

CONTENTS

FEATURE ARTICLES

- The Terror that Never Arrives*** **1**
Giles Beilby (CSU Stanislaus)
- With One Foot Here and the Other One There:
Blurring the Boundaries of Home and Exile*** **5**
Alba Cruz-Hacker (CSU San Bernardino)
- Feminist Theory and International Relations:
The Feminist Challenge to Realism and Liberalism*** **10**
Tricia Ruiz (CSU Hayward)
- The Ideal Woman*** **16**
Jennifer Holt (CSU Stanislaus)
- Reporting Child Maltreatment: Challenges Faced by Teachers*** **21**
Natalie B. Morejohn (CSU Stanislaus)
- The Infinite Wisdom of Georg Cantor*** **30**
Dan Westerman (CSU Stanislaus)
- Undulation*** **36**
Tony Darrin Kelly, II (CSU Bakersfield)

CAPSTONE RESEARCH PROJECTS

Biological Research

- Exploration of a Lung Cancer Cell Line:
Resistance and Sensitivity to Taxol*** **39**
Eliza Hyatt (CSU Stanislaus)
- The Effects of Cigarette Smoke on the Process of Angiogenesis*** **41**
Aaron Rossie (CSU Stanislaus)

Sustainability Research

- America, the Clean and the Beautiful:
An Argument for the Switch to Renewable Energy Sources*** **43**
Katie Shadden-Westerman (CSU Stanislaus)
- Development in California's Communities: Assessing the Value
of Sustainable Practices*** **46**
Christina Walley (CSU Stanislaus)

Psychological/Communication Research

***Interpersonal Compatibility and Social Loafing:
An Introduction to a Study*** 49
Martin Lanik (CSU Stanislaus)

***Nonverbal Communication in the Employment Interview:
Gender Differences in Impression Management Techniques*** 54
Rebecca Vickers (CSU Stanislaus)

Historical/Political Research

***The Impact of Historiography: Piracy and Religion
from 1590 to 1660*** 59
Kelley Littlepage (CSU Stanislaus)

***Revisiting the First Amendment: The Meaning of
Separation of Church and State*** 64
Caleb Couchman (CSU Stanislaus)

Education Research

***Reflections on the Declining Involvement of Hispanic Students
in Higher Education: Evaluating College Entrance/Graduation
Rates Among Latinos at CSU Stanislaus*** 69
Mariel Zamora (CSU Stanislaus)

A Publication of the University Honors Program *Cover photos and design by Jim Tuedio*
California State University, Stanislaus *Front Cover: "Arches Storm"*
801 W. Monte Vista Ave. *Arches National Park*
Turlock, CA 95382 *Moab, Colorado*
www.honors.csustan.edu
(209) 667-3180

Back Cover: "Bristlecone Pup"
Wheeler Peak/Great Basin National Park
Baker, Nevada

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Honors Program Editorial Staff: Jim Tuedio (Honors Program Director) and Helena Janes (Co-Director). Special thanks to Tom Carter (Computer Science) for providing invaluable critical feedback to students in HONS 4200, and to the following faculty who served as Capstone mentors: Vickie Harvey (Communication Studies), Ida Bowers (Geography), Stephen Routh (Political Science), Katherine Royer (History), Helena Janes (Teacher Education), Janey Youngblom (Biological Sciences), Lin Myers (Psychology), Alejandro Vallega (Philosophy) Jamie McCreary (Psychology), Tommi Lou Carosella (Biological Sciences), and Flora Watson (Biological Sciences). This publication was financed by a grant from the Instructionally Related Activities (IRA) Fund.

Soundings

A Journal of Exploratory Research and Analysis

Perspectives dominate our everyday perceptions, directing our attention toward or away from facets of reality which, when taken together, comprise the complex makeup of our surrounding world. In the process of acquiring perspective in life, we become sensitized or desensitized to issues, concerns, opportunities and challenges.

To see the world in a new light is to become responsive in a new way. The capacity to respond to issues and concerns otherwise masked from view demands a special openness and attention to what we find strange and challenging. We cannot see the world in a new light without curiosity and the willingness to explore unexpected or marginalized phenomena; nor without paying attention to hidden facets of our filtered social constructions.

The call to see the world in a new light -- to "open the universe a little more," as Salman Rushdie has urged in *Imaginary Homelands* -- calls for critical voices, exploratory minds and the empowerment of creative forms of expression carefully interwoven with sensitive analysis and personal concern. It calls for attending to complexities in life that are all-too-often eclipsed from view by more dominant ways of thinking, feeling and speaking. Above all, it calls for an attentive ear, the first condition for generating an attentive response.

The articles brought together in this journal solicit our ear and seek to direct our attention to some depth soundings from a spectrum of exploratory research and analysis. The hope is they will expand our perspective and make us think or respond to new facets of our surrounding world.

Exploratory research and analysis is the key to opening the universe a little

more. The contributions to follow offer opportunities for personal reflection and further lines of study regarding complex phenomena in the context of human, social and environmental involvements.

Seven feature articles have been drawn from contributions to the system-wide CSU Honors Research Conference, which was held on the Stanislaus campus October 30, 2004. Honors students from seven CSU campuses came together to present and discuss a range of fascinating topics.

Ten summary articles present the scope and focus of Capstone research projects nearing completion by seniors in the CSU Stanislaus Honors Program. Many of these students will discuss the results of their research at our annual Honors Research Conference in May. We invite you to join us at this conference! It will take place in the John Rogers Faculty Development Center at CSU Stanislaus on the afternoon of May 20, 2005.

We hope you enjoy these exploratory excursions into unfamiliar regions of our experience. If they catch your ear and you are in the neighborhood on the afternoon of May 20th, drop by the John Rogers Faculty Development Center and continue the explorations with us! Above all, please accept our invitation to direct some attention to the issues and observations set forth in these pages. In the process, it may become apparent that more is at stake than we are ordinarily inclined to recognize.

Honors Community Statement

The Honors Program at CSU Stanislaus is a community of scholars bound together by vital principles of academic openness, integrity and respect. Through focused study and practice involving exploration and discovery across a variety of disciplines, the Honors Program upholds these principles of scholarly engagement and provides students with the necessary foundations for further research and inquiry.

Our interdisciplinary curriculum is integral to this work, and is intended to facilitate creative understanding of the irreducible complexities of contemporary life and knowledge. Personal and intellectual honesty and curiosity are essential to this process. So, too, are critical openness to difficult topics and respect for different perspectives, values and disciplines. The Honors Program aims to uphold these virtues in practice, in principle, and in community with one another.

Honors Program Advisory Committee

May 14, 2004