

The background of the cover is a photograph of a white, two-story house with a gabled roof and a dormer window. The house is partially obscured by lush green foliage and white flowers in the foreground. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. A white double-line border frames the top right section of the cover.

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NEWS &
NOTES

Fall 2023

New Growth



News + Notes

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Theme & Cover Note

Our theme was inspired by the growth that students undergo during college. Much like the flowers growing outside the Honors College, we are changing into new versions of ourselves. We wanted to take a minute to appreciate that change.

Cover by: Caroline Emerick

Editors Note

There is a cliché that you become a different person when you go to college. One I truly did not believe in. Yet as I approach my final year at Ball State, I truly can see that I changed into a new person. My time in the Honors College has developed my communication skills and created a better appreciation for the need for diversity in all conversations. My time as a Pre-Veterinary Zoology student has developed a passion for conservation and a desire to educate the public on how to do better for the environment.



The last four years of being a part of News and Notes developed a love for journalism and bettered my leadership skills. What I hope you get out of this edition is a time to reflect on your own changes in your life. Life is sometimes very fast-paced and we can forget to take time to appreciate all we have.

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Photography Credit: Brian Kacerski



Let's Talk About It...



Dr. Timothy Berg

"I was a history major at University of Georgia and if I could go back, I would go to a small liberal arts college and be a Studio Art major."

"Would you change anything about what you studied in undergrad if you could?"

"If I could go back to the glorious 1990s, in my undergrad years I would probably pursue a minor in either photography or creative writing."

Dr. Alex Kaufman



Dr. Ellen Thorington

"Honestly, there is not a lot I would change about my undergraduate experience at Bates College, where I designed my own major in Medieval and Renaissance Studies. The one thing I could have done more of is take better advantage of the outdoor activities in Maine offered through the Outing Club. I wish I'd learned kayaking, for example."



Evan Spell

"Life isn't all about school. The world still turns regardless of if you meet perfectionist standards or not. Don't invest your identity in something that ultimately matters little more than for your own pride. Do a select few things and do them well."



"I would tell myself to spend more time with friends. I've made so many good friends here, and I wish I had realized how short the time was sooner."

Kieran Claypool

"What would you tell your freshman self?"



Angel Esquivel Vazquez

"You exist in the abundance. You have everything to do anything. Take the opportunity."



Ezra Keen

"I would tell myself to not stress so much about the little things. Focus more on spending time with friends and having fun."





Dr. Lewis presents his lecture to honors students, Sept. 13, 2023



Pick your Pie

(But don't forget to try the others)

The annual Meyer Lecture was delivered this year on Wednesday, Sept. 13 in the ballroom of the L.A. Pittinger Student Center by Dr. William T. Lewis Sr. The lecture was centered around Dr. Lewis' recent book, "Sweet Potato or Pumpkin Pie: Conversations with my White Friends about Race," which was published in March 2022.

The inspiration for Dr. Lewis' book came following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota during the summer of 2020. The protests, marches and speeches that flowed out of the Black community following the tragedy opened the door for him to have conversations of his own with those around him — his white friends included.

"Conversation leads to action," Dr. Lewis said during the lecture. "We're talking to each other so we can root out the assumptions and get to a basic level of understanding. Once we're in dialogue with each other, we understand one another." He continued, "When we have conversations with people from different perspectives, it informs our current perspective, and it helps us to understand that we're all human and it helps us to be able to love each other from a human perspective."

Dr. Lewis has built his life around teaching others the significance of having difficult conversations about racial relations in America. To this point, he has shared his message of diversity and inclusion at three highly acclaimed colleges and universities — Indiana University, Bridgewater State University and Virginia Tech University.

Messages like these are especially significant for students to hear at institutions such as Ball State, given that — in addition to being the home of the Cardinals — it is also home to a predominantly white student body, with 75.8% of its total population identifying as white, according to a university report published by the Office of Institutional Research and Decision Support. In a school that looks so alike, it is imperative that the student body listens closely to Dr. Lewis' instructions.

This sentiment was echoed by Dr. Emily Rutter, the Associate Dean of Ball State University's Honors College, during her introduction for Dr. Lewis at the start of the evening.

"While our racial identities and their intersections with other categories — gender, sexuality, class, disability, ethnicity, what-have-you — impact nearly everything about our lives, we often don't engage in productive dialogues about these topics, especially across lines of difference," Rutter said.

"Dr. Lewis' mission is to disrupt that pattern and embrace these opportunities to appreciate diverse perspectives within the context of coalition building and ultimately to work in solidarity towards realizing an equitable and just society."

