported throughout their time on campus by expert advising and a wide array of extracurricular activities. Every component of the Honors experience is important, and we are taking steps to enhance them all.

Each year, incoming Honors students are welcomed at Kickoff, organized this year around the museums theme. Over the summer, they read Lawrence Weschler’s Mr. Wilson’s Cabinet of Wonder, then on arrival participated in a day-long celebration of the university as our own “cabinet of wonders.” Professors Phil Gingerich, John O’Shea, and Patricia Wittkopp (herself a 1997 graduate of the LSA Honors Program) gave short lectures describing various wonders uncovered in the course of their research. During the afternoon, Honors resident advisors organized a cross-campus scavenger hunt which had students racing about in search of campus wonders, including some found in our museums.

Currently, Honors students are housed in two separate residence halls, South Quad and Couzens. We are currently working to reunite them all in South Quad, and hope to be able to accomplish this in the fall of 2010. A long-standing element of the first-year experience is the Honors Great Books course. Professor Don Cameron, who taught this course for decades, retired at the end of the last academic year. We are very pleased to have the course continue this fall in the capable hands of Professor Ruth Scodel, chair of the Classics Department and former Director of the Honors Program. While Great Books is a centerpiece, our students take Honors courses in all the disciplines. This year we will be working with LSA departments to find economical ways to offer a wider array of introductory Honors courses.

During their sophomore year, most Michigan students select their academic concentrations. Qualified students, whether they entered the Honors Program as freshmen or not, may choose to pursue an Honors concentration. The requirements for Honors graduation differ among the disciplines. But all ask students to cease being classroom students, learning what others already know, and become independent scholars, producing new knowledge in their disciplines. Students express this new knowledge in a senior thesis. Having worked with many senior thesis students in my own research, I know what a transformative experience the thesis process can be. The work produced for theses is the real thing, often leading to a publication in the professional literature.

During the next few years, we will do all we can to make this opportunity available to more Michigan students. As a first step, we have arranged to have all senior theses permanently archived in the University Library’s “Deep Blue” electronic repository. This Honors thesis archive holds more than 100 theses from last year’s graduates. This year we’ll ask all Honors graduates to join in this program. If you’re interested in the work thesis students do, I invite you to access them online at the link provided on the Honors Program website.

International experiences form an increasingly important aspect of many students’ undergraduate careers. This is a natural reflection of the increasingly integrated world we live in. We will be working this year to help concentrations make international experiences a more natural part of honors concentrations, and to provide advising and financial support to ensure that all interested students can take advantage of these opportunities.

Over the next few years, we will be tightening our belts still
further. We will work to focus our resources carefully on those things which matter most to Honors students. If we do this, I am confident that we can continue to improve the Honors Program, even in resource-limited times. And of course we look to you for help. Generous financial support from our alumni and friends enables all of our extracurricular programming, funds recruiting and kickoff, and allows us to lend a hand to students when they need help to study abroad or travel domestically in support of their thesis research. Without your donations, the Honors Program would be a shadow of what it is today.

Let me close with a little story, meant to remind us all of why the Honors Program remains a success. We have all heard stories of faculty members at research universities like Michigan being reluctant to encounter undergraduates, and indeed one does hear talk of research ‘opportunities’ contrasted to teaching ‘obligations.’ Around the Honors Program, the tone is very different. Honors students, smart, hard-working, and eager to learn, are every instructor’s dream; Michigan faculty clamor for the chance to work with them. Indeed, I have received effusive thank you notes from instructors, saying things like “I learned a tremendous amount from them,” and “Thank you for the opportunity to spend a semester with these incredible students.” And that, in the end, is the core element of the Honors Program: wonderful, committed students.

All the best,

Tim McKay

“LUNCH WITH HONORS” EVENTS FOR 2008-2009

Every few weeks, we invite a visiting celebrity or a distinguished faculty member for a lunch with Honors students. We set out a buffet lunch; the speaker gives a brief talk designed to provoke thought and spark discussion. The Lounge is usually packed full of students, and discussion often carries on well into the afternoon. This year we were able to welcome the following speakers to “Lunch with Honors:”

