HONORABLE MENTIONS

Winter 2021

A collaboration by DePaul University’s Honors Program
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On the cover: St. Vincent DePaul statue surrounded by snow.

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Hello Honors Community!

Even though DePaul—in its current online, remote format—is not what we are used to or expect from a college education, I'm trying to look on the bright side. Even though we're not on campus enjoying the university in person, I've decided to look at it as the fact that we're doing something that might never happen for college students ever again. While still enrolled in college, we are being forced to explore what our life after graduation might look like. We are still taking classes, but those classes can be taken anywhere. College isn't a location anymore. These days, we have even more freedom than just how many electives our advisors and degree progress reports say we can take. Now, we have the freedom to choose where we take these classes: the kitchen, a bedroom, outside (if you're not living in the winter tundra of Chicago), or inside a car. All of these places and more can now be a DePaul classroom.

As we approach a full year of DePaul Zoomiversity, we all have a good sense of what new practices and customs we like from DePaul Zoomiversity and others that we hope to never experience again. These preferences of course modalities are different for everyone. Some may thrive while studying at home whereas others rely and depend on the physical study spaces that DePaul's campus offers. Through all of these differences, this year’s Honors Student Government has worked hard to create events, spaces, and opportunities for our honors community to come together from wherever we are studying.

From ugly sweater contests, trivia nights, to speed dating (but for friends) events and launching an all-new accountability buddies program, the E-Board has been putting in their best efforts to make our distance as negligible as possible. Our Vice President Elizabeth Whitcomb loves all things HSG and never drops the ball. Lauren Berry is still our resident Zoom Wizard as the Communications Director who has also been doing a great job building out our all-new Instagram. Please go follow us on Instagram (@hsgdpu). Academic Representatives Ali and Zach surveyed all students for feedback about honors classes and created the most professional looking report of the survey results to share with Honors faculty that any college student has ever made. Great work you two! Natalia and Bhavi have worked hard to get the new accountability buddies program started and off the ground. I hope all involved are enjoying getting to know your buddy! The HSG Service experts—Gia and Bethany—are doing a great job finding virtual service opportunities to share with the entire honors community. Please go check out the honors blog at dpuhonors.com to learn more about our service initiatives like BeTheMatch and all things honors in general. Now, for perhaps our loudest members of the E-Board.. give a round of applause for the social powerhouse PARTY BOYS—Ben and David. Their energy has been quintessential in bringing out the fun in every HSG meeting and creating new, virtual zoom events to foster interaction between all of us in Honors. Next, the two most important people to our readership are the people responsible for bringing Honorable Mentions to life: Julia and Ben! Our newsletter editors love bringing the work of honors students to our readers. We appreciate your dedication to create an outstanding, interesting newsletter that we all look forward to every quarter.

The past two quarters have been a blast to share with our honors e-board and everyone I've met at our meetings. I hope every honors student has enjoyed connecting with the honors community virtually too. If you haven’t been to an HSG meeting recently, I encourage you to check us out because we bring the fun at every meeting and cannot wait to see you there! Good luck on finals and we look forward to seeing you at our first meeting of the spring quarter on Friday, April 9th.
Monday, February 8th kicked off Blue Demon Week, the annual tradition celebrating what it means to be a Blue Demon at DePaul. The week culminated on Friday the 12th with a DIBS birthday party. And you can’t have a birthday party without a birthday cake, so the Blue Demon Week Committee hosted a DIBS Birthday Bake-Off. When I saw the event advertised in the DAB emails, I knew that I had to enter the competition. To honor our beloved mascot and bake the sweetest cake creation, I transformed my kitchen into a DePaul Bakery. No, that wasn’t a typo. For five whole days, my kitchen was devoted to being a DePaul Bakery. I brainstormed ideas with my dad, and we got to work baking the greatest birthday cake for DIBS ever. I am also happy to say that my creation won 1st Place in the DIBS Birthday Bake-Off competition! Taking exams is a requirement of college, but winning 1st place in a bake-off is definitely going down in the history books as one of my very favorite DePaul memories.
HONORABLE EVENTS

Fast Friends: A Speed-Friending Event
February 5, 2021

Winners
Jacoby Weston

Ellie Meier & Magoli Garcia

Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest
December 29, 2020
“From day care all the way up to adult learners,” Professor Thomas R. Mockaitis has been an educator “for about forty years.” Professor Mockaitis joined the faculty in the History Department in 1991, and he will begin his 30th year at DePaul this fall. Over the years, Mockaitis has taken on new challenges and responsibilities, although the “core tasks of teaching research and writing have remained the same.”

A long-time supporter of the Honors Program, Professor Mockaitis has been pleased to see how the program has changed over the years. For instance, the Honors Program now attracts a much more diverse group of majors, a mix that not only creates an enriching learning environment for students, but also an enjoyable teaching opportunity for faculty. Some of these changes have occurred due to shifts in curriculum. For instance, during the mid-1990s the Program eliminated a back-to-back sequence of history courses paired with an English composition section. The linked nature of these courses made it difficult for students to fit into their schedules.