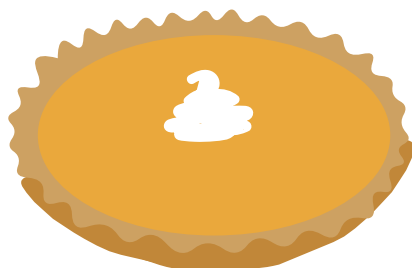
For this impactful reason, the Bruce F. and Ildiko B. Meyer Endowed Lecture Fund was founded. In addition to honoring the memory of Bruce Meyer, former dean of the Honors College, and his wife, Ildiko, the program exists to broaden students' minds by providing them with opportunities to hear from people unlike themselves.

Those interested in learning more about the Honors Inclusive Excellence Series and the Meyer Lecture program,

spring 2024 will feature events honoring Disability Pride Month (January), Black History Month (February), Women's History Month (March), and Global

Awareness and Sustainability Month (April). Details will be posted on the university's online calendar as dates get closer.

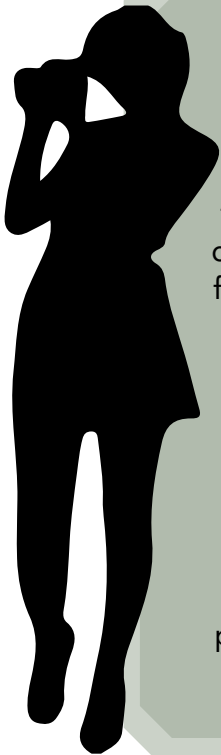
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Honors Colloquia:

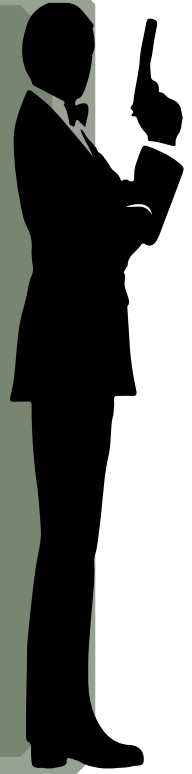
Using pop culture to initiate meaningful dialogue

Ball State's Honors College stands out in many ways. The Honors College and its close-knit community of students have been a part of the university since 1959, but recent additions have improved the experience of many students and allowed them new opportunities to learn. Honors students can choose classes that teach about James Bond, Planet of the Apes, female photography, teen films of the 1980s, and Medieval women writers. If a professor has a unique interest, they submit a proposal for their curriculum to be brought to the Honors College as an Honors 390 colloquium. The students then get to discuss how feminism, politics, and issues of race are represented in Planet of the Apes, or how the pre-selfie era influenced female photographers' self-portraits. This is a uniquely Honors experience that encapsulates the joy of learning and the excitement of genuine curiosity.



The first snapshot into an Honors experience begins with Dr. Sarah Ackermann's "The Originals: A Look at Female Photographers in a Pre-Selfie Era." In this class, students begin by looking at self-portraits from different eras and then are encouraged to discuss their opinions and perspectives. When she brought the proposal to create this class, Dr. Ackermann was inspired by her experience as a female photographer and her love for discussing art. Dr. Ackermann describes her goals for the class as twofold. Firstly, students aim to look at portraiture, specifically by female photographers. Secondly, students learn to analyze these portraits and apply those skills to the images that surround them daily. Through non-traditional lectures, guest speakers, and field trips to the David Owsley Museum of Art, this class provides students with new experiences and new perspectives. Portraiture, especially in the form of selfies, is becoming increasingly present due to social media. This class provides a breath of fresh air with its uniqueness that can be missed with the traditional core courses.

