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Balance of Power Book Club

by Toni Marie Perilli, ’22

During the fall semester, President Geisler hosted a book club for Castle Scholars, which was later opened to Clark Scholars as well. The club focused on the book Balance of Power by Richard North Patterson, which included a Q&A session with the author, as well as a group meeting over dinner.

At the beginning of the fall semester, President Geisler sent an email that described his desire to host an intimate-setting book club with any Castle Scholars students who would be interested in participating. The club would read Richard North Patterson’s “Balance of Power,” a fictional novel focusing on the subject of gun violence and the controversy surrounding legislation on the right to “bear arms,” as guaranteed in the Constitution. Aside from this, the plotline also discussed the boundaries of Presidential power, especially in situations with personal interest, the influence of interest groups, and the complexity of finding solutions for such multi-level problems. The group was set to meet twice, but a Microsoft Group was organized so members could interact with one another, as well as President Geisler, via email at any time they found convenient.

The first meeting of the group was entitled “Castle Conversations,” and was an event that was open to the public, featuring a talk with author Richard North Patterson and MSNBC contributor Bret Stephens and an open Q&A. In the first half of the event, the two special guests discussed the relevance of the modern issues featured in the book, as well as their own personal experiences related to the issue. The second half of the event opened the floor to the attendees, where President Geisler allowed students to ask their questions first. Students of all ages and class levels asked engaging and conversation-provoking questions on the book, modern politics, and how the two connect, as well as about points made earlier in the event. Patterson and Stephens both answered enthusiastically and with great detail and interest.

The second meeting of the group was limited to members of the book club. On a Tuesday night in Reid Castle, President Geisler welcomed a group of approximately 70 Castle Scholars and Clark Scholars for dinner and a group discussion. As everyone was arriving, the President kindly welcomed everyone in and directed everyone to the dining options for the night, featuring pizza, rolls, salad, and a selection of desserts. After everyone filled their plates and sat down, a light conversation ensued as the group ate their meal.
Once everyone finished eating, the conversation became deeper and deeper, and the President broke the group into two for an activity demonstrating the complexity of the issue. Each group represented a side of the gun policy debate and had to state their case and defend it, while the other group was allowed to refute it with their points. The debate lasted for quite a while, moderated by President Geisler, and ended in good spirits.

Before the end of the second night, President Geisler requested feedback from the students attending. Nearly every student responded that they enjoyed the event, and would be interested if the President were to potentially host another event like this one. Hopefully, in this upcoming fall semester, President Geisler will announce a second “pop-up” book club, and students will have the opportunity to once again participate in this thought-engaging and enriching experience.
In the Fall semester of 2019, students of the Castle Scholar Honors Program held the college’s annual Human Rights Awareness Day, an event that discusses the importance of our rights and encourages everyone to stand up and voice their ideas. Professor Yeung-Cheung from the department of Biology guided and supported the students in planning this occasion, focusing on its main theme: Youth Activism. While Human Rights Awareness Day elaborated on speaking out against the injustices of the world, it especially emphasized the power of youth, how young people can use their voice to promote positive changes.

The day began with President Geisler greeting the audience and discussing the importance of Human Rights Awareness Day, how it is critical that we fight for what we believe in. After his opening speech, the Castle Scholar students welcomed their first keynote speaker Nathan Law, the youngest legislator from Hong Kong who was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize of 2018. In his presentation, Mr. Law communicated about his journey and wholesome efforts in fighting for democracy in China. Incorporating a video as well, he displayed the unfortunate upshots that came with his fight for change, such as the violent shooting by police and even his own arrest. Many audience members filled the room with gasps, appalled by what they were seeing. However, they were fascinated by Mr. Law’s motivation and bravery in fighting for a better political system in China.