- Stasys Eidrigevičius, mixed-media artist, 2009 Copernicus Endowment keynote speaker
- Robert K. Musil, Scholar in Residence and Adjunct Professor in the School of International Studies at American University, Program on Global Environmental Politics, Nuclear Studies Institute
- Aaron David Miller, Public Policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center
- Danny Savitch, co-founder of the Jerusalem Open House (JOH), the largest LGBT organization in the Middle East
- Jonathan M. Tisch, Honors alumnus, Chairman and CEO of Loews Hotels, Treasurer of the New York Giants Football Team
- Henry Pollock, Professor Emeritus of Geology, UM
- Owen Gleiberman, film critic for Entertainment Weekly
- Bill Martin, UM Athletic Director
- Anna Tsing, Professor of Anthropology at UC-Santa Cruz, and Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar
- Kevin Boyle, author of 2008’s first-year book, Arc of Justice, and Professor of History, the Ohio State University
- Dick Siegel, singer-songwriter and Honors alumnus
- John U. Bacon, author of Bo’s Lasting Lessons, faculty in UM’s American Culture department, Honors alumnus
- Professors Scotti Parrish of English, Joshua Cole and Rudolf Mrázek of History, all Fellows at UM’s Humanities Institute: panel discussion, “What does research in the humanities look like?”
- Wendy Doniger, Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions in the Divinity School, University of Chicago
- Elizabeth Anderson, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and John Rawls Collegiate Professor of Philosophy and Women’s Studies, UM
**Honors Admissions Remain Steady**

Because of Michigan’s and the nation’s economic circumstances, the Honors Program went into this year’s admissions season with much uncertainty, but statistically, the 2009 incoming class of 515 students is very similar to last year’s. The ratio of in-state to out-of-state students is nearly the same: 63% of the incoming class is from Michigan this year as compared to 65.5% last year. We are experiencing a trend also found in LSA and national college admissions: more women (53%) than men are in the incoming class. Academically, we have another amazing class: our median ACT range is 31-34, very close to 2009’s 32-34 range, and the median range for SAT scores for this year’s class is 1370-1490, compared to last year’s 1380-1490.

We know, however, that test scores and grades only partly indicate a student’s ability and intellectual passion. That’s why we urge all students admitted to LSA who are interested in Honors to apply to the Program by writing an essay to supplement their UM application. We include the “Honors essay” in a holistic evaluation of the student’s entire application. It’s a time- and labor-intensive process, but each year it brings us wonderful students who benefit from our academic challenges and contribute to our community.

**HELP US RECRUIT NEXT YEAR’S HONORS CLASS**

Beginning this winter, the Honors Program is asking Honors alumni to help introduce prospective students and their parents to Honors at Campus Days.

Each year, from late January through April, the Admissions Office invites prospective first-year students and their parents to visit Ann Arbor for a “Campus Days” program. At these full-day visits, mostly on Mondays and Fridays, students admitted to all UM colleges, including LSA, learn about housing, financial aid, and student life. In the afternoon, prospective students visit their academic units. Admitted LSA students interested in Honors and their parents have the opportunity to meet with Honors Program staff and current Honors students.

This year we would be delighted to have Honors alumni/ae join us for these sessions, which include a brief presentation, but are mostly an opportunity for students and parents to ask questions about Honors academics and the Honors community. We wouldn’t expect you to do any formal preparation: just come ready to answer questions about your time in Honors and the impact your Honors experience had on your life after UM.

The first Campus Day is Friday, January 22, 2010, and there will be sessions each Monday and Friday (with the exception of March 1 and 5) through April 19th. There will also be Saturday sessions on February 13th and March 20th. The Honors portion of Campus Days lasts from 2:00 to 4:00. If you’re interested in joining us and are available for any of these dates, please contact Scott Kassner at skassner@umich.edu or call Honors at 734 764-6274.

**“Ideas in Honors”**

Mini-courses for first-year students taught by Honors seniors have been one of the most successful innovations of the last decade. First-year students have enjoyed the opportunity to examine topics they might never encounter otherwise in a small, relaxed setting and the chance to forge relationships with upper-class students who have made the best of their time at UM. Student instructors have relished the freedom to choose a topic and craft a fruitful learning experience for freshmen. For some, it has completely changed the way they think about a career as an educator. Topics have ranged from mathematical biology to stand-up comedy, from politics to the history of physics, from social justice to classical drama. Each semester, we wonder what kinds of topics will attract our new students and we find that they are interested in everything. End-of-term evaluations are always stunning. The offerings this fall include courses in the literature of exploration, the psychology of influence, the ethics of genetic technologies, Cormac McCarthy, disease epidemiology, perspectives of solitude, revitalizing Detroit, institutional change in “The Wire,” and Mozart’s Mass in C minor. For a list of classes and descriptions of each from fall, 2004 to the present, go to www.lsa.umich.edu/cg/. Just look under “Honors” for any given semester and you will find all the information there.

