



Spotlight on the

CAROL FARBER HONORS PROGRAM

at Nassau Community College

Winter 2022 | Issue 1

Alumni Highlight



Scott Zukowski

Scott Zukowski is a 2021-23 Postdoctoral Fellow in the Institute for American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria. He graduated from Nassau Community College with honors in May 2007, after which he earned his Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree from Tulane University in New Orleans. He then spent a year working at a gold prospect in the Alaskan wilderness before doing his Ph.D. in American literature at Stony Brook University. Following his Ph.D., he received a Mellon/ACLS Public Fellowship, working as an editor and events manager at Library of America, a nonprofit publisher of American literature. Always appreciative of his time at NCC, he served on the NCC Alumni Association Board of Directors from 2012 to 2021 and hopes to again in the future.

Statement About Honors Program:

When I think back on the most revolutionary experiences of my life, my final semester at NCC always sticks out as one of the most profound. For some reason, I was enrolled in four honors courses at once, and miraculously (and unexpectedly) they all fit together and complemented one another so well that it actually felt like I was enrolled in one "super-course" rather than four distinct ones. I learned about world literature (with Professor Hromulak), psychoanalysis, Marxism, Lockean philosophy, the theory of relativity, and the complex racial histories of rock and roll, and I emerged with a different mind than I entered with. And if that weren't rewarding enough, because I was an honors student and a member of Phi Theta Kappa, Tulane University then offered me a major scholarship that allowed me to continue my studies. I often reflect on the NCC Honors Program and wonder where I'd be without it.

"One of the major benefits of the Honors program is the long-lasting relationships students and faculty develop. Our Honors students typically keep in touch with Nassau faculty after graduation throughout their journey to their ultimate degree, and even after having achieved their career goals. Scott Zukowski is one such student. Scott was an outstanding Honors student here at Nassau. After graduation, he went on to finish his B.A. and M.A. in English at Tulane University, inevitably obtaining the Ph.D. at Stony Brook University. Thereafter, he received several fellowships, including the Mellon/ACLS Public Fellowship at the Library of America, an MLA fellowship, and an internship with the Rockefeller Foundation. He has also published articles in the Early American Studies journal.

Scott is now an Assistant Professor at the Institute for American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria, and the Associate Editor for the leading American Studies journal in continental Europe, Amerikastudien/American Studies.

Scott also served as President of the Alumni Association for NCC for nine years.

Quite a resume, to be sure!

Those of us who have had the privilege of teaching in the Honors Program are truly fortunate to have played a part in Honors students' academic and professional growth."

*Virginia Hromulak, Ph.D.
Professor, English*

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Newsletter!

Honors Program

Contact us!

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Alumni Highlight

DAUS Student Leverages NYU Alumni Network to Land Full-Time Position at Citibank



We are pleased to share that one of our BS in Real Estate students, Jhamal Cruickshank ('22), recently earned full-time employment at Citibank in the Public Finance Division as a result of leveraging an alumni relationship, which began through SPS Wasserman's career programs and coaching. After his career coaching session, Jhamal was connected with an alum working in finance who helped him navigate the job search and

encouraged him to take advantage of a number of Wasserman resources. This led to Jhamal attending Wasserman's on-campus recruitment program, where he landed his position with Citibank.

"I am passionate about finance and ultimately knew I wanted a role that matches my interests. Public Finance is the perfect bridge for me because it is a cross between project finance and investment banking. I chose Citi because I knew it would be the perfect place to grow since their public finance team leads the league tables. Additionally, the team was very supportive and provided constructive and positive responses to all my questions about their work culture. This indicated to me that Citi was a place where I could develop professionally and personally."

Jhamal cites SPS Wassermann as playing a pivotal role in securing his offer: "With the help of career coach, Alina Acevedo, I was able to revamp my resume and tailor it to my career searches. Wasserman facilitated the opportunity to be introduced to NYU alumni who were working in finance, and these individuals provided helpful advice on how they got into finance."

He also credits the Division of Applied Undergraduate Studies (DAUS) for the success he has experienced: "DAUS was the most attractive option because of the benefits it offered to transfer students. The program allowed me to be eligible for many scholarships, which made my goal of attending my dream school attainable. The program at DAUS is composed of individuals who have a similar background as myself, so I knew that my transition to NYU would be easy."