After his impacting discussion, he then joined in a panel discussion with other youth activists: Sarah Clements, Nazira Cisse, and Noely Jimenez. Clements became a well-known activist for gun control after her mother survived the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012; Cisse, a high school student, became part of the Teen Activist Project, a group that strives for racial justice and LGBTQ+ rights; and Jimenez is currently a theatre major at Manhattanville, who is also a committed worker in the People’s Theatre Project in Manhattan. In this conference, these youth activists discussed their rationales as to why they began advocating for change, the struggles they had to endure, and how they will not stop pushing for equality and safety in our country. Audience members got to learn more about their experiences through a Q&A at the end, asking Mr. Law about his fears when fighting for democracy, how Clements deals with individuals who oppose gun control, and other insightful questions.

Audience members afterwards were offered to participate in many fun
activities that the Castle Scholars students had created. They joined in on designing colorful posters that stated what they believed in and what we should advocate for, along with posting their thoughts through sticky notes on the Lennon Wall, inspired by the actual wall created during the 1980’s. Some even took part in Jimenez’s theatre workshop, learning about acting techniques, as well as having fun.

The end of Human Rights Awareness Day centered on the Brownson Takeover, a critical event of the college’s history. The discussion elaborated on 18 black students at Manhattanville during 1969, whom were fed up with the discrimination on campus and protested by refusing to leave Brownson Hall. The Castle Scholar students presented a video-interview conducted with Dr. Elizabeth McCormack, the former president of the college during that time, where she spoke about the impact of this form of youth activism and how it encouraged her to allow students to voice their opinions on crucial topics. Cheryl Hill, an alumni who was actually one of the activists, discussed to the audience about her personal experience during the Brownson Takeover. She elaborated on the impacts of their protest, how it influenced students to protest against the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in 1970. Ms. Hill also emphasized the importance of youth activism, how we have a voice and can use it to end the prejudice and injustices that still exist in our world today.

Human Rights Awareness Day is a significant, intriguing event that not only gives Castle Scholar students the opportunity to learn about our rights, but the whole Manhattanville community as well. Having these youth activists come and tell their stories was on eye-opening experience to many and we are very grateful to the Castle Scholar Honor Program for creating this amazing occasion year after year.
On Monday, October 28th, the Castle Scholars were invited to a dinner with President Geisler. This is an annual tradition of the Castle Scholars Program, where students have the chance to socialize with professors in the program and President Geisler.

This year, we were treated by Chartwells to an array of different foods, drinks, and desserts. We sat in round tables with fellow Castle Scholars, with a few professors at each table. It was great to have conversations with professors outside of the classroom, and socialize with fellow Castle Scholars,
MoMA, the Museum of Modern Art is located in Manhattan, New York. West 55th street between fifth and sixth avenue, a few blocks away from Central Park. The layout of the building follows a chronological order, starting from the 5th floor in the 1860’s progressing down the levels until ending with 21st century pieces. The fourth and fifth floors hold the permanent collections of MoMA, ranging in various different styles and artists. There were many different media throughout the floors, oil on canvas, metal, film. Within every exhibit there was a variety of art to be observed.

Manhattanville thrives off of culture and often offers its students various opportunities to explore the inspiring locations available. In March of 2020, the Castle Scholars Honors Program organized this fantastic trip to MoMa. Professor Adhia, the director of the Castle Scholars Program and Associate Professor of Economics, and Professor Saleeby-Mulligan, from the Department of Art History and Visual Culture, were the professors to accompany students into the city. The agenda for the day was loosely structured. We arrived together, walking into the grand entryway and were immediately surrounded by art. After getting our tickets we were left to explore the museum on our own, determining our own path as we wished. We met for lunch as a group and later met back at the main entrance to finish off our trip where we started.

My journey through the museum began on the fifth floor, as was suggested. There were endless exhibits, so the game plan was to target those that caught the most interest, personally. Some of those being: Readymade in Paris and New York, Abstraction and Utopia and Architecture for Modern Art. On this floor was The Starry Night by Vincent van Goah, a modern art classic. Another well-known artist on this floor is Claude Monet. His series, Water Lilies, are a personal favorite and inspiration. Seeing these pieces in person was utterly breathtaking.

