

LIBERAL ARTS HONORS  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

# LIBERAL ARTS HONORS & HUMANITIES A READ-LETTER

## CALENDAR:

### MAY 4:

Last class day of Spring 2013 semester

### MAY 17-18:

Spring Graduation ceremonies

### JUNE 6:

Summer Orientation for new LAH students begins

### AUGUST 27:

LAH Orientation Bike Rides and Walks

### AUGUST 29:

First Class Day

### OCTOBER 26-27:

Family Weekend

### NOVEMBER 6:

Last day an undergraduate student may, with the dean's approval, drop a class or change a class to pass/fail

### NOVEMBER 22-25:

Thanksgiving break

### DECEMBER 7:

Last class day

### DECEMBER 8-9:

Fall graduation ceremonies

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK:

I recently came across a wonderfully concise definition of a liberal education. In talking to a group of young people about what they should expect from college, the then President of Barnard College, Judith Shapiro, said: "You want the inside of your head to be an interesting place to spend the rest of your life" (Andrew Delbanco, *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*, p. 33, a book I recommend). Our LAH students are doing just that, furnishing their minds to be interesting places, doing so in the classroom, honing critical thinking and writing skills, testing their ideas against great works of literature, history, and philosophy, storing up the best that has been thought. Much of what will delight and sustain them in years to come, however, arises from reading and editing submissions to *Echo*, the LAH literary journal, and then following up with all that goes into funding and publishing the journal; in organizing an All-Honors Semi-Formal, a massive book drive, and selecting and prepping our Quiz Bowl Team, all activities of the LAH Student Council this year; participating in "Foot in the Door," the LAH Theatrical group, playing in the LAH Music Ensemble, mentoring LAH freshmen, organizing Rousseau and Ransom Reading Groups. In these and many other activities our students learn to lead and to follow, to set priorities and work with another, manage their time and that of others, while sparking their curiosity, learning humility, and developing lasting friendships. That is, LAH students, in and outside the classroom, are interesting minds in the making. Allow me in closing to boast: the LAH Quiz Bowl team--Janette Martinez, Sam Naik, and James Stratton--brought home the trophy this year, besting teams from Plan II, Business, and Engineering Honors. And the editor of *The Daily Texan* for 2012 - 2013 is LAH History major, Susannah Jacob. I welcome your comments, suggestions, and questions ([carver@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:carver@austin.utexas.edu)).

Best wishes,

*Larry*  
Larry Carver



## LIBERAL ARTS HONORS ABROAD: TOKYO, JAPAN



*Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan*

### LAH STUDY ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS:

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Applications will be due Monday, November 1, 2013 at 5 pm for students planning to study abroad in the Spring 2014 semester. Students must plan on studying a foreign language while abroad in order to be eligible for funding.

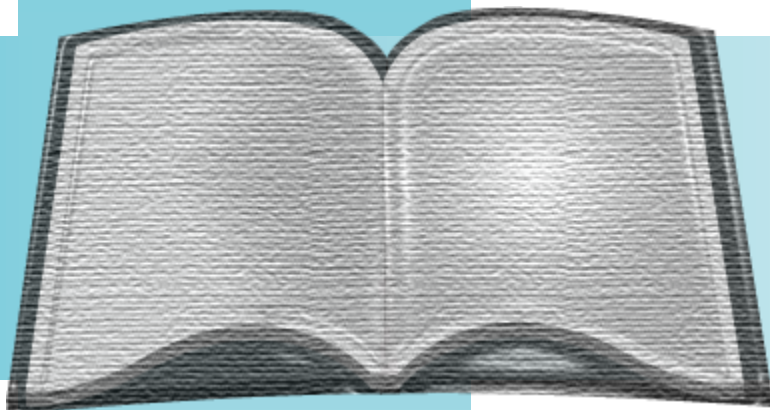
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Study abroad with the Liberal Arts Honors Program! We offer many opportunities to travel all over the world. Check out the programs on the UT Study Abroad site.