Professor Mockaitis’s research and writing interests in the history of Modern Western Europe, Medieval and Early Modern Britain, and international terrorism are well-reflected in his courses. He has taught a section of HON 102: History in Global Contexts almost every year he has been at DePaul. Mockaitis has helmed three different sections of the course, including Germany Under the Third Reich; World War I in History, Literature, and Film; and Kings, Castles, and Cathedrals: The World of Medieval England. The latter will be available in its third iteration during Spring Quarter 2021. Although this course is often offered as a hybrid, Mockaitis notes that this will be the first time he has taught the course completely online. Having participated in the DePaul Online Teaching Series (DOTS) six years ago, the switch to remote teaching back in March 2020, though sudden, was not as daunting.

Since then, the country has contended with almost an entire year of pandemic safety precautions, a presidential election, and its aftermath. Due to his expertise in early modern Europe and international terrorism, Professor Mockaitis has been a frequent guest on television and radio shows throughout the past year, speaking about everything from the bubonic plague to the recent attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Professor Mockaitis offered some of this guidance to students currently enrolled in his section of HON 350: Honors Senior Seminar, which focuses on international terrorism. Although the insurrection at the Capitol was domestic in nature, his students did use the course to make sense of the events unfolding around them. Much like any point of historical analysis, Mockaitis has guided students through the process of parsing and assessing the many frantic accounts surrounding the attack.

The personalism of the Honors Program is clearly evinced in Professor Mockaitis’s approach to teaching. He values working individually with students to encourage good writing and guides students through an editing process not unlike his own. Courses are structured much more like graduate seminars with papers and discussions, rather than grilling students on dates and names. Mockaitis also makes an effort to make his courses inclusive. For instance, although Medieval society was a bit more homogenous due to less contact outside of Western Europe, he has ensured his Kings, Castles, and Cathedrals course covers the experiences of marginalized groups and women, and also includes readings by women historians.

For more of Professor Mockaitis’s expert commentary on terrorism, students can find several of his op-eds in The Hill. (https://thehill.com/search/query/Mockaitis)
Over the past couple of weeks, the Honorable Mentions team has been accumulating data to find out where DePaul Honors students have been quarantining and studying for the last ten months. Here is a map with the data from 141 respondents showing which states are populated with the most Honors students.
OPINION
Online Education During the Pandemic
By Eiman Navaid

In March of 2020, students across the country were notified that either school would go online for two weeks, or fully remote for the remainder of the school year. DePaul University gave the latter notification. Despite this, students were still hopeful that the upcoming school year would allow for ‘normalcy’. One year later, we sit in front of our laptops with ridiculously high screen times, confined within our dorms, apartments, or parent’s houses, attending Zoom classes and meetings one after the other. There seems to be no end in sight, as yet another graduating class misses out on a ceremony and goes through an online transition into their next journey of higher education or the workforce.

If a year of online learning has taught us one thing, it’s that students are not meant to learn in a remote setting, it is unbelievably unhealthy and has shown no benefits. Students are more burnt out than ever before, unable to pay attention in their Zoom classes, with strained eyes, gaining a variety of health complications from the drastic increases in screen time.

While education, in general, does require a significant amount of screen time, the pre-COVID experience came with a lot of ‘moving around.’ With in-person extracurriculars, an on-campus experience, and different forms of socialization with friends or classmates, students were not confined to one area with the inability to go places without compromising their health, or the health of those around them. They were moving from place to place, even if that meant simply changing up their study spots. Now, especially in the colder weather, there is nowhere to go, not even sit outside and soak in the sun or enjoy the fresh air as we complete our online coursework.

Also, the coursework in a remote setting seems to have increased from what it was in-person for whatever reason. Being in a remote setting does not mean that students have more time to complete coursework. When one dives deeper into the mental effects of quarantine, it should be clear that coursework must be decreased. The past year has put students in situations where their mental health has been tested more than ever before. Whether that meant they had more responsibilities given their family situations, or they used to rely on the normalcy of going out from time to time for the sake of their well-being and now can’t, students experienced a variety of hardships. Completing assignments for the sake of a grade and not gaining any valuable information or educational insight does not, in any way, help them out. It only adds an insurmountable amount of stress and anxiety. Also, college students have to worry about internships and part-time jobs, both remote and in-person, along with searching for summer opportunities that are still up in the air. Coursework is never the sole purpose of being a student, which is a concept academic institutions have always failed to understand, even more so during this pandemic.

This is where academic institutions failed their students in supporting them. Instead of providing different resources and advising professors to be more open and understanding in terms of assignments and deadlines, universities sent out baseless emails of ‘understanding the situation students are in’ and advising us to ‘take care of our health.’