Throughout the rest of the museum there were numerous artists, lesser known, but still with incredible work. Throughout this article I’ve embedded pictures of a few works that I found interesting and inspiring. Marcel Jean’s Untitled (Woman’s Profile), had me turn around and walk back into the room to see it once more. The intricate details and lovely side profile were awe inspiring. It seems as though there is a tie between nature and humans, almost as if this is a representation of Mother Nature, in my interpretation of it. Joan Mitchell’s Ladybug, much larger in person than it appears in picture, is what I would call a perfect blend.
of chaos. The colors and strokes are loud, but work in harmony with one another, resulting in an impactful and entertaining piece. I personally find it very aesthetically pleasing and also stimulating.

This trip, like all other Castle Scholar events, was inspiring, informative and entertaining. The other students and I were and are so grateful for this trip and all that the Castle Scholars Program has to offer us. The skills we learn because of our involvement and the opportunities we are presented with, are something that will be held with us throughout our educational, professional and personal lives. Even after we are no longer Manhattanville students.
In November 2019, the Castle Scholars Honors Program had set up an amazing trip to the Rubin Museum of Art, the museum that celebrates the arts and cultures of Asia in New York City. Professor Saleeby-Mulligan from the Department of Art History and Visual Culture and Professor Mehta from the Department of World Languages and Literatures, accompanied students on this trip, ensuring that they had not only a unique experience, but also a chance to learn about different beliefs and to make cross-cultural connections. While the main focus of our visit to the Rubin Museum was an exhibit of photographs, “Shahidul Alam: Truth to Power,” by the Bangladeshi activist and photographer Shahidul Alam, we had the opportunity to visit the rest of the museum.

On entering the museum, we came across beautiful paintings of Chinese dragons on the walls, staring at us with wide, colorful eyes. As we walked further past the entrance, we came across a white, circular table with intriguing instructions on top. It asked us to type our beliefs and what aspects of our lives we wished to improve on. Students wrote noteworthy statements, saying how they would never give up on their dreams, be happier with who they are, etc. After we finished typing in our statements, we had to spin the top of the table, which visually projected our goals on the ceiling, going up with the spiral staircase.

Our tour soon began and the docent started out by describing how the circular table we had just spun was similar to a prayer wheel, an item used by Asian monks that are filled with sacred mantras. They are utilized to help ease pain, unhappiness, and the desire for a better life. The students and I were amazed by this significant of the table and it made us more eager to learn about Asian cultures.

As we walked through the museum, our docent began by showing us elegant forms of art, such as statues of the Buddha. She explained to us how each statue meant something different based on their body position, their pose, and the direction of their eyes. She also introduced us to an old, yet captivating work of Chinese art, covered with images of demons, human beings, animals, and nature. She described to us how the work of art represented a view of life and the afterlife.

As we moved up the different floors of the museum, our docent introduced us to other unique statues from Asian culture. One was focused on a Hindu goddess’s success that included a riveting story of spirits and demons. Towards the
end of the tour, we came to a small room, decorated with dim lights, red and gold cloths, and altars for the Buddha. The humming of monks filled the room, creating a serene vibration for us. Our docent shared with us the importance of this prayer room, how it is used, and the significance of the small details in the room.

Our final destination was the Shahidul Alam exhibit on the museum’s top floor. Here we encountered photographs from Alam’s four-decade long career that included portraits, photos of daily life, and protest movements. Our trip to the Rubin Museum of Art was not only an educational experience, but also a great opportunity to observe different beliefs and how they are translated through art. It was an eye-opening introduction to arts and cultures of Asia. The students and I were very grateful to the Castle Scholars Honors Program for arranging this trip.
Senior Spotlights

Name: John Calicchia
Major & Minor: Music Business Major; Accounting and Finance Minor
Favorite Castle Scholars Class: Beatles in their Context because who wouldn’t love learning about the Beatles and listening to their music.
Favorite Castle Scholar Memory: Going to see Strawberry Fields in the city as a field trip with the Beatles class.
Campus Involvement: Tour Guide, Music Industry Club, NSLS, 2020 Quad Jam Planning Committee/Battle of the Bands Coordinator
Post Graduation Plans: Attending Iona College for an MBA in Financial Management
Advice for Castle Scholars: Work hard, get involved as much as you can, don’t be afraid to try something outside your comfort zone and have fun. These four years will go by fast so make the most of them.

