

Georgia Southern University

Digital Commons@Georgia Southern

Honors College News Blog

Honors College

12-11-2017

University Honors Program News

Georgia Southern University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/honors-news>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "University Honors Program News" (2017). *Honors College News Blog*. 45. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/honors-news/45>

This news article is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors College News Blog by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.

30 Years in Honors: Dr. Tom Case Retires

DECEMBER 11, 2017



Dr. Tom Case with his final Honors First-Year Experience class.

Finding Thoreau, Plato and Aristotle on an economics class reading list is rather uncommon. Most professors do not stray from the textbook; however, Dr. Thomas Case prefers works of literature and philosophy as an avenue into the subject. "Many students believe that economics exists only in the textbook. I wanted them to realize that economics exists outside its field and spills into cultural aspects of our society, like the novels we read," Dr. Case said. This innovative approach to economics is but one example of the ways he has shaped honors education at Georgia Southern.

Dr. Case was hired in the fall of 1981 by the College of Business, one year before the Bell Honors Program (BHP) was founded in 1982. It was not until 1987, however, that he was asked by Bell Honors Director Dr. Hew Joiner to take on teaching honors courses, and in that year the two of them created the Honors section of the Freshman Orientation course, a precursor to the First Year Experience (FYE) course currently taught.

"The University wanted an extended orientation for the incoming freshman. Dr. Joiner asked me to teach the Honors section. I actually taught that class until the Bell Honors Program ended," Dr. Case said.

Dr. Joiner and the Honors Council had developed a rigorous and challenging set of courses for Bell Honors Program students. "At my request, Tom Case volunteered his time over the following summer to create such a course, and his design was ratified by the full Council in time to be introduced in the ensuing fall. It seemed only logical to ask Tom to teach this class, in addition to his slate of departmental teaching duties. He accepted cheerfully and he continued to guide its students through an "Introduction to University" more useful to BHP Scholars thereafter," Dr. Joiner said.

After several years of teaching this introductory course, Dr. Case also volunteered to teach the Honors section of economics. When the College of Business no longer wanted to have an Honors section, Dr. Case came forward. He felt it necessary to continue offering this course. He added this class to his normal teaching schedule, as an uncompensated overload.

"I stepped in because I wanted the students to have the opportunity to take Honors economics. I felt like it was the right thing to do for the students and the Bell Honors Program. This course was usually taken by sophomores, so I was able to teach some of my freshman students again. I enjoyed watching their growth from freshman to sophomore year," he said.

When Dr. Case taught this economics course, he expected discussion rather than lecture. His students read Thoreau, Plato and Aristotle. In class, the students participated in debates on the topics within each reading. He also emphasized the importance of the history of economics, and how ancient theories shaped modern-day finances. They also read works by Karl Marx and Adam Smith creating a rich reading experience for his students.

"One semester, I had my students read Walden by Henry David Thoreau. In this piece of literature, he talks about the economy of Concord and Lexington. When he enters the woods for an extended amount of time, he discusses the process of gaining materials for building a house. The story included very basic levels of economics," he said.

Dr. Case was able to witness the growth of the Bell Honors Program as well as the development of the University Honors Program. The biggest difference was the increase in the number of students. With a larger community, the honors program has more resources and opportunities for the students. Dr. Case is still heavily involved in the Honors Program. He teaches an Honors FYE section, Surviving the Tech Revolution.

Similarly to his economics classes, Dr. Case has his students read novels and articles centered on society's evolving technology. His FYE course is primarily seminar based because he wants his students to initiate the conversation.

"At the beginning of class, I talk about major points that I think are necessary. Afterwards, I let my students talk freely. I am there to guide the discussion only if it needs it. One thing I love about my students is their openness. They do not have to agree with me or the other students, but they are always respectful and willing to hear everyone's ideas and interpretations," he said.

Dr. Case feels that a class with discussion rather than lecture allows the students to become active thinkers. Students from his last class this semester benefited from this style of teaching.

"My favorite memory from this semester came from a discussion on Tom Friedman's book, Thank you for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations. A chapter in his book analyzes if God is in cyber space. One of my students asked the class how we can place morality within technology, like self-driving cars. It grew into such an interesting conversation that I will remember," Dr. Case said.

Kelley Nemecek (information systems '19) was the peer leader for Dr. Case's class this semester, and served as a resource for the students. "I have greatly enjoyed my time both working with Dr. Case as his peer leader and as a student in his classes. He leads insightful conversations in the classroom and serves as an inspiration to students of all levels."

Thirty six and half years of experience influenced Dr. Case's pedagogy. When he first arrived here at Georgia Southern University, there were 6,300 students on campus. Now, the student population is over 20,000. Despite this growth, Dr. Case does not feel the university has lost their connection with the students.

"Georgia Southern University has always tried to maintain that student-centeredness, personal touch and relationship. The students were and still are the primary focus of this school. When this semester comes to an end, it will be the students that I miss the most. I'll miss the give and take during our classroom discussions. Even after retirement, I want to help as much as I can with the Honors Program," he said.