

# DANA WEST



*AS – Liberal Arts & Sciences*

**Summa Cum Laude**

24 May 2022

## HONORS PORTFOLIO

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### **Honors Courses.**

American National Government, *Matthew Evans*

Art Appreciation, *Erin Gardner*

Composition II, *Sabrina Chesne*

Introduction to Comparative Politics, *Matthew Evans*

World Civilizations to 1500, *Sevin Gallo*

*“Curiosity has its own reason for existence. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality.*

*It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery each day.”*

Albert Einstein

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### **Community, Curiosity, and Diversity**

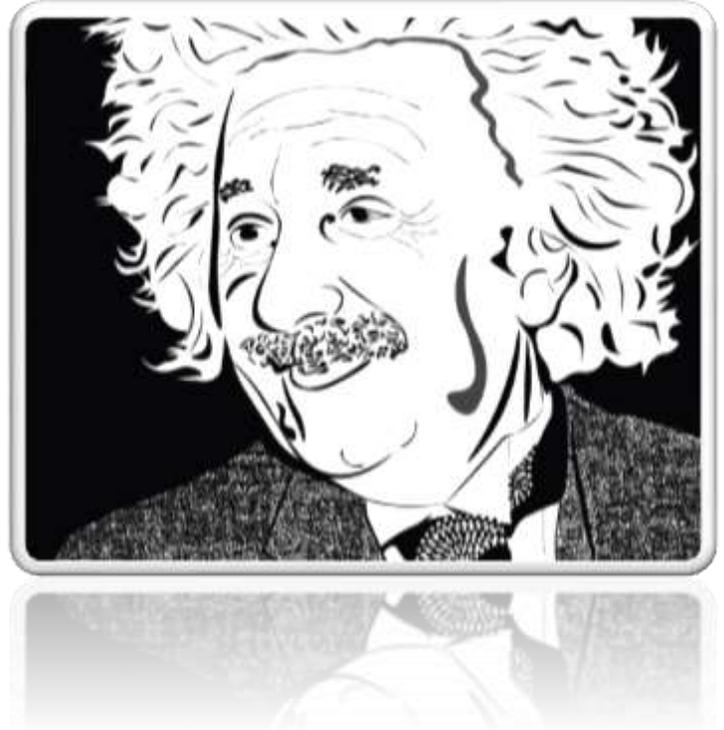
During my time at NWACC, and due largely to the excellent care of the Honors Program faculty, I experienced a resurgence – a personal renaissance! Each of my professors in the HP took a personal interest in my education, extended kindness as I navigated the unfamiliar terrain of being a mother of five and full-time student, and educated me with dignity.

Though once an ardent academic, I experienced great cognitive dissonance in my youth and could not find my place in the world. I felt suffocated by a grotesque mother culture, my **Self** (that elusive illusion) alone in a troubled world. After a tumultuous teenhood and unguided entrance into adulthood, I left university (and society at large) with no intention of returning. My partner (now my husband of 15 years) and I joined forces and began forging our way through life – traveling, farming, learning, loving, growing, creating and raising our large, beautiful family.

We lived in tight-knit communities, ran cooperative farms and bakeries, were atheists, were religious, were atheists again, and then realized we’ve been humanists all along. I was a teacher in our homeschool co-op, a seamstress, midwife’s apprentice, and all-around homesteader. The experience deepened and polished my character in many ways, but two years ago we decided it was time to move our caravan along.

And so, we moved to Arkansas from California in 2020 on the winds of spring and uncertainty, seeking once again, reaching out amid global crises. As a human, a woman, a mother, and friend, I am a multidimensional creature with many needs; the decision to return to the classroom after so many spirited trips around the sun has been a fruitful one. I feel encouraged and supported, full of excitement and vision.

With Prof. Chesne, I read sublime essays, began writing poetry again, and reengaged with my love of the art of language. The pieces she chose told deep stories through diverse



voices; they were thought-provoking, stimulating, full of curiosities and literary virtuosity. “How to Bartend” by Rabih Alameddine was my favorite, speaking to me as a friend.