Yet, students still hold hope for the future, manifesting a more open summer and a smooth transition into their next year of education. There is a very large possibility that students may have to go through another year of online school -- depending on how the summer ends up going in terms of cases, and now, the vaccine rollout as well. As students anxiously await to see the future outcome, they deserve support and resources, which universities have yet to provide. This must be started, even if things end up going back in person students will need time to adjust to an in-person lifestyle with safety restrictions as they have been learning in a remote setting for an entire year now.
My Call to Action in the Time of COVID-19

By Lauren Berry

As a student studying Health Sciences with a concentration in Public Health and a minor in Spanish, I have always had a passion for giving back to the community. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I felt an immediate call to action. In August of 2020, I began working for the emergency relief organization CORE Response as a member of the COVID-19 mobile units team providing free testing on Chicago’s south and west sides. The early stages of the pandemic demonstrated the immediate need for better testing capabilities in underserved communities and CORE immediately stepped up.

I firmly believe that health equity begins with accessibility, which is what attracted me to a position with the mobile team in particular. CORE’s mobile units operate in communities of highest need, taking into account positivity rates and access to community-based testing. We partner with the Chicago Department of Public Health and local organizations in order to provide free testing to people with and without insurance at community events, ensuring that our services are coming to those who most need it.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, we have seen that testing is one of the first steps in taking action to slow the spread and receive care. During my experience with CORE, I have learned a lot about practicing patience, humility, and empathy. It can be a scary and overwhelming experience to navigate a global pandemic, while sick, especially if the U.S. medical profession has not adequately served people from your community in the past.

I have loved the opportunity to watch communities come together and support one another during a time of crisis and I am incredibly grateful to have been welcomed into these efforts with open arms. Not only have I been able to see the concepts that I learn in my classes and applied in real life but also develop my professional skills for a future in public health.

For anyone looking to get tested with CORE, the process is simple, safe, and efficient. You can find a testing site near you at chicagocovidtesting.com and schedule an appointment.
Honorable Mentions

A Conversation with
Kathleen Rooney
By Julia Matuszek

Professor Rooney is seen feeding some of her “pigeon friends” as she likes to call them. (Picture credit to Professor Rooney’s sister, Beth Rooney)

How does one write a novel from the perspective of an animal? How does one go about writing a novel about a true story that occurred more than 100 years ago? How does one pigeon save numerous human lives? These questions and many more were answered on the evening of Thursday, January 21st when the Honors Program held an event via Zoom with author and one of DePaul’s creative writing professors, Kathleen Rooney. The event was led by Honors Program Director as well as fellow English professor, Dr. Jennifer Conary. Over twenty participants of the Honors Program attended, which allowed for an intimate conversation to occur. The event was centered around Rooney’s latest novel Cher Ami And Major Whittlesey, and also touched upon topics such as research, publishing, and the writing process overall.

Professor Rooney is a seasoned author, with multiple works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry under her belt. And now most recently she has added Cher Ami And Major Whittlesey to her resume. The book is a historical fiction novel that focuses on telling the story of the two titular real life figures during the final year of World War One. Cher Ami was a homing pigeon during the war, a vital tool for the war effort as pigeons were the best means of communication then. It is during a battle in France, where Cher Ami and soldier Charles Whittlesey come together in an act of bravery and wit. The novel follows these characters before, during, and after this battle and allows the audience to get a true understanding of these forgotten heroes.

How did Rooney learn of this unique true story? The novel actually has origins in her Advanced Topics in Writing: Drift and Dream: Writer as Urban Walker class. It was during that class that a student named Brian Micic turned in an assignment which alluded to Cher Ami. Micic encouraged Rooney to look up Cher Ami if not already familiar with her. Rooney was not, and this inquiry led her down a rabbit hole of research where the story of Cher Ami captured her heart and mind. This story was perfect for Rooney for two reasons. Rooney had always wanted to write about WW1 but felt that it had already been widely covered and had such a vast amount of information surrounding it as a whole, but Cher Ami’s story offered Rooney a keyhole in. And secondly, Rooney had always been fascinated by pigeons, in the sense that people tend to hate them but they are incredibly intelligent and beautiful animals, so discovering Cher Ami was kismet for her.

Once Rooney was set on writing the historical fiction novel, as would be expected, it required a lot of research. Rooney explained that she spent an entire year purely on research, and then from 2015 to 2018 spent time writing, revising and continued to conduct research. Rooney even traveled to France.

Rooney also stressed the idea that writing takes time, and allowing yourself time to think, edit, revise is all part of the writing process.
to Washington D.C. and saw the actual Cher Ami stuffed in the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. This in-depth exploration illuminates how Rooney was able to write a novel with not only two perspectives, but with one of those perspectives being that of a pigeon. While this was no small feat, Rooney explained that she always knew she would write the two perspectives as the two characters' stories are deeply integrated within one another. Writing from Cher Ami's perspective turned Rooney into a pigeon expert because in order to try to understand Cher Ami as best as she could, Rooney had to grasp the science and history of pigeons.