**We want to hear from you!**

We hope that you have enjoyed reading about the accomplishments and adventures of some of our alums and students. We want to hear from you also. Please send news to us at honors.alums@umich.edu.

If you would like to keep up with what is happening throughout the year in Honors, let us know and we will add you to the distribution list of our weekly email, “This Week in Honors.”
Honors Admissions Essay Scholarship Winner:
Thomas Hobbes and John Rawls Duke it Out Over Dinner

Each fall, prospective Honors students are asked to write an essay based on one of several prompts. This essay, along with the student’s entire UM application, is evaluated as we consider the student for Honors. The best essays are nominated by our readers for a $1,000 book scholarship. This year’s winner, Holden Warriner, responded to the following prompt:

Invite any two authors, artists, musicians, scientists, and/or philosophers—from the present or from the past—to join you for dinner (it’s OK to mix them: for example, you could have an author and a musician, and your guests need not come from the same time period). Who would you invite and why? What would you talk about? What kind of food would you serve?

Here’s Holden’s essay:

As our growing hunger overcame our interest in discussing philosophy, Thomas Hobbes, John Rawls and I gradually turned our attention to the menus. While I was eager to hear these two great thinkers, from different times and contrasting schools of thought, share their views on social contract, my mind was focused on trying one of this restaurant’s widely acclaimed steaks. However, the menu contained quite a surprise: steak and chicken were the only options, and just a helping of each remained in the kitchen. After rereading to confirm this, I sighed at the foreseeable dispute. Although I had invited my guests for a philosophical debate, I had doubted it would interfere with my quest to satisfy my growling stomach. So, I hesitantly raised my head and asked the obvious question: “well, how should we decide who gets what?”

Hobbes seized the steak-knife placed before him and slid his seat backward. He assured us that, “if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and…endeavor to destroy or subdue one another” (Leviathan 69). This response, followed by his placing the knife back on the table, suggested that Hobbes was fearful of Rawls and me and, maybe, even himself. However, he hesitantly brought himself back to the table, explaining that, “a man [should] be willing, when others are so too…to lay down his right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself” (73). As he said this, he nodded suggestively toward an approaching waiter, implying the decision should be the waiter’s to make.

With a look of confusion tinged with anger, Rawls responded to Hobbes’ proposition by asking why we, the parties to be consuming and paying for dinner, should not decide amongst ourselves how it was divided. “Why on earth,” he further inquired, “should we turn over this decision to an external party with unknown motives? Suppose we instead have an auction?” A look of excitement then overcame Rawls as he described how our situation resembled his hypothetical, or so he thought, “original position” (A Theory of Justice, 118). He explained that none of us knew “his place in society…nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities” (137). As none of us knew the amount of bills contained in each others’ wallets, each party at our table was essentially unaware of his relative fortune. Further, as the preparation of the steak and chicken was unknown, not one of us could be sure of “his conception of the good,” or how much he would enjoy the dishes (137). Rawls assured us that we could, cloaked by this “veil of ignorance,” devise a just procedure for the distribution of dinner (136). This drawing of a social contract would be unhindered by any individual attempts to exploit natural circumstances, in this case the sum of money held by each of us, for unfair advantage.

Hobbes, unconvinced of our ability to work together, reaffirmed his proposal by raising his hand and calling for the waiter, an unaccountable authority figure. Rawls, furious at the prospect of surrendering our collective power to a foreign sovereign, leapt across the table and took hold of Hobbes. As the two struggled unyieldingly, I helplessly looked beyond and saw the waiter take the order, a portion of steak and one of chicken, of a table in the far corner.