<http://world.utexas.edu/abroad>

My name is Alana Harrison, and I am currently studying abroad in Machida, a suburb of Tokyo, Japan! I am a third year Psychology major; I'm also minoring in Japanese, which explains my choice in location. I've only been here for a little over two weeks, but this experience has already become an enormous milestone in my life! My host campus, J.F. Obirin University (no affiliation with the Oberlin University in the states), is a fantastic place to both learn Japanese and meet new people. As a small liberal arts college, Obirin offers an experience far different than that of the University of Texas at Austin; with a considerably smaller campus and a more intimate student body, it's much easier to get to know students in a much shorter period of time! In fact, I feel like I get to meet new friends on a daily basis, and I continuously have new opportunities to practice my Japanese with native speakers. My Japanese peers at Obirin are very friendly, approachable, and very patient with my sub-par Japanese abilities. I don't feel daunted at all by the idea of approaching complete strangers and forging new friendships through the commonality of this amazing (albeit somewhat difficult) language. In fact, that's how I managed to join a student club (Obirin Dancing Company) here at the university; very few of the members speak English, but we still have tons of fun together! Living in an international dorm is also a great way for me to meet people from all around the world! I have friends from Boston, Hawaii, China, Mongolia, South Korea, Australia, the UK, and the Netherlands. In fact, in many instances, the only way I can communicate with some of my friends is through Japanese. For instance, some of my classmates are Chinese and speak no English whatsoever; I, of course, speak no Chinese whatsoever. Because of this, we rely upon our mutual Japanese capabilities to get the message across—it isn't always perfect, but it's an incredible immersion experience. My time in Japan has also been so worthwhile because of the endless possibilities for leisure and travel! In this fascinating world where ancient meets modern, where thousandyear-old temples are just a block away from ten-story department stores, there's always a variety of new things to see and do! Early April was peak cherry blossom season, and I don't think I've ever seen more beautiful flora in my entire life. Just miles and miles of soft pink foliage! The petals are wilting now, unfortunately, but even that is a breathtaking sight—they drift from the trees and whirl through the air like snow! I have mostly spent my free time shopping for quirky and fabulous Japanese fashions (much to the dismay of my wallet), but future travel plans of mine include a fiveday trip to Kyoto to see temples and attend a geisha ceremony, a weekend trip to Hiroshima to visit the World War II monuments and museums, a relaxing getaway at a Japanese onsen (natural hot springs), an excursion to the top of Mount Fuji in late July, and, of course, a day at Tokyo Disneyland! I have enjoyed nothing but positive experiences here in the Land of the Rising Sun, and I can't wait to see what else this amazing country has in store for me!

- Alana Harrison, Psychology major



## STUDENTS WRITE: A FOURTH YEAR ESSAY PRIZE WINNER

*“No, but I would lay down my life for two brothers or eight cousins.”*

### WORDS OF WISDOM:

Don't be afraid to move outside of your comfort zone: try new things, take on more than you think you can manage, push yourself.

- James Lamon

My advice for incoming freshmen? Get involved with research! From volunteering in the Psychology research labs to executing my senior honors project, research has been a crucial component of my education here at UT.

- Aftyn Behn

Let yourself fall in love with UT. It really is the best experience you'll have, and you won't want to leave once you're close to graduation!

- Sheena Patel

### ECHO

Looking for an opportunity to publish your prose, poetry, or photography? Echo will soon be soliciting original material for its 2012-2013 issue. Send anything and everything our way to [echolitmag@gmail.com](mailto:echolitmag@gmail.com).

Speaking on behalf of kin altruists everywhere, the British evolutionary biologist, J.B.S. Haldane, famously quipped the above when asked if he would give his life to save a drowning brother. I begin with this quote not to espouse its brut scientific outlook, but to point out that modes of thought concerning morality and mortality have evolved since Socrates. This evolution is evident in the prompt itself: Socrates' consideration of the good, complete with example of Achillean courage, culminates in a question regarding values—values, not virtues.