The event also focused on writing as a craft, with Rooney sharing many of her best tips. She especially emphasized the power of walking, as the activity of walking enables the mind to wander, therefore improving and aiding the writing process. In fact, she had a six mile daily average while writing Cher Ami And Major Whittlesey. Besides physical activity, Rooney also focused on outlining and planning. As mentioned earlier, Rooney has experience with several different styles of writing but noted that she found novels the hardest. She compared writing a novel to building an entire house rather than just a room, in order for the story to stand. And because of this, Rooney emphasized creating an outline when writing a novel, as it will act as the blueprint for the house.

Rooney also stressed the idea that writing takes time, and allowing yourself time to think, edit, revise is all part of the writing process. Writing can be a challenge, with concerns about having work be unique and fresh not making the process any easier. Rooney explained that at a certain point in your writing, you can't help but be original. She compared writing to following a Bob Ross painting tutorial. Everyone can watch the same Bob Ross episode but in the end everyone's painting will still look different, and that same idea applies to writing as well.

The audience was also lucky enough to have Rooney read an excerpt from the book. As the book goes back and forth between Cher Ami and Major Whittlesey, there was a vote in the audience regarding whose perspective they wanted to hear, and Cher Ami won. Rooney read from chapter 5 of the novel, sharing Cher Ami's perspective as she is leaving her farm and making her way to France. As Rooney was reading, the entire audience was listening intently, with everyone curious and captivated by hearing a pigeon's perspective.

If you are interested in reading Cher Ami And Major Whittlesey it can be purchased through Amazon, IndieBound, Barnes & Noble or directly from the publisher, Penguin Random House.
Honors Alumni Feature: Ryan Zieman
By Rachel Hannigan

DePaul Background: Marketing (IME Honors Program) and Commercial Spanish Minor, 2013

Current Position: Social Media & Digital Marketing Consultant and Instructor within DePaul's School of Continuing and Professional Education

Describe your involvement at DePaul/the Honors Program during your time here.

“I'm most proud of being chosen to be the student speaker at commencement for the Driehaus College of Business.”

Ryan did not waste any of his time at DePaul and in the Honors Program! During his first year, he was an Honors Floor Representative for Honors Student Government (HSG). He also worked on the Academic Committee where he fielded the questions, comments, and concerns of Honors students and shared the feedback with faculty and administration.

Ryan also worked as a Resident Advisor, Honors Chicago Quarter Mentor, and often contributed to Honorable Mentions. However, Ryan feels that his greatest accomplishment during his time at DePaul was being chosen as the student speaker at commencement for the Driehaus College of Business.

Did your post-graduation work match what you had anticipated for yourself during college?

“I always aspired to work in marketing and, by my senior year, set my sights on social media marketing.”

After graduating in 2013 from the Driehaus College of Business, Ryan knew he wanted a career in social media marketing. The flexibility and seemingly endless opportunities appealed to him. For Ryan, it allowed him to work for several different organizations after graduation, including managing social media for travel bloggers, Fortune 500 corporations, etc. However, this is all what Ryan expected from his degree.

What Ryan didn’t expect from his time at DePaul was the ability to travel and work and live abroad. After graduating, Ryan moved to Madrid, Spain for two years and worked teaching business English. Since moving back to the United States, he has worked at several major corporations. Currently, he manages social media marketing and instructs in DePaul's Social Media Marketing Certificate Program.

How did being in the Honors Program prepare you for work after graduation?

“Honors classes helped me to develop a curious and inquisitive mindset.”

For Ryan, the Honors Program was sort of a continuation of the work he did in high school as an honors and AP student. Honors classes take a certain amount of rigor and commitment in order to navigate successfully, and Ryan says he was definitely held to these standards during his time in the program. In addition to this, the Honors Program also allowed Ryan to develop a “curious and inquisitive mindset” that he still carries with him today.
How have you been adapting to work during the COVID-19 pandemic?

“The lines between work life and personal life having become increasingly blurred.”

Adapting to life in the pandemic has been challenging for everyone; Ryan Zieman can attest to this. In his experience, work and personal life are becoming so intertwined that it seems almost impossible to distinguish the two! In order to keep some semblance of normal life pre-coronavirus, Ryan tries to increase his activity and maintain the healthy habits he had acquired before the pandemic. In order to do so, Ryan makes sure to schedule time for himself, whether it be taking a morning walk, doing yoga, or an evening workout.

In keeping with the idea of forming healthy habits, Ryan says it is important to create spaces that are separate from work and technology. This could mean reading a book, trying a new recipe, or doing another hobby that allows you to take time for yourself.

Which skills did you acquire in the Honors Program that you appreciate most now?

“The Honors language requirement along with my commercial Spanish minor really helped me to thrive and not just survive in a new, foreign environment”.

