



news

NOVEMBER | 2025

Message from the Assistant Director

Dear Kathwari Honors Students,

As we move toward the end of the semester, I know many of you are balancing demanding coursework, leadership roles, and everything else that comes with being a driven student. Take a breath and remind yourself that you are doing it. Every late night, every effort to stay organized, and every small step forward adds up. You are building something meaningful, even on the days it doesn't feel like it.

Before the semester wraps up, I hope you will take a well-deserved break to celebrate with your Honors community. Join us for our Honors **Holiday Hangout on Wednesday, December 3, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Honors House**. We will have a hot chocolate bar, holiday games and prizes, movies playing, and cookie decorating. It is a relaxed, cheerful way to pause before finals and enjoy time with your fellow Honors students.

As we head into the new year, I want to share that I will soon be departing for maternity leave. During my absence, Mikayla Silkman, WestConn Kathwari Honors alum and instructor of HON 100, will serve as Interim Assistant Director until I return in April. Please join me in welcoming Mikayla and offering her your support as she steps into this role.

I wish each of you a peaceful end to the semester and a holiday season filled with rest, gratitude, and joy. Thank you for all you bring to our community.

Warmly,

Caittin Kennedy

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Honors Success Stories

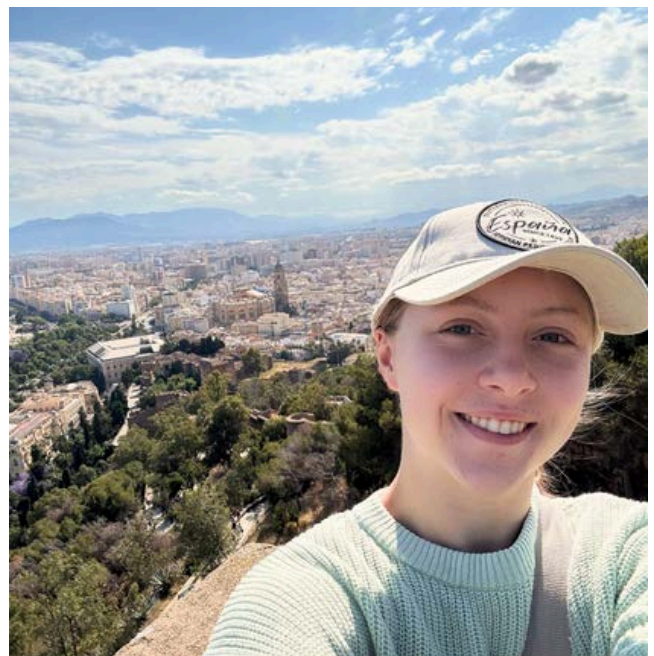
KATHWARI HONORS STUDENT KYLIN MCMAHON EXPLORES MUSIC AND CULTURE IN MÁLAGA, SPAIN

This summer, sophomore Kathwari Honors student Kylin McMahon participated in WCSU's Summer Arts and Culture Study in Málaga, Spain. Having studied Spanish since elementary school and been a member of her high school's Spanish Honor Society, McMahon jumped at the opportunity to travel outside of the U.S. for the first time and immerse herself in Spanish culture.

McMahon enjoyed the hands-on experience of studying a language abroad. Speaking Spanish with her class and her local host family, she learned through discussions. As a Music Performance major, McMahon was fascinated by flamenco, and attending a performance was a highlight of her trip. The style of guitar and dancing was completely new to her. Overall, McMahon believes in the benefits of studying another language. She says, "One of the most powerful skills you can have is language and communication. It helps provide not only career opportunities but also understanding across cultures."

For students studying abroad, McMahon recommends practicing the language. As part of her class, she wrote diaries in Spanish, which helped her internalize new material. She also advises that cultural immersion may bring challenges, but it is worth it. "At first, things may be a bit overwhelming... but the more you practice, the more comfortable you will be," she says. McMahon would love to study abroad again in the future. For now, she is excited to continue her role on the Honors Council, where she enjoys being a student representative and learning about the program behind the scenes.

Read the full story [here](#).



Honors Course Spotlight

HON 498 - "LIVE NEWS & ELECTION COVERAGE" STUDENTS AND FACULTY PRESENT RESEARCH AT BEA CONFERENCE

Two research teams, including two WCSU professors and five Kathwari Honors students, presented the panel "Framing Values, Democratic Backsliding, and Political Polarization" at the Broadcast Education Association (BEA) conference in Denver with interconnected topics:

"Two Americas: Contrasting Television News Coverage,"

JC Barone, PhD, Professor of Communication & Media Arts (Film & Broadcasting), with Honors Students:

- Jackson Chase**, Creative & Professional Writing
- Yianna Kariotis**, Media Arts Production (Film & Broadcasting)
- Matthew Moody**, Media Arts Production (Film & Broadcasting)
- Emelie Myhill**, English & Interdisciplinary Studies

"Hateful Misinformation and Democratic Backsliding,"

Jessica Schofield, PhD, Assistant Professor of Political Science, with Honors Student:

- Kate Jackson**, Political Science



This panel investigated the role of traditional and digital media in reinforcing ideological divides within the current political landscape. For both professors and students, this was an impactful experience. Professor JC Barone describes the team's dedication, meeting on Sundays to research. He writes, "Students actively participating in university research is vital because it transforms their education from passive learning to hands-on intellectual engagement.... they gain direct experience in inquiry, evidence-based reasoning, and problem-solving—skills that are central to higher education and highly valued in professional fields."