In classical and Christian thought, temperance, prudence, fortitude, and justice were called the four cardinal virtues. They were cardinal in that morality hinged upon them. Failure to participate in these virtues displeased (the) God(s), and in this morality was linked to mortality: God judges all mortals at death. The virtuous life precedes the pleasant afterlife. This changed, however, when Machiavelli broke from classical and Christian tradition with *The Prince*. Rather than upholding a system based upon ideals unfounded in nature, Machiavelli based his theories on personal experience and historical example. Recognizing that virtue was exclusively manifest in the divine, Machiavelli took virtue from God and gave it to man. Modernity followed, accompanied by further definitions of virtue. These definitions all share one quality: subjectivity. A virtue is not higher truth but any quality one values as excellent. In this age of the individual, one is free to define virtue or assign value but limited in means to induce agreement. Science, however, can make “good” decisions grounded on fact. In the quote above, Haldane will sacrifice his life for two brothers or eight cousins because, combined, they express 100% of Haldane's genes. He may die, but his genes will break even for the next generation. From an evolutionary perspective, Haldane made a good decision. In mathematics, value becomes even more calculable. It's merely a numerical measure of quantity. Here, subjectivity does not apply. Value becomes a quality of an object and not an impression of the mind. Of course, the belief that value should be free some subjectivity is itself subjective.

I cite these truths to show that agreeing or disagreeing with Socrates' value statement rests upon incomparable notions of value itself. Values are not distinct points on a plane between which meaning can be drawn; each is a unique plane. I cannot impress my contemporary value conception onto the classical because, according to my conception, what's more important is that all men remain free to decide what is good—but even then I've trespassed. I cannot translate values between minds or across time, including the value that everyman is free to formulate value, without nullifying my definition.

As for the final question, I would never die for 1 or 2, but I might for 3. There are 3 primary colors, 3 constituents in the atom, 3 dimensions in the universe, 3 Abrahamic religions, 3 bodies of Buddha, 3 cosmic functions in Hinduism, 3 hand formations in rock-paper-scissors, 3 components in a successful gimmick, and 3 courses in a decent meal. The number 3 has always spoken to me.

- James Lamon, English major



## LIBERAL ARTS HONORS ABROAD: CÓRDOBA, ARGENTINA

“I had to relearn that my goals were not others’ goals and that a ‘business attitude’ could seriously affect my work in a culture centered on personal relationships and emotional trust. I had to be patient, be present for others, and put my goals into perspective.”

-Travis Knoll



*Travis in Cuesta Blanca, Córdoba  
(in the Sierras de Córdoba)*

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<http://world.utexas.edu/abroad>

### Relearning for the First Time

When I returned to the States in 2009 from my high school foreign exchange, I knew that I wanted to return to Argentina to put a coda on my intense experience. Learning about the UT-Córdoba exchange, I saw my opportunity. In the next years, I would enter Latin American Studies, write my term papers, and form my thesis all with the goal of constructing my ‘bi-national’ identity. When I finally got funding for field research to return to La Plata early as well as to attend Córdoba in the fall, I breathed a sigh of relief as it seemed like the hardest part, getting on the plane, was behind me. Things had surely changed, but I had maintained contact with my host family, my friends, and my professors, and had even received a stipend for a language assistantship at my former exchange school, the Colegio Nacional de La Plata.

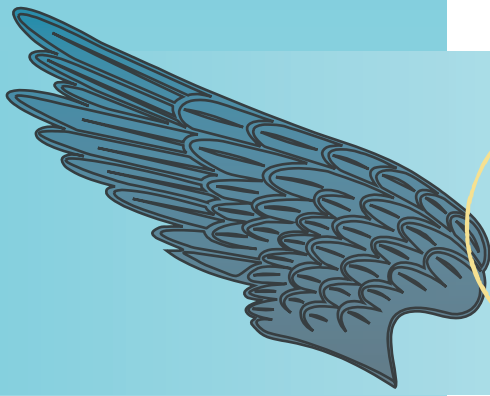
Getting on the plane would be the easy part. Two days before departure, I learned that my host uncle had died eight days earlier from a surprise heart attack. However, the family insisted I come anyway, saying that it would bring a bit of normalcy to a difficult situation, but that things had indeed changed.