After graduating from DePaul, Ryan put his Spanish minor to good use and spent two years in Madrid teaching business English. The Honors language requirement was extremely beneficial to this time because it gave him the knowledge and experience to travel and work abroad. Living in a foreign environment and being immersed in that culture can be nerve wracking, but Ryan felt adequately prepared due to the help and requirements of the Honors Program.

Another aspect of the Honors Program that Ryan is thankful for is the Honors Thesis. If taught him how to be a “self-starter by encouraging [him] to take initiative and work autonomously”. Also at DePaul, Ryan was encouraged to start building his LinkedIn profile and start networking as an undergrad, which helped him build his career after graduation. Especially in a field such as marketing, networking and building your professional profile is essential to the work and DePaul gave Ryan the resources and opportunities to do so.

Do you have any advice for current Honors students?

“Although it sounds cliche, don’t take things too seriously and enjoy every minute of your college experience.”

Basically, have fun! College isn’t just about the academics, Ryan says. A GPA was extremely important in high school, but it does not mean as much as you may think it does in college. Your college years are the best of your life, so take advantage of it! Sure, grades are important, but so are the lifelong connections you are bound to make at DePaul.

Ryan has some other wise words to share: “listen to your Honors advisors”. They know more than you do about planning your courses and are very willing to help, so take advantage of it. They are always willing to create a plan specifically geared to your needs, so take their advice.
The HCIR Honors Symposium: An Interview with Allyson Thenhaus

By Rachel Hannigan

On Saturday, February 27th, Allyson Thenhaus, an Honors Program senior majoring in political science, had the honor of attending the (virtual) HCIR (Honors Council of the Illinois Region) Honors Symposium to present a paper that she wrote.

What was the focus of your paper that you presented at the symposium?

“It was a research paper I had written for my International Relations class this past year.”

“My paper focused on the rise of illiberal democracies internationally in recent years, (specifically in Poland and Hungary) and the consequences of this.” Thenhaus had written this paper as an assignment for her International Relations class that she had taken in the past year. This paper was then chosen by the Honors Council of the Illinois Region to present at the symposium. Her paper was presented amongst other papers of similar topics by honors students across the state.

How did COVID-19 affect the symposium?

“It was well-coordinated, and everyone was assigned to a panel with other students who had similar topics.”

Obviously, COVID-19 presented some challenges this year, so the symposium took place over Zoom. The event was organized in terms of topics, so Allyson was placed in a panel with students presenting on similar topics. The presentations were followed by presenters asking questions to one another, which Allyson said was well-coordinated. Despite these challenges, Allyson said “I’ve never attended an honors symposium in person, so I didn’t know what to expect, but everything was planned out by HCIR.”

How did the symposium go? Did it give you new outlooks on your papers, help you discover a new topic you were interested in, etc?

“It was fun to get to present and talk about a topic you’re passionate about and learn more about other Honors student’s projects.”

Allyson said that she had a great experience at the symposium! She shared that “the event was a great chance to talk about topics that you’re interested in and learn about other honors students’ topics and interests.” Allyson said that her favorite presentation was one on the dangers of complacency and how it impacted people in Italy around World War II.
Love and snow were in the air this quarter for the Honors community. Just days after Valentine’s Day, the Honors Program hosted English professor and author Dr. Michele Morano for a reading from her new book, *Like Love*. In this collection of fourteen essays, Professor Morano reflects on the complexity and continuum of different forms of love, that are sometimes more like “strange entanglements.” Written as a memoir, her essays expand beyond the storybook cliches and touch on other kinds of “unconsummated romance” throughout our lives.

Professor Morano read a selection from one of her essays, regaling a weekend she spent in the small city of Hamburg, Germany during the summer after college while backpacking through Europe. She describes the happenstance companionship she struck up with a young man named Tomas, in which they “dodged the overdone romance story, but it caught up to them anyhow.” Although this encounter lacked romantic and sexual attraction, Professor Morano still left Hamburg unexpectedly heartbroken. She explained that “sometimes the vast possibility signaled by romance is all there is, but that doesn’t diminish its meaning.” The other essays in *Like Love* similarly capture the many different forms of romance: the feeling of being in love with family and friends, crushes, and even love’s minefields and taboos.

The Honors Program also welcomed the three winners of the *Like Love* creative writing competition to share their work. These students included Natalie Dizon, a senior neuroscience major; Riley McLaughlin, a senior English major with a concentration in creative writing; and Maya Williams, a freshman playwriting major at The Theatre School. Like Professor Morano’s essays, each of the winning works contemplated experiences and sentiments that are not quite romantic, but still evoke the feeling of love, or subvert readers’ expectations of it.