Honors student Kate Jackson enjoyed learning about the political processes of other countries and presenting in a professional environment. She writes, "I recognize the unique opportunity that working one-on-one with a professor is, and I am deeply grateful to Dr. Schofield for the experience." Jackson values the Honors Program's focus on opportunities outside of the classroom. This experience showed her "how important it is for different fields of study, such as political science and media, to grow together through interdisciplinary study."

Read the full story [here](#).



Honors Course Spotlight

FILM SCREENING & DISCUSSION OF *THE FAMILY I HAD* LED BY HONORS PROFESSOR DR. CASEY JORDAN

The Kathwari Honors Program presented a screening of the documentary film *The Family I Had*, followed by a discussion with Honors Professor Dr. Casey Jordan and the film’s directors Katie Green and Carlye Rubin of Smoke & Apple Films, an all-female filmmaking team. The film screening was open to the public and also associated with Dr. Jordan’s class HON 398 - “Breaking Bad: Drugs, Economics, and Crime Theory.”

The award-winning documentary tells the story of intra-family violence and juvenile incarceration through a mother’s unwavering love for her son who killed her daughter. This event was an opportunity to consider complex topics in the field of Criminal Justice.



Honors Alumni Spotlight

KATHWARI HONORS ALUMNA MIKAYLA SILKMAN DEVELOPED HER PASSION FOR TEACHING AT WCSU

After completing her BA and MFA at WCSU, Mikayla Silkman is now an adjunct professor teaching in the Kathwari Honors Program and the Department of Creative & Professional Writing. During the spring semester, Silkman will serve as Interim Assistant Director of the Honors Program until April.

Silkman credits her own Honors Program experience with developing her passion for teaching. As an undergraduate, serving as a teaching assistant helped her realize that she wanted to become a professor. Silkman was one of the first Kathwari Honors Graduate Fellows while completing her MFA in Creative & Professional Writing, which helped her hone her teaching craft. “This hands-on approach to education helped me become more confident in the classroom, pushed me to consider new ways to approach class discussion and assignments, and helped ready me to enter the world as a working professional,” Silkman says. She also appreciated the individualized attention she received from her MFA mentors, who spent “quality one-on-one time with both [her] and [her] writing.”

The Honors Program also helped Silkman develop her interests outside of the classroom. She enjoyed attending Honors events, volunteering on campus, and making lifelong connections with her peers. These experiences pushed her to keep exploring. Silkman says, “I tried so many new things during my time at WCSU, and all of them led to incredible things. I learned that I love to ski, that I love backpacking and hiking and rock climbing... and I even met my now-husband in a class at WCSU that someone encouraged me to take as an elective.” While Silkman knows that academic performance is important, she recommends finding balance. “So many students (especially our hardworking Honors students), base too much of their self-worth and happiness on their grades. One day, your GPA won't matter, but you'll spend the rest of your life with yourself. Become someone you like spending time with!”

Read the full story [here](#).



November Snapshot

HONTEd MOVIE NIGHT & CRAFTING

In late October, students enjoyed the spooky and fun-filled annual *HONTEd* Movie Night with snacks, costumes, crafting, games, and more. It was a great chance to get into the fall spirit, de-stress, and connect with fellow Honors students. From ghost stories to glue sticks, there was something for everyone, and a wonderful time was had by all.



HONORS REGISTRATION NIGHT

Honors Registration Night was a huge success with a large turnout. Students prepared for priority registration at midnight while enjoying pizza, snacks, conversation, crafting, and self-care, including face masks, manicures, video games, and more. It was great to see so many students bonding and de-stressing while registering for their courses. We're looking forward to a great spring semester!



LET'S DE-STRESS!

As we wrap up the fall semester and start preparing for final projects and exams, it is important to find balance. This event was a hit, allowing students to prioritize connection and self-care at the Kathwari Honors House. Students had snacks and made crafts, including face masks and slime, to relax and recharge before Thanksgiving break.



November Snapshot

LEADERSHIP THROUGH HORSEMANSHIP PROGRAM

On November 14, the Kathwari Honors Program partnered with Pegasus Therapeutic Riding for another session of the Leadership through Horsemanship Program after a successful experience in the spring.

Students traveled to Brewster, NY to learn about caring for and interacting with horses. This required students to be present and effectively communicate in order to build trust. Body language is an essential consideration when working with horses, so students were encouraged to slow down, check in with themselves, and be mindful of their thoughts and feelings.

This was a chance for students to step outside of their everyday environment and practice real-world leadership skills in a supportive setting. Students enjoyed interacting with the horses and overcoming challenges with guidance. Overall, it was a unique and engaging experience that gave students a new perspective about communication and leadership.



Upcoming Events



 KATHWARI HONORS PROGRAM
WESTERN CONNECTICUT
STATE UNIVERSITY

Honors Holiday Hangout

Join us to celebrate the winter weather, connect with fellow students, and relax before finals!

HOT COCOA BAR ❄️ HOLIDAY GAMES ❄️ COOKIE DECORATING

 **Wednesday, December 3**
11:00am - 1:00pm
Honors House Lyceum 

**GOOD LUCK ON YOUR FINAL
PAPERS, PROJECTS, AND
EXAMS!**