After a frustrating twenty-four hour delay in my flight, I arrived in Buenos Aires. My host father excitedly greeted me at the airport, and, despite my initial reservations, it seemed as if their decision for me to come had been the right one, but as we arrived to La Plata, the hushed voices and the spontaneous displays of grief were both understandable and unavoidable.

My research on Argentine cinema did not go as planned, with the tensions between working in an informal society and adhering to the strict guidelines of the IRB slowing my project. The school did not stick to the contract, instead dividing my time (and pay) between the Colegio and another school across town. Friends that had ‘waited two years’ to see me again suddenly became ‘too busy’ to even spend half an hour a week over tea. A talk with another host uncle in which he described his inherent ‘mistrust of US foreigners’ and their ‘infantile attitudes’ of believing that anyone should ‘care about their attempts to study us’ only added to my feeling of isolation, although the latter point brought a healthy dose of humility and loosening to my research approach. I had to relearn that my goals were not others’ goals and that a ‘business attitude’ could seriously affect my work in a culture centered on personal relationships and emotional trust. I had to be patient, be present for others, and put my goals into perspective. I even took advantage of the position of the other school to meet new colleagues and experience the difference between private and public education. In short, a mechanistic view of time, goals, and production would prove as futile as it would destructive.

Deep down, I remembered why I had wanted to come back to the country of the celeste y blanco, even if it took another exchange to unlearn and relearn what I thought I knew.

- Travis Knoll, Latin American Studies major



## CLASS OF 2013:

## POST-GRADUATE PLANS

### WORDS OF WISDOM:

The advice I have for incoming LAHers is to not take on too much too soon. College may require new study habits as well as limitations on the extracurricular activities you get involved. Succeeding in college is all about finding balance.

- Ariel Maxie

Enjoy every minute-- it goes by very fast! Also, take as many LAH classes as you can; the professors are awesome. Especially sign up for classes that really spark your interest.

- Burkley Wombwell

Don't focus on learning all the little details for a class in order to get a good grade on tests. Instead, try to truly grasp the concepts the professor is teaching. Once you graduate, all the information you bombed your short term memory with goes out the window, and the only thing that you will take away from college, that will benefit you in the future, are the ideas you were able to consolidate inside yourself.

- Dickie Fischer

CONGRATULATIONS!

**Paul Cuno-Booth** I will be studying abroad at the American University in Cairo (AUC) with the Center for Arabic Study Abroad (CASA).

**Shanup Dalal** After graduation, I will be heading to NYU Medical School to pursue my dream of becoming a pediatric neurosurgeon.

**Katie Erwin** I'll be in Houston, attending Institute for Teach for America while teaching summer school in HISD.

**Dickie Fischer** I will be living in Alexandria for a year, going to a language institute and enrolling in the American University of Alexandria as part of the UT Arabic Flagship year abroad program.

**Zach Garber** I'll be immigrating to Israel in August and joining the Israel Defense Forces in November.

**Sydnee Houlette** I will be leaving to study abroad in the Ghana Maymester two days after I graduate. Following my stay in Ghana I will be in Florence, Italy for a week and a half working with other artists and visiting friends that I made last summer when I studied abroad there. I will return to Houston at the end of June, and then come back to Austin. I hope to contribute to the ACE program in the 2012 - 2013 school year, and also am looking forward to performance opportunities and continuing to write creatively. My time here at UT and in LAH has passed so quickly, and I am very grateful for the acceptance and support I have received through being in the Liberal Arts Honors program.

**James Lamon** I'm working in Austin (currently searching for meaningful employment) and then studying for the October LSAT and GRE. After the test dates, I'm moving to L.A. to pursue a career in screen writing/television writing. This fall I will apply to MFA programs in creative writing.