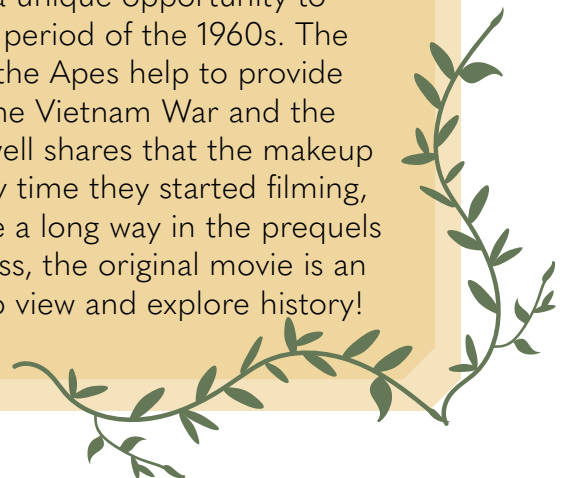
The James Bond Honors 390 class provides an interesting opportunity to investigate multigenerational pop culture. As Dr. Jacquelyn Buckrop notes, the twenty-five films that the James Bond universe has produced span multiple generations and different eras of popular culture. In Dr. Buckrop's class, students read and watch "Dr. No," which is the first film in the series with Sean Connery as James Bond. They also watch "Skyfall," one of the more recent and highest-grossing productions with Daniel Craig. Similar to Dr. Ackermann's class, students are presented with a wide range of information, and they decide for themselves whether they want to learn about James Bond as a broad topic or dive into a specific niche. The goals of this class, as Dr. Buckrop describes them, are to introduce students to a lasting part of popular culture and to appreciate the films' longevity in a quickly changing society. Lastly, despite this class's detailed discussions, the most popular question about these films remains unanswered: who will be the next James Bond?



The most interesting way to teach the Vietnam War is through the lens of Planet of the Apes. As Dr. Jason Powell explains, the 1968 movie has a little bit of everything: feminism, race issues, politics.

In this class, students read the original book, watch the movie, and discuss what they've learned. Like the other three classes, this one is also discussion-based, which allows the students the chance to discuss their questions and opinions about the material.

However, this class affords students a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the interesting period of the 1960s. The book and movie versions of Planet of the Apes help to provide historical context and knowledge of the Vietnam War and the cultural experience at that time. Dr. Powell shares that the makeup of the actors took hours to put on every time they started filming, noting that the special effects have come a long way in the prequels and other subsequent movies. Regardless, the original movie is an interesting lens that students can use to view and explore history!



New Dean, Who This?



A New Branch in the Honors College Community

Meet the new Honors College Dean! What Dean James Buss loves most about the university environment is its ability to facilitate the conversation of diversity “in a way that really doesn’t exist in most moments of the day and most times in your life.” He considers the continuation of these healthy, conversational atmospheres to be one of the most important responsibilities of his position as Dean. Dean Buss was a first generation student at Bowling Green State University, which, among other experiences, inspired his perspective as an administrator. When he was thrown into university, he remembers “not understanding how to navigate that world.” As time went on, he learned the importance of utilizing university resources, attending office hours, and establishing relationships with faculty. As Dean, one of his goals is to “provide systems and structures for students to navigate [college in a way] that is universally understood.” This, in turn, would bring more perspectives into the intellectual conversation and increase the value of higher education for everyone at the university.

Dean Buss’ goal is to create environments where students’ personal growth takes precedence over academics. As he has gained more experience, he has taken on a broader perspective of university.

Imposter syndrome has always been something Dean Buss has felt, but instead of covering it or trying to remedy it, he has grown to embrace it, saying “the day that I feel comfortable is the day that I retire.” It is his belief that feeling like an outsider and including other “outsiders” in challenging precedents is essential to societal growth. To students, he would say “being comfortable being uncomfortable is one of the greatest skills that anyone can learn.”

Dean Buss remembers being taught radical transparency by a mentor and now considers it to be an important tool for his position. He recalls hiding his identity as a first generation student but learned to embrace it in his relationships and his academics because it provides an important perspective to discussion. He practices radical transparency now by giving students the opportunity to get to know him as a person and not just a faculty member. By bringing his family to events and being transparent about his experiences, such as being on academic probation in his undergraduate education, he hopes to make students feel more comfortable with participating in conversations that build relationships.

Our new Dean is proud to have joined our Honors College community, and he greatly appreciates everything that was built over the years to support students and faculty in their human and intellectual journeys. Dean Buss intends to remain radically transparent and use his experience to create atmospheres of conversation. Where new ideas or previously overlooked ideas can flourish, pushing towards an academic setting where it is comfortable to be uncomfortable and growth is unavoidable.

Now Introducing:
Dean James Buss

Profile

Name: James Buss

Hometown: Lima, Ohio

University: Bowling Green University;
Purdue University

Education: Bachelor's in History;
Master's in Policy History; Doctorate in
History



*Dean Buss poses with his son Joey Buss (left & right)
Dean Buss in his youth pictured with his brother.*



Bringing Virginia Ball Back

Meaning behind the merge

The Virginia Ball Center (VBC), originally located off campus at the Kitzelman Center, has begun its merger with our very own Honors College; however, this merger is not as unexpected as it may seem. According to Dr. Blackmer, director of the VBC, the plan was always for Virginia Ball's Foundation to cease its funding in 2029.