Works Cited
May 2009 Graduation Snapshot

- 283 Honors graduates; 37 joint with the Residential College (RC)
  - 193 earned Bachelor of Arts
  - 85 earned Bachelor of Science
  - 5 earned Bachelor of Science in Chemistry
- Approximately 10% of the entire LSA class (283/2770 students)
- 98 double-concentrators, including 13 double Honors concentrators
- 4 triple concentrators, including 1 with 3 Honors concentrations
- 1 quadruple concentrator
- 6 joint with School of Music, Theatre, and Dance
- 1 joint with the Ross School of Business
- Average Honors GPA = 3.745

Levels of distinction are awarded on the basis of rank in the class. **Students in the top 3% of the entire University class earn Highest Distinction, those ranging from 4% to 10% earn High Distinction, and those in the 11-25% range earn Distinction.**

How did Honors students fare?

- 70% of Honors students graduated with some level of Distinction
- 38 Highest Distinction: cumulative GPA = 3.927 – 4.000
- 72 High Distinction: cumulative GPA = 3.809 – 3.926
- 89 Distinction: cumulative GPA = 3.644 – 3.808

**Top Five Honors Concentrations:**
5. English with Creative Writing sub-concentration (13); Neuroscience (13)
4. History (17)
3. Economics (18)
2. English (21)
1. Psychology (40)

**Most popular Minors for Honors Graduates:**
Applied Statistics (7)
French & Francophone Studies (7)
Music (7)
Spanish Language, Literature, and Culture (7)
Mathematics (6)
Honors Students Travel and Learn in South Africa

For two weeks in May, six Honors students traveled with four other students and Professor Barbara Anderson to South Africa to continue onsite the study they had begun in a winter term course, Sociology 295, “Population and Health in South Africa in Transition.” The course is part of an LSA program, “Integrating Study Abroad into the Curriculum” (ISAC) which encourages faculty to take students abroad as a supplementary part of their courses; the travel, though not required, is a matchless enrichment of course content. Because of generous alumni support for study abroad, the Honors Program has been able to help underwrite some of the travel costs for Honors students in this course. We asked Professor Anderson and this year’s ISAC students to comment on their experiences for us.

Jeremy Levy, a sophomore, provided a thought-provoking introduction to his report of the trip in one of two articles published in the Michigan Daily (this one appeared on June 7th, 2009)

Someone needs to tell Oprah that Africa isn’t one country. This is what Lindsay Louis, a trainee at the South African Department of Foreign Affairs, said when I spoke with him during my recent trip to South Africa. From his perspective, Oprah is one of many reasons Americans think that all African countries are identical.

He's right. Most of us know little about Africa, and our inability to distinguish between its countries is, without question, linked to the continent’s portrayal by charities and the media. Despite our lack of knowledge, we’ve demonstrated an immense desire to help Africa and donate money. But if Americans want to make a serious contribution to Africa’s well-being, they can start by recognizing that African countries each experience a unique set of problems.

It’s clear from the rest of his articles (you can find them in the Michigan Daily online archives), and the reports of other students and Professor Anderson, that the combined Winter term class and Spring term trip gave students the benefits of in-depth analysis and first-hand observation.

Professor Barbara Anderson reported that “The trip was planned to provide students an opportunity to see first-hand the physical diversity of the country, the sharp contrasts between urban and rural South Africa and the implications for the socio-economic transition underway there of the parallel presence of a first and a third world society in that country.” The group visited Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Kruger National Park and surrounding areas and Johannesburg. They heard presentations from a variety of South Africans speaking from different perspectives on how events in South Africa’s troubled past continue to influence politics, education, health care and every other aspect of life in the country today. The students visited museums, historical sites and the Supreme Court of appeals, attended elementary schools and a district health clinic, and classes at University of Limpopo. They were also able to participate in the joyous celebration of the inauguration of newly-elected President Zuma on May 9.

Eileen Patten, an Honors junior concentrating in English and Sociology, wrote about the inauguration: “My favorite day of the trip was when we attended President Zuma’s inauguration in Pretoria. We stood in a field for hours in the rain watching performances from the different provinces and groups, talking to the people around us, and enjoying the general atmosphere of excitement that persisted despite the less-than-perfect weather. One moment that struck me particularly was when Nelson Mandela walked onto the stage that was just a few hundred yards beyond where we were standing. He looked old and frail, yet his smile coming through the monitor was enough to make the entire crowd of people feel comforted and safe. To this day, one smile from him was enough to calm his countrymen from their lively dancing and celebration for a moment of reverent silence, in some cases even tears of happiness.”

