

FALL '20 NEWSLETTER

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Morrison in the Time of Covid-19

BY SCARLETT LACHNEY

With the ever-changing state of the world, things look a lot different than they did last year for just about everyone. As a current sophomore, I got a taste of what the Louisiana Scholars' College was like last year compared to life in a 2020 Morrison Hall.

The feeling of home that was once present walking into the building is not altogether gone, but it is vastly different. Someone walking down the hallway downstairs no longer hears the cacophony of arguments, banter, and laughter pouring out of the student lounge because the room now has

a carrying capacity of four people and often sits empty, allowing the chairs and vending machines to collect dust. Masks hide the majority of what would be smiling faces if everyone were not so perpetually exhausted. Students and professors no longer flit about the halls between classes to chat.

Some professors have not even come to the building this semester, instead teaching from the safety of their own homes to avoid potential exposure. The professors who are here operate differently than they did before as well, no longer freely giving out hugs or passing out snacks during exams. There is no eating allowed in the building, and physical contact increases the chance for COVID to spread. After hours, when Morrison would house many over-caffeinated and underprepared students cramming for exams or finishing papers, the classrooms now sit mostly empty, leaving those who dare to linger haunted by the sound of the walls shaking. Before, the symphony of friends' voices always overpowered the eerie creaking of the walls, but now, the rattling is the only thing to distract from an otherwise deafening silence.

The changes caused by the pandemic are disheartening, but the Scholars' College remains united. Morrison still feels like a home, but now it is a home to a socially distanced family. Professors have office hours, and they will hand you tissues if you need to cry, even though both of you have masks on. There are friends in the hallways that you can ask to go for coffee with, because everyone needs a break from the monotony sometimes. Classes are full of lively, intellectual conversation, even if some of them do have to be online. Mrs. Kerri still sits behind her desk, and anyone who pokes their head in to say hi still gets her warm greeting, albeit through a clear plastic curtain

Despite the circumstances, students and professors are wildly passionate about pushing the limits of learning, attaining and sharing all the knowledge they can, and creating an experience that goes beyond that of an average college. More so now than ever, we are all endlessly devoted to lending one another a helping hand, whatever form that takes. This semester has shown me that the true heart of Scholars' is still present because the true heart of Scholars' lives in the people who walk the halls; for the time being, those people just have to get used to doing things a bit differently.

"The
greater the
obstacle,
the more
glory in
overcoming
it."

-Molière

Professor Profile: Dr. Holly Stave

BY JONATHAN GENNARO

Dr. Holly Stave was thrilled to talk about her newly published critical essays on Toni Morrison's novel, *God Help the Child*. Amidst the turmoil of the present, Stave was still glad to have her editorial book published over the summer. I sat down in her cat and novel filled office, and we started discussing her work.



Stave, along with fellow Toni Morrison Society members Alice Knox Eaton and Maxine Lavon Montgomery, has been working on *New Critical Essays on Toni Morrison's "God Help the Child": Race, Culture, and History* since 2016. In the essays, Stave and the other editors took a dive in Morrison's eleventh novel *God Help the Child* and discussed its use of trauma, narrative choices, and the comparative eye.

Stave's ensemble of critical essays analyzes the child abuse the protagonist experiences as the book progresses, and how the book was the first of Morrison's works to be placed during the present rather than in the historical past. In *God Help the Child* and in all her other works, Morrison doesn't write heroes or villains, Stave finds; she writes only people with different flaws.

It always seemed to Stave that these details impeded her critical analysis of the author's works. She says that Morrison's amazingly lyrical style blows her away. Stave believes some authors do not really tell a story. They only write to show off that they could use words. Morrison, however, writes gut-wrenching stories that absorb readers. If you are interested in exploring Morrison's works, Stave recommends her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, as a wonderful introduction to her style.

Stave believes the central, resounding message across Morrison's works is the need of community and the equal opportunity to bring both devastation and relief from bias.

Congratulations to Dr. Stave on the publication of her book. She wishes happiness and health to all during these times.



Bryn Edmonston
Fall '20
B.S. Psychology

Thesis: Virtual Grief on Twitter and its Relationship to College Students' Mood

Senior Thesis Spotlight: Bryn Edmonston

BY KACI WAGUESPACK

Bryn Edmonston will be graduating this fall with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Bryn came to NSU and LSC in the fall of 2016, following in the footsteps of her cousin, Carly Bourgeois (Spring '17). She entered the college with the intention of becoming a nurse, but her path soon changed.

Through the diversity of classes offered within the college and the encouragement from professors, Bryn soon found a love of psychology. She credits her well-roundedness in academia to “the variety of classes that suit everyone’s interests.”