Statement About Honors Program:

"I must first pay respect to my Honors English Professor Hromulak whose constant affirmations, challenges, and support helped me through some of my most vulnerable moments at NCC. The high academic standard set forth by the honors program kept me focused on my goals and additionally the diversity of the program and its facilities kept me occupied and challenged which made my transition to NYU seamless."

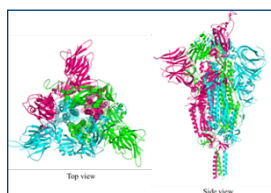
Faculty Highlight

Professor David Pecan's most recent academic publications include "[Un]Licensed Riot: Prodigality, Hypocrisy, and Guild Discourse in Chaucer's *Cook's Tale* Fragment," for the journal *Narrative and Language* (forthcoming Spring 2022), a chapter entitled "The Dragon Has Left the Building." For the book *Teaching Beowulf: Practical Approaches*. (Medieval Press [with] DeGruyter, forthcoming December 2021), "Negotiating Interpretative Paradigms of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*." *Gnosis*, vol. 4, no. 2, (January 2018), 1-16, and "The Expressive-Repressive Binary: A Consideration of Rhetoric and Ideology in the Old English *Wanderer* and Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Book I, Meter I." *Ashvamegh*, vol. 3, issue 35 (December 2017). 1-20. Additionally, Professor Pecan was appointed to the National Endowment for the Humanities Association's Review and Awards Panel for Seminars and Institutes in the Area of Medieval Studies (2020), and continues to work on completing two book-length studies—one on the Wheel of Fortune Motif in Medieval Literature for McFarland Press and a study of the Old and Middle English versions of the Orpheus Narrative and their relationship to medieval impressions of Ancient Greek and Classical Roman philosophy for the *Literature and Philosophy* Series produced by Vernon Press.



COVID-19 Variants: Structure and Function of Spike Proteins

Rakhi Agarwal, Ph.D., Chemistry Department, Nassau Community College, NY



The world has been facing a life-threatening pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Recently, highly transmissible and infectious COVID-19 variants evolved with dire consequences to humans. The most troubling variants of concerns (VOCs) are - Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta. The entry gateway

of the virus is by host ACE-2 receptor recognition and binding via receptor-binding domain (RBD) of the viral spike protein. This trimeric spike protein (**Figure**) plays a crucial role in receptor recognition, viral attachment, and cell membrane fusion. In our study, a sequence alignment of VOCs and structural modelling of spike protein with ACE-2 receptor complex unraveled the structure-function correlation of transmission and infectivity. At least eight mutations at the RBD of the

spike protein were involved in its higher interaction with the host ACE-2 receptor. The two most striking L452R and T478K mutations in the Delta variant at its RBD of spike protein provide additional electrostatic interaction with the ACE-2 receptor. It potentially leads to its higher transmission rate and infectivity. This study sheds light on a better understanding of the mechanism of host-pathogen interaction and will guide in making appropriate therapeutics for SARS-CoV-2.

Acknowledgments: In Nov-21, I got the invitation by Prof. Hynes-Musnisky with an opportunity to present this research to the Honors program students during the Lunch and Learn series at NCC. Lastly, but not least, I truly admire the dedication of high school student Ms. Harshni Parag Patel from Jose Marti STEM Academy, NJ, in carrying out this research project with me in Summer-21 along with help from her advisors and colleague.

2021 Long Island Heart Walk

This past September Honors Club participated in the 2021 Long Island Heart Walk. Honors Club raised over \$1000 for the American Heart Association. Thank you to everyone who joined us in the walk! It was a great start to the school year.



Honors Beach Clean-up

This October's Honors beach clean-up was a huge success. In just two hours, we collected over 30 pounds of garbage from Long Beach. In addition, we collected important data about the trash we found that will help efforts to reduce our pollution of the ocean. By far, the strangest object found was a football by honors president, Markenson. Special thanks to the American Littoral Society for providing the bags, data sheets, and information on organizing the clean-up. If you want to participate in another New York clean up, you can visit their website.



Honors Club Hosts Friendsgiving

In November, the Honors Club hosted a Friendsgiving event for members. This was our main social event of the semester as a club and we had an impressive turnout! Club members enjoyed a night of music, games, and conversation. Attendees were asked to bring canned or non-perishable goods which were donated to The Nest. Thanks to everyone who came and to the Honors Club board for planning the event!



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