Robin Czerwinski also wrote about the effect the inauguration had on her: “I signed up for Soc 295 to fulfill an Honors requirement. What I got was a life-changing experience. Even amidst our lively class discussions, South Africa still felt like a far-away land and its history no more than a horror story. But standing in the crowd of South Africans at the inauguration of their 3rd democratically elected president changed all that. To sense the eagerness in the air when Mandela’s vehicle arrived, and to hear the shouts of joy erupt from the crowd at a glimpse of their beloved former leader on the big screen brought home the story of South Africa for me. I finally understood the reality of all that has happened in that country, and all that still has yet to change. I will never forget the excitement of Nelson Mandela’s brief appearance, for it helped me realize the importance of public service.

Other students highlighted other aspects of the trip. For Monica Sangal, an Honors sophomore, reported that “we visited a health clinic in a township of Bloemfontein where HIV/AIDS was a main concern. Walking through the clinic and seeing the patients waiting to be treated was heart-wrenching, but it also put real faces behind the statistic that South Africa is in the region with the greatest prevalence of HIV/AIDS. It was a moving experience.”

Susie Schaffer, an Honors sophomore, described her excitement over the visit to an elementary school classroom: “When we were informed that we would visit an inner-city primary school in Bloemfontein, I was thrilled to be able to observe a real world application of the systems and methods I learned about. In fact, our visit to the primary school became my most prized experience in South Africa and one I will never forget. The students were very disciplined, but demonstrated great motivation that seemed contagious. I was also taken aback at how ecstatic

Continued on back cover
The Changing Public Transportation Scene in Senegal…

Continued from cover

Research Center where my classes were held. As I sat there each morning, usually squished awkwardly between people, I would look around and wonder things like: how do these cars make money when the fares are so low? How old is this vehicle? (This question came to mind when a piece of the rusty ceiling fell onto my shoulder and when I looked down I could see the road through large gaps in the floor boards.) I wondered about the photos of athletes and religious leaders who had put them there? What was their purpose? Looking around, I asked myself who were the people who take the cars rapides, and why didn't they use another mode of transportation, like the larger, more comfortable bus or the newer minibus?

When I returned to Dakar in August, I decided to start by interviewing the people most directly involved in the car rapide system: drivers, apprentis, owners, clients, and coxeurs. Coxeurs are men who work either at the gare routière, the parking lot where the cars rapides are parked or at car rapide stops throughout the city, helping the apprentis fill the car with passengers. Many of the people with whom I talked do not speak French or feel more comfortable speaking their native language, Wolof, so I conducted all of my interviews with the help of a translator, Mbaye Sarr. Mbaye posed the questions in Wolof, and I recorded the responses with a digital voice recorder. We later translated them into French.

I found the responses to be very interesting. While there was significant variation in opinion, there were also several recurring sentiments that surfaced. I was especially interested in talking with the apprentis, since I interacted with them directly as a car rapide commuter. I also spoke with drivers about the difficulty finding honest apprentis, and with other commuters about the disputes and issues that arise daily.

The general consensus among actors within the car rapide system is that the president’s plan to phase out the aging vehicles is a step in the right direction. The minibuses that will replace them will be newer, safer, and better regulated, and they will pollute far less. However, several advantages to the current system surfaced repeatedly throughout the course of my interviews. One such advantage is the possibility of waxale, a Wolof word meaning, “to bargain.” Haggling over fares is common and the outcome is up to the apprenti. This is not possible in the minibuses where there are tickets and fixed fares.

More importantly, the cars rapides serve those who work late. The apprenti and chauffeur are required to pay the car rapide owner 15,000 francs (about $30) at the end of each day, whether or not they have earned that much from the fares. As a result, they often continue circulating well into the wee hours of the morning in order to make a profit. The minibuses, in contrast, return to the garage at 10:00 pm each night as they run on a pre-determined schedule, and there is no incentive to stay out later. For those who work late and are unable to pay a taxi fare ten times that of the car rapide, eliminating these vehicles could be costly.

I also had the opportunity to talk with Moudo Kane Diao, a specialist in transportation statistics at the Management of Ground Transportation. He informed me that, while he understands the concerns about cost and late-night circulation, Senegal must professionalize its urban transportation. The minibuses respect every stop and do not wait until the vehicle is full before leaving a stop. This is much more convenient for passengers who are in a hurry. Cars rapides can sit ten to twenty minutes at a stop just waiting for more passengers, and this is unacceptable for people on their way to work. Mr. Diao told me that there must be standards and that those standards must be adapted to the socio-economic conditions in Dakar. Thus, while the minibus fares are slightly higher than those of the cars rapides, they are still affordable for most.