Merging with Ball State's Honors College is the VBC's way of continuing the program without the Foundation's funding, and thereby getting to explore new ventures with the Honors College.

The National Collegiate Honors Council defines honors education as, "an enhanced or enriched curricular or co-curricular activity that is broader, deeper, or more complex than other offerings at the institution." Dr. Buss, the new Dean of the Honors House says, "If you think about what the Virginia Ball Center does, it does Honors work."

The Virginia Ball Center of Creative Inquiry truly encapsulates Ball State's signature Immersive Learning experience with semester-long, student-directed projects that allow students opportunities in exploration, research, project creation, and presentation chances that they may not receive in a typical classroom.

The best part: you don't have to be an

Honors student to participate.

This process, and the VBC, is one that Dr. Blackmer is intimately familiar with. She has been working with the Virginia Ball Center since 2006. Her first experience with them was funding for her project, "The Human

Faustus Project." As a fellow of the VBC, Dr. Blackmer was given funding to work with 15 undergraduate students to co-write a play about genetic engineering. "I am a weird person," Dr. Blackmer says when describing this project. She explains, "I love the arts... but I also love science." The Virginia Ball Center gave her and the students she worked with the opportunity to combine these two unconventional, somewhat contradictory interests.



A Long Time Coming

This is, to Dr. Blackmer, one of the best things about the Virginia Ball Center's Immersive Learning: students have the chance to explore and create projects surrounding a variety of their interests, which is something they may not be able to do in any classroom.

Because of this, Dr. Blackmer also feels that the Honors House is the most logical location for the Virginia Ball Center. It doesn't fit into any one discipline and neither does the Honors House. Plus, as Dr. Buss believes, we are bringing Virginia Ball back to campus to bring more attention to both the VBC and the Honors House.

For both Dr. Buss and Dr. Blackmer the support they receive from each other, and the campus, has made the merging process much easier than they expected.

All students, Honors or not, are encouraged to participate in Virginia Ball's Immersive Learning program. Check out their page on the Ball State website or email Dr. Blackmer at jsblackmer@bsu.edu for more information.

2000

The Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry was established.

2003

Virginia B. Ball died at age 84 in Miami, Florida and was buried in Muncie, Indiana.

2006

The VBC supported by ongoing grants from the Edmund F. and Virginia B. Ball Foundation.

2023

Virginia B. Ball Center merges with Ball Honors College.

2029

Funding to Virginia Ball Center ceases, as a part of the original plan of the Foundation.

Becoming a Lifelong Learner

An Interview with Steve Shrader



What did you think you were going to do when you first started/finished college?

I loved my majors and learning while I was at Ball State but really didn't give a lot of thought to how it would translate to jobs after college. I work a lot in technology and really enjoy creating value with that but I didn't figure that out until after college.

What is your current profession and what does it entail?

I'm an entrepreneur. I graduated with degrees in History and Computer Science, and that combination of thinking allowed me to see the world from a different perspective than most. I mostly focus on technology with two of my companies, but have also been heavily involved in education along with a non-profit that will be starting a for-profit education company in 2024.



What advice would you give to freshman or incoming Ball State students, as a graduate out in the working field?

It's very unique to be in a setting surrounded by so many people pursuing the same goals with access to so many learning experiences, both in the classroom and extracurricular events. Push yourself outside your comfort zone and talk to as many people as you can and attend events across the campus. You'll find friends and hobbies you would never have known you were interested in.



Ball State is a step in your educational journey. It will set you on a firm foundation for the rest of your life, but education is all around you; it is critical to be a lifelong learner and continue to learn and grow as a person.

In what ways did Ball State shape you into the person you are today?

I went to Ball State when I was between 18 and 22 years old, so I was going to be significantly shaped by my environment wherever I was. I was blessed to be at Ball State in the Honors College and surrounded by hardworking and good people.

The people, classes, and conversations at Ball State were significant in shaping the person I am now.



What is something new that you've recently implemented into your routine?

I'm very happy with my life, family, work and hobbies. That is mostly what makes up a person's routine. We are always trying to better our lives though with adjustments, not usually with major changes, although we have done that a few times.

Health is so important to being able to live a fulfilling life but we take it for granted unless we get sick. So we do think about a healthy lifestyle.

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Muncie, IN 47306-0185

Donations

If you would like to make a gift to Ball State or the Honors College, please use the QR code linked to the Ball State Foundation website. There is a drop down menu that will allow you to select the Honors College.



You can also visit the Alumni & Friends page on the Honors College website to update your contact information or get involved with the Honors College from the comfort of your community.



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