**Janette Martinez** After graduation, I will be moving to Houston and teaching middle school at YES Prep Public Schools.

**Ariel Maxie** I will be interning at The Richards Group, an advertising agency in Dallas this summer which I hope turns into a full time job. If not, I plan to start grad school either in Spring 2013 or Fall 2013.

**Nadia Nadesan** Riding to Alaska with Texas 4000.

**Michael Sierra-Arevalo** I've been here in Austin working at a startup called SpareFoot since I graduated in December. In fall, I'll be matriculating to Yale for their doctoral program in sociology as an fellow at the Institution for Social Policy Studies. It's a multi-disciplinary fellowship that combines economics, political science, psychology, and sociology and lets you work together to learn and build policy memos.

**Lindsey Smith** I'm moving to Cairo, Egypt on a Fulbright grant to study at the American University in Cairo and do research for a year.

**Carolyn Webb** After graduation I will be teaching English in Japan with the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Program. I actually heard about JET from another LAHer participating now (Caitlin Eberhardt). I'm so excited and hope to eventually go to law school when my time with JET ends.

**Lauren Williams** Our semester [in Egypt] is starting to wind to a close, meaning we're scrambling to read and write several thousand words a week in preparation for finals, and as you can imagine it's been a bit hectic. When I return from my year abroad in August, I will be entering the Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures program in the UT Graduate School specializing in Arabic. I have also received a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship from the Department of Education to assist me in my studies.



MAKE A GIFT!

Help Liberal Arts Honors Students pursue academic research, study abroad opportunities, and unpaid internships. You may give to Liberal Arts Honors online: <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/progs/lahonors/giving.php>

Of course, we welcome the opportunity to meet with you and seek your guidance in assisting the College. If you would like to make a donation, please mail your pledge for Liberal Arts Honors to:

Kathleen Aronson,  
Director of Development  
and Alumni Relations  
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Austin, Texas 78712

Currently, the Liberal Arts Honors program resides in the oldest building on the Forty Acres. LAH will soon move to the new College of Liberal Arts Building. While the students and staff will be sad to leave the beautiful old charm of Gebauer, Liberal Arts Honors will have a larger, more modern space. Careful attention was paid to give our students state of the art facilities, and the extra resources offered to the growing program allow LAH to maintain the close-knit environment essential to its vision.

Because of the spread-out nature of the various departments in the College of Liberal Arts, when the new building was in the planning stages, space in the new central home of the college was competed for tenaciously. Dean Diehl assured Dr. Larry Carver, director of the Liberal Arts Honors Program, that both the premiere honors programs in the college would have pride of place next to each other in the new building. Showcasing the honors programs illustrates the college's commitment to their work. The program's new home is a symbol of Liberal Arts Honor's value to both the College of Liberal Arts and its students.

While the acknowledgement of LAH's importance in the College of Liberal Arts is vital, the tangible improvements the new space will make in the lives of its students cannot be ignored. While the current space in Gebauer offers students a place to gather and work, the new building will offer the students double the number of computers in the new computer lab and a commons room that is both larger than the space in the Gebauer building and completely dedicated to student use. LAH's student organizations will be able to use the space for meetings and events. Even outside the office, the new building will allow for LAHers to take honors courses from many disciplines, all under one roof. The light and airy environment will offer students a home in the new heart of campus, mere steps away from the Student Activities Center, Gregory Gym, and Waller Creek.

The building's importance to LAH is just one small part of what it represents to the college as a whole. Being the largest college on campus, the departments of the college are spread all across the Forty Acres. Having one place that gathers many of the previously spread out academic units will create a stronger sense of college unity. Bringing departments together brings their students together, giving them a place all their own. LAHers have this sense of community in Gebauer, but a larger space will help that connection grow. LAH is happy to call the new building our new home.

## LIBERAL ARTS HONORS AND HUMANITIES PROGRAMS

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<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/progs/lahonors/>

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