In order to help facilitate the transition, the government is also subsidizing the cost of the minibuses for current car rapide owners and they are allowed to finance the new vehicle. According to Mr. Diao, owning a minibus is far more lucrative than owning a car rapide. While cars rapides usually bring in 15,000 francs ($30) each day for the owner when the university is in session, the minibus yields 75,000 (About $150). Some of the car rapide owners I interviewed said that they could not afford to purchase a minibus and were unwilling to give up their current vehicles. However, if the government can do a good job of advertising the financial benefits to the switchover, more might be willing to reconsider.

There are some clear positives to the current car rapide system, but the negatives render it unsustainable. One owner told me that he did not buy his car rapide himself, but that he had inherited it from his father who had purchased it over 35 years ago. This confirms that many cars rapides have been on the road far too long. The frequency and severity of accidents involving these cars is certainly a problem that needs to be remedied. And, as many in the transportation business believe, Dakar is ready for a more standardized, professional, punctual, yet still affordable system of urban transport. On the other hand, there is a certain aesthetic value to the cars rapides that is irreplaceable. And of course, for the people who rely on bargaining or who find themselves leaving work after midnight, the elimination of the current system may make life a bit more difficult.

I am incredibly lucky and truly grateful to have had the opportunity to return to Senegal to study something that really interests me and that has barely been researched. I want to thank the Honors Program and the History Department for making this experience possible. My goal is to transform these interviews, newspaper articles, and documents into a thesis that paints a compelling and accurate picture of the continuity and change within Dakar’s public transportation system.

We want to express our profound gratitude to Samara Heyward Braunstein whose generous gift to Honors will support strategic initiatives and provide scholarships for study abroad opportunities for Honors students. We are also delighted to announce that Robert and W. Keren Vishny have endowed the Stephen Darwall Prize for Honors Resident Advisors, named in honor of our former director, that will be awarded for the first time in May, 2010, to a senior RA serving this academic year. In addition, Bruce Wasserstein has supplemented his original gift that supports the Morris Wasserstein Awards with a generous fund in honor of his mother, Lola.
From scholarships to programming, from awards to research funding, alums and friends of the Honors Program make possible many of the resources that contribute to the total Honors experience for our students. Without your support, many of the activities you have read about in this newsletter would be impossible. We send a sincere “Thank you” to those below who have donated generously to the Honors effort this year.

Honors Students Travel and Learn in South Africa  …Continued from page 13

the children were to have American visitors and their vast interest in the lives we live halfway across the world. As we reluctantly left, the kids rushed out to wave goodbye with huge grins on their faces. To this day, those students remain a strong part of my newfound desire to further engage in international education.”

Natalie Marcoux, also an Honors sophomore, summed up what she and her classmates experienced and came to understand as they visited South Africa: “From readings, health reports, student reports and a semester of lectures, our Sociology class arrived in South Africa with some academic sense of the country's history. What I didn't have was a good understanding of the realities of the present. After attending the inauguration of South Africa's newly-elected president, Jacob Zuma, on May 9, 2009, my personal perception finally came into focus. While on the ground, I came face to face with South Africa today. I saw, while standing in the middle of 30,000 black South Africans, the past I had read about playing out in the present. The lingering effects of the Apartheid had yet to subside: the crowd was not integrated. However, the respect and love for Nelson Mandela had not diminished; the crowd wept and sang Mandela's song as he was welcomed. And the fight for freedom had not been forgotten; the crowd stood in the pouring rain for two hours, dancing and singing, as they waited to receive their newly, democratically elected president. In 15 years, the country has made progress, although it still has many obstacles to overcome. Our trip brought us speakers who told us stories of oppression and struggles of the past and present. We attended an all-black, 600-student lecture at the University of Limpopo and witnessed the students struggle to attempt to view us, white Americans, differently than the white Afrikaaners, whom they appeared to despise. South Africa has had a long history of Apartheid. However, as I stood for four hours at the inauguration, I saw a mutual feeling of hope in 30,000 individuals. I saw the faces of pride and joy in the South Africans as helicopters and jets flew by with the South African flag. In one morning, on this trip, I began to understand the spirit of South Africa.”