Natalie shared a small collection of poems called “New Text Message,” each entitled after and inspired by a word-for-word text sent by friends and family. Riley’s poem, “Six Foot Six,” discussed her relationship with her dad and evoked vivid imagery from her childhood. Professor Jennifer Conary, the Honors Program Director, also read an excerpt from Maya’s piece, a fictional piece which juxtaposed the unconditional love from a friend with toxic ties to a family member.

After the readings, the event shifted to a discussion of writing and process. In addition to the writing competition winners, Professor Morano welcomed input and reflection from the Honors students in attendance. Students and guests ruminated on where ideas come from, how they get started, the impacts of the pandemic, and using writing to play around with possibilities and gain clarity. From special pens and open-ended prompts to character-driven works and binge-writing sessions, it became clear that although writing can be messy, like love, it helps us to make sense of where we are, what motivates us, and how we will be affected going forward.
Like Love Creative Writing Competition

On Thursday, February 16th the Honors Program hosted Creative Writing Professor Michele Morano who did a reading and led a discussion of her latest collection of essays entitled Like Love. Prior to Professor Morano’s reading, the winners of the Like Love creative writing competition read their work. Listed below are the authors, and their winning entries. Congratulations to all! And thank you to everyone who contributed their writing.

Natalie Dizon
Natalie is a senior Neuroscience major with double minors in Biology and Psychology. Currently residing in her hometown of Tinley Park, IL, she plans on applying to grad school after DePaul to become a Pathologist Assistant. Outside of academics, Nat is a member of DePaul Neuro Club and KALAHI (DePaul’s Filipino Club). You can find her roller-skating or listening to music in her free time.

Riley McLaughlin
Riley is a senior English-Creative Writing major, with minors in both Women’s & Gender Studies and Professional Writing. She is originally from New Lenox, IL, and now lives in Wrigleyville. After finishing out her undergraduate studies in March, Riley plans to get a job in content writing, publishing, or editorial work.

Maya Williams
Maya is a freshman Playwriting major and currently living in Aurora, IL. Outside of school, she also enjoys songwriting and drawing. After college, she plans to find work with editing and writing.
new text message!

Each piece has been inspired by conversations and interactions I’ve had in my life that emit love through a variety of forms. Every title is a word-for-word text that has been sent to me.

“call when you get home”

Even though the train is an hour ride
or my apartment is a ten minute walk away
or my house is a five minute drive away
my voice is all you yearn for
a confirmation of my safety

your love is my safety

“This is a v soft song that you reminded me of.”

Perhaps it was the smooth bassline
that reminded you of me
the band’s harmonies in the background
bringing comfort in the musicians’ energy
just as you bring warmth to my day

there is a beauty in recognizing art within ambience
feeling movement within melodies
seeing soul within sound

and yes,
I’ll send you a song recommendation, too.

“okay be safe”

Your compassion emits straight to my heart
Even from a ten-character text
on an LED screen lit up too bright.
Your love feels just as strong as it did
when you first held me in your arms
tears in both our eyes—
probably—
because after all,
I am my mother’s daughter.

“I’ve had a blast so far seeing the sun in you
and the light you shine on everything you come across
but it’s okay to show clouds
because the weather isn’t always consistent right?”
Does light know how bright it shines?
Whether the light radiates on an early morning
or illuminates the everlasting night sky
You helped me recognize the complexities of bearing light.

If I am the sun
you remind me that inconsistency is okay
and you shed light on me when I have darkness

If I am the sun
my warmth is growing
glowing
and feeling the effects
of a melting heart
even in the middle of the night

If I am the sun
then you are my moon

“just wanna let you know I’m here for you
and ill always be here
for you and whatever choices in life you make”

sleepless nights and nap-filled days
our sides aching from laughing too hard
and early mornings of finishing assignments just in time
your presence has been greater than any love saga

I taste our friendship within every sip of iced lavender lattes
with oat milk, of course.

Even after days without talking,
every laugh we share brings back a flood of memories.

suddenly, I feel the pure bliss of running across 159th
trying to beat out the red light in the 4-lane intersection

no matter how young or how old we are,
our hearts will always race in line with time
as we pretend to be asleep at the crack of dawn
and I miss that exhilaration in our lives

I see our morning bike rides around the lake
feeding the ducks and sharing our stories
not realizing that one day,
these moments would be feeding our own memories
and lasting forever.

thank you, Annalyn, for being my best friend.
We all know the feeling of bliss, and in fact, we all need bliss in our lives yet, the sensation is indescribably incredible and words are not enough to give justice.

You are bliss every interaction we have, and all the laughs we endure through the day-long screens of our phones or through the endless night-drives just like the wonders of bliss are indescribable your awe and wholesome being is unmatched.

thank you for being you always

Riley McLaughlin
Six Foot Six

Beer bottle on the highchair tray, the green glass pillar towered before my smiling baby doll. It looks out of place in the photo, or maybe just in my memory, but you left the bottle there just the same.

