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Honors 1000 Seminar

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Reflective Essay

Honors 1000 The City was a very beneficial course for my learning and development as both a student and a person. The class gave me multiple opportunities to extend my knowledge and community engagement through multiple assignments, events, and the like. My growth extended through these assignments, passport events, lectures, and novels, as we explored the different themes within cities and the lives inside them. I thoroughly enjoyed how much the class challenged me, both in relation to difficulty as well as in relation to the world around us. The knowledge and skills I gained in this class will follow me through all my years at university, and hopefully beyond. I am amazed at the things I learned about how cities can and have changed throughout the years, especially because of the influence that people have on them, depending on where and when the city is located. I will use what I gained in this class to better the world and maintain rounded perspectives when presented with novel issues.

Honors 1000 has strongly influenced my growth as a learner through readings, especially the three books we read in class: *Detroit: A Biography –* Martelle*; City Life –* Rybczynski*; and Ragtime –* Doctorow*.* These books tied in closely with the history of our cities, and how we, the people, have influenced these cities and molded them to fit each generation’s specific desires. *Detroit: A Biography* probably influenced me the most out of all the books. While both *City Life* and *Ragtime* had their merits, they weren’t as sound as Martelle. Rybczynski spoke of how our cities were based off the citizens that lived within them. Doctorow wrote about the specific lives and what they endured each day. Perhaps Martelle’s book spoke to me most directly because I could relate to it most similarly. The fact that it was all about Detroit helped, as well as the lessons it contained for what Detroit is and where the city has come from. The struggles of the many people, immigrants, and workers spoke to me. The way that their hard work, dedication, and courage showed everyday has taught me something about what it is like to be a learner in today’s day and age. While we are fighting very different battles, the battles of those in the book would not have been waged if it had not been for the resilience of the American people and the citizen’s crippling desire to succeed, and to be something more than they are. These desires are not unlike the desires of students today, as students are measured so greatly by their grades and the work that they produce. Martelle’s book has helped me grow as a learner because I have learned just how much it takes to get what you want. There are always going to be people standing in the way, telling you that you can’t do it, or that you aren’t good enough; but it is each person’s reaction to these statements that determines the outcome. I have learned to not let people get in my way, to stand up for something that I believe in, and I will never pass up an opportunity to better myself as both a learner and a student. This book has showed me that I have to take every chance I am given as a learner, and to never pass up an opportunity. But most of all, it taught me to appreciate these opportunities, and these chances at a better life; because not everyone is granted the same chances that I am.

Dean Herron’s lectures and the assignments we received as part of the class also influenced my learning a great deal. Dean Herron had me most interested with his comments and ideas about Chaplin v. Rivera, unity v. uniformity, and the idea that our cities = ourselves. It was interesting that so many of the great debates of Detroit’s history could be boiled down into two main sides. The Chaplin Rivera argument taught me that not everything is what it seems, because even though someone may paint something into a glowing scene, that still could not be the reality of a situation. This taught me to not blindly accept what I am told, to question facts, and to make sure I know both sides of the equation before giving an answer. Also, the idea of unity and uniformity was interesting because of the fact that there is a strong difference between one with the community, and being thousands of the exact same one in the community. It makes me, as a learner, want to stand out, and to make changes to the way I am growing. Unity is something that should be treasured in communities, so that even though so many are different; they can still come together in the name of their shared home.

The essays that we worked on over the semester were extremely eye opening for me as a freshman in college. I never thought critically about any issues before, and I never imagined that any of us could solve any of them. But after seeing the essays that my classmates and me have written, I say: why not? The essays have made me realize that nobody really fully understands any problem, and that the past cannot be undone. However, many people collaborating and making strong efforts can make change in their own little ways. For example, in our third essay, we were asked to choose a problem in Detroit as well as a solution to said problem. In all the research over all the essays, I learned that many people are just as confused as we are about what to do with the failing city. However, there were multiple little groups working hard to combat the effects of a bankrupt Detroit, and their combined efforts actually are making a change in the city. This taught me that even when it seems like there is a dead end, perhaps one just has to look up for a rope instead of around for a door. The way to success isn’t easily found, and it is going to take a great deal more effort to climb out of failure than to walk into it, but that doesn’t mean it is impossible. As a learner, one should take from this to never give up; even when it seems like all hope is lost. You can never grow if you stop trying, and I will keep this in mind as I continue to grow as a learner. There is always another answer to a problem; it just might take a little more work to find it.

Lastly, the passport events that we have taken over the semester have changed the way that I intend to grow and to learn. First, when we saw Modern Times, the film showed the harsh reality of the assembly line as well as the toll it took on the people who worked there. The film shocked me, quite honestly, because it didn’t hesitate to show the actual effects on those working the line, as Chaplin seemed to go insane. It made me understand that to be a good learner, everything is expected of you, and sometimes that still isn’t enough. As in the beginning of the movie, everyone was just sheep in a herd, and one really has to fight that preconception if they ever hope to break out and be something different. A learner cannot simply go with the flow of everyone and expect to excel in a given area; it takes hard work, dedication, and a little bit of crazy. The other passport event, The Eastern Market, was a novel experience for me. I enjoyed the market and it was a welcome change from the usual supermarket feel that most people were accustomed to. While this event was a more indirect influence on my learning, it influenced me nonetheless. As I walked around the crowded booths and saw all the people mingling, I learned something about success and learners that I was surprised by. People always say that it takes a group effort to achieve something, but I never really believed it until I saw the sense of community at Eastern Market. Everyone was talking, helping others, and simply being a part of the community. As a learner, it made me realize that I cannot achieve anything by sitting behind a computer all day doing research and learning new things. True learners learn by engagement, getting involved, first hand experience, and collaboration. While it is hard for me to admit, nothing can be achieved by anyone if we do not work together as learners, to better everyone’s knowledge and growth.

This course will shape my future career and goals in many ways. Not only have I captured many new ways of learning, I have also taken on new perspectives on issues. My mind is far more open than it was at the beginning of the semester. Honors 1000 The City is a terrific class that has taught me more about myself than I could have ever imagined. I have learned many new ways to take in information, as well as how to reach out in new ways. There is far more than one way to gather information, and nothing will ever be achieved through uniformity or through people working alone. In my future goals, I aim to make these points known, that we must work together as a community and bring each of our own unique, novel ideas together in order to be successful people and citizens. I am extremely satisfied with the knowledge I reaped from this course, as well as everything that I have learned about myself. It is important to remember that it is harder to get out of a problem than it was to get into it, but to also never give up, because the next solution could be right above your head.