Like all seniors, Bryn faced the daunting task of writing her undergraduate thesis, but she was more than prepared. Bryn applauds the opportunity that Scholars’ students have by writing an undergraduate thesis saying, “undergraduate research helps so much because a lot of people don’t have any [research] experience going into a master’s program.

Bryn ultimately decided to choose a topic within the psychology field for her thesis. “I saw the way that virtual grief affected me, and I wanted to know how it affected other people too. I saw that there was like no research, and I thought why not me,” Bryn said.

Picking a topic was only the first of many challenges that Bryn faced. Bryn’s topic was so narrowly focused that she found scarce research on the subject. When she was able to find research, “most of it focused on the people who were writing it” as opposed to the people who interacted with it. Bryn publicly defended her thesis on Nov. 18 in Morrison Hall and virtually through Microsoft Teams. If Bryn could give one piece of advice to future Scholars, she would tell them to “be ready to work hard because the process is rewarding when you get to the end.”

Staying In and Missing Out: The Freshman Experience

BY DESTIN LOPEZ & JACKSON GREGORY

Many college students this year find themselves missing staples of the college experience like meeting new friends, attending football games, and participating in Homecoming Week. A lot of freshmen have gone through almost a whole semester with no outside interaction, right after spending their last semester of high school online, but they are handling it with impressive strength.

The Louisiana Scholars' College is offering a mix of online and in-person classes. All the in-person classes require students to wear a mask and sit six feet apart in compliance with safety guidelines. These necessary precautions ensure the well-being of students and professors, but it is difficult to form relationships with people when you cannot get close to them or see their face without a mask.

When asked if they felt like they were missing out on the "freshman experience" because of Covid-19, Freshman Kiyah Shockley said, "Yes, absolutely! There was plenty of clubs I was interested in looking into, but they aren't available at the moment."

However, others, like freshman Jayde Burks, do not feel like they are missing out. "The 'freshman experience' is still upheld by in-person classes and Scholars' activities in Morrison every so often," Burks said.

The Scholars' College Forum Council, led by president Emily Williams, has made alternate events to make up for almost every event that could not be held because of safety restrictions.

When asked if online learning is harder than in-person learning and which do they prefer, Burks and Shockley responded in different ways.



Burks sided with in-person learning, saying “I prefer in-person class because it’s easier to meet with your professor and get your questions answered.”

Shockley disagreed. “Online learning is easier for me personally because it helps with my social anxiety. All of my classes have switched to online, and I feel that it’s much easier to prepare for class and not be scared to participate.”

Students have hope that the pandemic will end soon, and with the end will come new friendships, fun events, and a new experience for everyone to enjoy.

Shockley is excited for the day that Covid-19 is over, saying “I’m definitely looking forward to on campus activities and get-togethers once we are allowed to do so. Being able to mingle and meet new people will be such an exciting thing once it’s safe to actually do so!”

Big Ideas: Paranoia

BY ANDREW DUBRISKE

On November 12th

of 2020, the LSC forum hosted in-person in Morrison room 227 and online via Zoom the first in what will hopefully be a series of Big Ideas Conferences, a set of lectures given by college alumni, current college faculty, and students from various perspectives on a common issue. The three speakers for the event, who were asked to share their expertise on the topic of paranoia, Rose Tuson, Dr. William Housel, and Dr. Davina McClain each exposed their thoughts on the topic through a short lecture and then addressed questions from both the in-person and online audience.

The first presenter, Scholars’ alumni Rose Tuson, who is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in psychology, spoke on paranoia from the perspective of clinical psychology. In her lecture, Tuson discussed the psychological explanations of paranoia, the various mental illnesses of which paranoia might be a symptom, and the common medicinal and therapeutic treatment methods of the disorder.

The second presenter, Dr. William Housel, who earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Syracuse, discussed paranoia and its origins from a sociological perspective. He talked about the relationship between the internet and the widespread nature of misinformation in modern society and how this misinformation can easily lead to harmful patterns of paranoid thinking, such as conspiracy theories.

The third and final speaker for the event, Dr. Davina McClain, presented a theory of past lives and their impact on irrational fears and phobias. In her lecture, Dr. McClain presented subconscious memories past lives as a possible explanation for humans’ seemingly irrational fears.

Scholars' Forum Council members and faculty would like to thank those who attended the conference whether it be in person or online as well as the presenters for being willing to sacrifice their time in order to volunteer for the event.

If any college alumni would like to present at future iterations of the Big Ideas conferences please feel free to contact Dr. Keith Dromm for any additional information.



Congratulations to Amber Edmisson (Scientific Inquiry, '21)! Amber has been accepted into LSU Shreveport Health Sciences, School of Medicine, under the Early Decision Program.

Congratulations to Shannon Roussel on her acceptance into the LSU-HSC School of Dentistry!

Shannon is a senior in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Scientific Inquiry.