You bounced me steadily on blue jean knees, wore out the Tom Petty CD in the stereo as you let my tiny fingers swat at the stubble of whiskers on your face. Always switched the TV to basketball after dinner—our young eyes memorized the sins of travels and double dribbles before knowing much else.

Rarely made it through an evening without snoring erratically, nearby bottle peeking out from between couch cushions. I climbed onto your expanse of a chest and joined you in the humming slumber, my small fist around your hitchhiker’s thumb and the love wrapped up there, suspended.

“thank you again for being you” to a constant in my life that I didn’t know I needed: describing our parallelism is like describing bliss.
I’m waiting.
With a little nudge in the right direction, I wouldn’t have to wait for much longer. A little further and I would never wait again.
But this is a love story. Or the closest I’ll ever get to one.

So I sit. And I wait.

“You didn’t like it?”
I wrinkled my nose. “I don’t know, maybe if it had some fight scenes or something…”

Jayla rolled her eyes. We were on FaceTime in the late hours of the night. Jayla studied her physics notes while I cleaned the kitchen. But we somehow got sidetracked discussing our favorite shows once again.

“Lanelle, It’s a love story. You need to expand your horizons. At least—”

“Hey, my horizons are expanded. You have no idea how expanded my horizons are.”

We laughed. I finally finished the dishes and Jayla flipped her notebook closed.

She yawned. “Alright, I’m going to bed.”

“Okayyy. Night, Jayla.”

“Goodnight, Lanelle.” She blew a kiss. “Love you.”

I paused. Gave her a half hearted smile. Then hung up.

I was a quiet child.

Quiet as in my teachers asked my parents what was wrong with me during conferences. Why doesn’t she talk? Does she know how to speak? But it’s not my fault everything and everyone was terrifying. I liked it at home where I could play by myself in my own special corner. It was my peace. My comfort. My happiness. I had no idea why everyone was always trying to drag me away from it. So, I made a fuss. Whenever I had to leave, I cried and screamed and thrashed around. Go outside? Go to school? Over my dead body.

It didn’t take long to learn my place in the world. Because my shrieks and cries meant nothing when my parents knew how to shut me up. A few slaps would do it. Pin me down and hit me until I was choking on my own tears. I didn’t mind. It hurt them more than it hurt me, and they must’ve been dying inside if that were true. I’d go upstairs and wreck my room. Wail into my pillow until it was drenched and my throat was raw. I didn’t mind.

Because they loved me.

“You already ate?”
I set my fork down. “No, just not hungry.”

It was dinner time, the one time a day where I always lost my appetite.

“Okay. Well, your father and I were thinking of having a movie night just the three of us. Does that sound fun?”
I bit my tongue. Sitting alone with my parents wasn’t possible for me. It was in the heavy silence when my thoughts wandered into the darkest corners of my mind. I could do something terrible. With just us here. It wouldn’t be right. It wouldn’t be okay. But I could do something. Maybe test out their theory. See if it hurt me more than it hurt them. I knew it was awful. I knew it was wrong. But doing anything normally with them set me over the edge. Movie night. Dinner time. They had no right to be normal with me. To smile in my face and try to have family time but then raise their hands against me if I stepped out of line.

I stood and grabbed my plate. “I’ve got homework.”
Mom joined me in the kitchen. “Is everything alright?”
She stepped forward, arms outstretched, but I jerked away. My heart was pounding. Was that love? Their right to reign over me? Then pretend it never happened?
My phone buzzed. I hurried to my room and opened my notifications. Jayla was texting me.
‘Quick question: Have you talked to him lately?’
‘No,’ I responded. ‘Why? Did something happen?’
‘Not really. He said he misses you.’
I chucked my phone across the room. Bullshit.

I met him sophomore year. I’m pretty sure he hated me. But that’s okay cause I’m pretty sure I hated him, too. By junior year we were inseparable. By senior year we were applying to colleges and joking that we’d visit each other at the most random times. But in college, everything fell apart. We got into an argument. He never listened to me. Never took me seriously. I was hard to read. I never initiated with him. The argument got physical. We were always physical with each other, tripping, punching, hugging. But this time, I couldn’t see straight, couldn’t think straight. He called after me. Seized my shoulder and spun me around. So what? So he could pin me down and hit me? I wasn’t gonna lie there like a lifeless doll and just take it. Not this time. So, I shoved him to the ground. Swung at him over and over.

“Don’t touch me,” I screamed. “Don’t touch me, don’t touch me, don’t touch me.”
I think I loved him.
We haven’t talked since.

“Are you sure you can’t go?”
I sighed. “Sorry, Jayla. I can’t leave the house right now.”
It was on the tip of my tongue. Could I say it? Could I really? Was I even allowed to?
I squeezed my phone. “Bye.”
No sooner did I hang up, Dad yelled my name, jolting me out of my own skin.