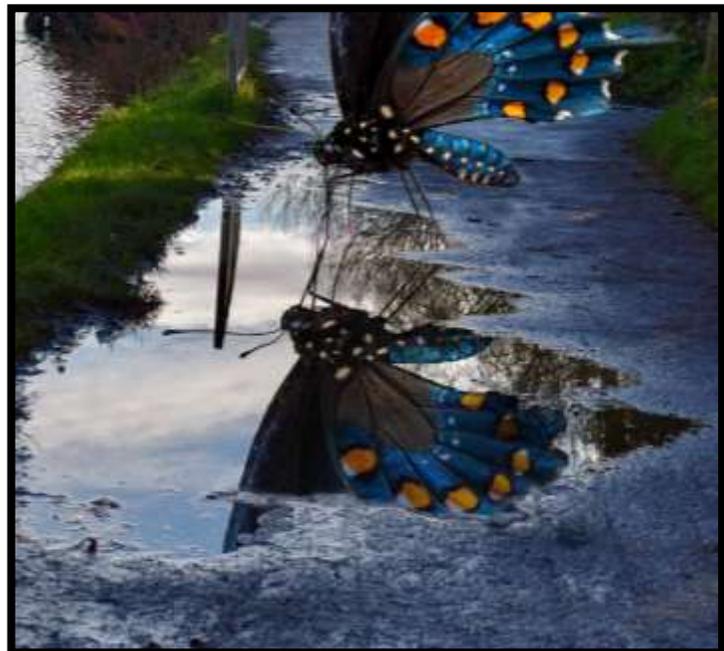


World Civilizations with Professor Gallo was expansive; if we wish to cultivate a healthy humanity, we must know the stories of our shared history! I love her emphasis on food culture, as this provides an experiential, community-oriented way to build bridges between people of diverse backgrounds. I attended a Marshallese food demonstration hosted by Prof. Gallo and Chef Judy Tatio (pictured left with her fabulous fare) and used the delightful experience to inform my honors food presentation. Everything I

learned in this class left me wanting more! I loved learning about the agricultural revolution and how that monumental transition has shaped our global story. The ending is not yet written!

American National Government and Intro to Comparative Politics were transformative. Professor Evans spoke straight to my will, equipping me with practical tools and knowledge to be an engaged global citizen. I enjoyed representing Pakistan on the Economic and Social Council in last year’s virtual Arkansas Collegiate Model United Nations and exploring the perspectives of a diverse international community. Prof. Evans taught me volumes about the structure of our national government, international politics, and civil resistance. He introduced me to the realm of political theory and philosophy, and I just cannot get enough!

Professor Gardner’s Honors Art Appreciation has been my playground in the springtime. Art is a multifaceted gem, and we admired and engaged with it from many angles. She created a safe space for us to explore and connect through our creativity – our most human quality! I loved making my own pieces and learning about such a diverse range of styles and artistic individuals (especially [Laurie Anderson](#) and [Martine Gutierrez](#)).







*“The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.”*

Albert Einstein

### Memorable Experience

Participating in the NWACC Honors Program was a holistically enriching experience. I was profoundly inspired by all I learned from and about my American hero, Laurie Anderson, for my Art Appreciation artist presentation and the personal piece I created to accompany it. My intention was to tell a story, to make something new out of things that already exist, and to put a piece of myself into the world in hopes it could gather energy and speed. I spent several weeks creating a sound collage called “**Stay close to the sounds that make you glad you are alive,**” learning along the way about the composition process and how to use unfamiliar technology. I blended recordings of spring noises from my creek, a rearrangement of six lovely poems by Hafiz, a few melodies borrowed from *Princess Kaguya* (a breathtakingly beautiful film from Studio Ghibli), and music from *Silent Noon*, from the *House of Life*. I was also inspired by all the amazing things I’ve been learning and loving about light in Physics and Human Affairs with Dr. Deanna Shields, a



wonderful class. The result is an expression of emergence, an awakening long in coming. I had a lot of fun making it and am excited to keep experimenting!

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*Then I said, "You asked me if I thought your visions were true. I would say that they were if they made you become more human, more kind to every creature and plant that you know."*

Hafiz, *The Gift*

### Parting words

As Einstein said, "Intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only at death." Live your best life, engage in meaningful works, and explore the mysterious of our marvelous universe. If you are passionate, curious, and seeking understanding, participating in the NWACC Honors program will help advance your intentions.

Find inspiration and be inspiring. You will get as much out your education as you put in, so don't hold back!

