

Kaitlyn Diskin
Film

Photo courtesy of Ann Arbor Film Festival.

Film Students Rate Festival Submissions

Honors College students are often offered opportunities outside of class to further their knowledge and interests. Recently, one came from the [Ann Arbor Film Festival](#) (AAFF).

Formed in 1963, the annual AAFF is the fourth oldest festival in the U.S. This fall, the festival directors reached out to Honors College faculty member Benjamin Schneider, who gathered a group of students to view submissions for the Animated and Experimental Shorts categories.

Pam Westphal (Film) is one of the students who took part in the screenings. “I wanted to partake because I wanted to see the behind-the-scenes details about film festivals,” she describes. As a Film student, Pam thought that the opportunity could “provide a nice practical experience [she] wouldn’t often get.”

For a few of the students involved, this was a chance to look deeper into a possible career path. “I’ve always held such a fascination with film festivals,” says Abbie Esterline (Film). “Working at the Union Cin-

ema, I get some experience with them, but this was a whole new layer I hadn’t taken part in before.”

Ava Kanthack (Film) feels similarly: “I hope to work for a film festival one day and I thought this would be a fun way to gain a little more insight into that world.”

The team gathered on Zoom for a few hours to watch and discuss the films. Then, they rated different aspects of each entry as part of the festival’s judging process.

Not only was this a great opportunity to learn more about the selection process for film festivals, but the students enjoyed meeting other Honors College students interested in film as well.

“Talking with everyone in the Zoom meeting was so empowering,” shares Ava. “Especially because we were all women discussing a male-dominated field, it was so nice to meet more women in the Honors College with similar interests.”

Professor Schneider hopes to continue the relationship with the festival, so more students have an opportunity to participate.

Cold Read Crew Hosts Virtual Table Reads

At present, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the amount of drama existing outside our personal lives and we’re likely all familiar with the enterprise of seeking reprieve from these feelings.

Enter the Honors College Cold Read Crew (stage left), offering drama at the level of the fictitious and interpersonal.

Participants select parts for themselves from a chosen play and meet online to enjoy the spontaneity and hilarity inevitable of a several hour-long first reading.

Grace Feucht (English) participated in Thomas Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy*: “I signed up to play two characters to fill the cast list and ended up having many scenes where I talked to myself, repeatedly taking on and off a baseball hat to differentiate between the two characters.”

Honors College faculty member Jacqueline Stuhmiller organizes the cold reads: “I love seeing us all come together to create art in the spur of the moment.”

The material itself is full of intrigue, betrayal, murder, and murderers being murdered. The performances elevate the material with unintended humor, untraceable accents, and, with surprising ubiquity, hand-drawn facial hair.

The Cold Read Crew intends to continue in the Spring semester with Honors College students Faith Wrycha (Film) and Emily Fedewa (English) taking up leadership roles.

“All of the cold reads have been so entertaining, both to watch and to perform in. I’m looking forward to keeping it going,” explains Emily.

Faith says that, for participants, “there’s no pressure to read perfectly and no theater experience is necessary.”

The confluence of the exciting material and levitous performances makes for vividly memorable shows. Anyone interested in theater or collaborative art should try out, even for a small part.

Avery Dedjoe
Engineering

Photo courtesy of Honors College.