I tiptoed down the steps and met him in the kitchen. His arms were folded, his jaw set. What did I do? What did I forget? Was it my grades? Scholarships?
“IT thought I told you to take out the trash.” His voice was low.
“Whoops.”
I didn’t mean to say that. But it’s not like anything I said would’ve calmed him down. The next moments were fuzzy. All I remember was getting frustrated and raising my voice. I knew raising my voice was forbidden. But I was sitting at the bottom of a volcano. Waiting. He raised his voice right back. I didn’t feel like backing down. I always backed down. Every single time, I backed down. It was an honest mistake. Could he just let this one go? Maybe I should’ve kept my mouth shut.

His eyes flashed and he raised his hand. Just like he did so many times before. Pulling back to strike.

I was in hysterics before he could even make contact. Screaming. Crying. Begging. Pleading. Don’t touch me. Please, don’t touch me. I backed away, bumping into the counter. My voice didn’t even sound like my own as I wailed for him to leave me alone.

He lowered his hand, taken aback. His voice was softer. He tried to comfort me. Apologize.

I fled to my room.

Jayla called.

I didn’t pick up.

The day I fled to my room, somebody else walked out.

I ripped up my drawings. Punched my fist into my palm. I wasn’t a little girl anymore. I was in college. Wasn’t there a window for these sorts of things? Wasn’t I past that? Wasn’t I worth more? I was such an idiot. I learned my place in the world so early on. To think I challenged it. And I almost got hit because of it. I was sitting at the bottom of a volcano. Until I wasn’t. Until I was lava. Rising and bubbling and seething until I exploded.

I hit myself in the face.


Love?

I went downstairs to eat dinner.

Weeks turned to months.

I didn’t talk to Jayla. I didn’t talk to my parents. I didn’t think about him. I didn’t need anyone. Not their support. Not their love. Not their judgements or their disappointment. Not anything. I only needed myself. And that’s why, when a single thought of mine strayed out of line, when a single feeling of remorse tightened my chest, whenever I did something wrong, I put myself in my place. I beat it into myself until my head hurt. Love? Control? Discipline? I could do it myself.
“Hi.”

I shoved my hands into my pocket. “Hey.”

Jayla and I stood in front of each other on my driveway.

“Is everything ok,” she asked.

“Yeah, I’m just—”

“If you say chillin, I’m gonna lose my mind.”

Shoot.

I shrugged. “I’m just… waiting.”

Give it up. There was nothing I could say to describe the weight in my chest. The pit in my stomach. She might as well stop asking. Stop calling. Stop dropping by. Stop worrying about me and leave me the hell alone.

Jayla pulled me towards her in a hug. “You’re not getting rid of me that easily,” she murmured.

How? Why? I didn’t deserve this. But just in this moment, in this small, small moment, maybe I could have this. I blinked rapidly and dredged my hands from pockets and hugged her back.

“I’m sorry.” My voice was so thick I almost choked on my words.

“It’s okay. I love you, Lanelle.”

My stomach twisted into a knot. I opened my mouth and closed it. I wanted to tell her. I love you, too. She deserved that much.

She squeezed me tighter and smiled. “You don’t have to say it back. I know.”

I pulled away to wipe my eyes. All this time, I was waiting and waiting and waiting. Waiting for everyone to leave. Lashing out until they did. And here she was after I waited on her. Standing right in front of me.

She raised a brow expectantly.

“Okay, okay,” I puckered my lips around a smile. “I’ll give him a call.”
CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

Groundhog Day Coloring Contest

Winner
Pauline De Leon

On February 2, 2021 the Social Committee for Honors Student Government hosted a Groundhog Day coloring contest. We would like to congratulate Pauline De Leon for her beautiful winning submission! Pauline is a Junior majoring in Art, Media & Design. You can find more of her art on Instagram @clarivoh.
A Cold Greeting

By Liz Bazzoli

Winter visited my home last night, 
Uninvited and unannounced. 
In from the dying daylight, 
walked the man whom I had last year renounced.

The floorboards croaked beneath him, 
The lamplight lost its glow, 
And in blew a bitter wind 
That wracked my heart with woe.

His gait was gaunt and forlorn. 
Translucent skin worn and wilted 
Into a silver face of scorn 
The sun never once had gilded.

I offered forth a plate of food: 
Squash and carrots, lentils and beans. 
He declined, with no hint of gratitude, 
And took only coffee, no cream.

Discussion was sparse, words were few. 
In the sounds of our homeostasis, 
A sip, a sigh, the occasional chew, 
I felt an irrevocable sadness.

At night I awoke from my sleep, aroused 
To the sound of wind whipping the walls. 
A wraithlike wail echoed through the house, 
Shook the ground, tore through the halls.

Stillness had returned by the dawn, 
Just the drip-drop of a morning shower, 
But I soon discovered my friend was gone 
And in his place was a single pink spring flower.
“We should take as a maxim never to be surprised at current difficulties, no more than at a passing breeze, because with a little patience we shall see them disappear. Time changes everything.”

- St. Vincent DePaul