Name: Carmen Rizzo
Major & Minor: Majors: Dance & Theatre (concentration in Dance) and Business Management; Minor: Psychology
Favorite Castle Scholars Class: The Beatles in Their Context because I love the Beatles and learning more about each member of the band, their stories and their personality is very interesting to me.
Favorite Castle Scholar Memory: The several dinners with Elizabeth McCormack and her tales of her time at Manhattanville.
Campus Involvement: DTH Office Assistant, Digital Innovations Team, Manhattanville Dance Troupe, Minds in Motion
Post Graduation Plans: Audition for several dance companies and look for administrative positions in dance related areas
Advice for Castle Scholars: Be self-motivated and search for things that motivate you.
Name: Rachel T. Schlegel  
Major & Minor: Double Major in Psychology and Sociology  
Favorite Castle Scholars Class: Beatles In Their Context: They are my favorite band and I loved learning their history!  
Favorite Castle Scholar Memory: Helping run the Research Fair!  
Campus Involvement: Vice President of Cross Roads, Treasurer of Active Minds, Student Instructor for Sociology, Independent Research in Sociology  
Post Graduation Plans: Attending Columbia University for my masters in Social Work this fall!  
Advice for Castle Scholars: Work hard, believe in yourself, and above all take good care of yourself.

Name: Jeanine Castagna  
Major & Minor: Major: Creative Writing, Minor: Psychology  
Favorite Castle Scholars Class: I really liked my First Year Seminar Power of Prejudice because I was learning about issues in gender and racial relations. I also got to teach my experiences to a group of high school students at Nelson Mandela High School and at an ice cream social hosted by the college.  
Favorite Castle Scholar Memory: The dinners with President Geisler were always a nice opportunity to interact with fellow Castle Scholars and President Geisler.  
Campus Involvement: Pathways and Connections (PAC) Peer Mentor, Assistant Director of this year’s Vagina Monologues, President of Manhattanville Valiant Access Club (MVAC), Vice President of Academics for SGA, Student Coordinator for Art of Dancing (Clark Center Program), Editor in Chief of Castle Voices. I also perform in Manhattanville Dance Ensemble and Manhattanville Sound.  
Post Graduation Plans: I am continuing my Dual Degree BA/MPS Program in Early Childhood and Special Education. I will be working at a Westchester camp this summer and hope to work at a nearby school while taking graduate classes.  
Advice for Castle Scholars: Take advantage of the trips and Castle Scholars events.
Name: Jessica Roman  
Major & Minor: Political Science with a Concentration in Legal Studies  
Favorite Castle Scholars Class: My favorite Castle Scholars Class was The United Nations System taught by Professor Kamal. This class was unique in that Professor Kamal is actually a retired United Nations Ambassador to Pakistan. He told us so many interesting stories, describing his experiences traveling around the world and his many encounters with fellow diplomats. The class was small, I think only about 6 or 7 students; this gave us the rare opportunity to not only learn from this worldly professor but also pick his brain at what life was like on the floor of the United Nations General Assembly.  
Favorite Castle Scholar Memory: Going to the Museum of Modern Art (for free!!!)  
Campus Involvement: Founder/President of Asian American Student Association; Mville Women’s Soccer Fall 2017-Spring 2019  
Post Graduation Plans: Attend the University of Florida Levin College of Law  
Advice for Castle Scholars: My advice for Castle Scholars is to take advantage of the Castle Scholars programs throughout the semester! I had so much fun going to the Museum of Modern Art with my fellow Castle Scholars as well as going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art with my Castle Scholars Freshman seminar. I would also advise students to step out of their comfort zones when it comes to selecting classes and embrace the unique opportunities provided by a liberal arts education.

Name: Marissa Cordaro  
Major & Minor: Education and Math, no minor  
Favorite Castle Scholars Class: Music and Politics because although the class related to classical music, you can apply what you learned to modern music and relate the two. It was interesting to learn about the different influences that all the composers had on them based on the time period they were writing in.  
Favorite Castle Scholar Memory: Attending the Castle Scholar dinners with the President and having the opportunity to meet and interact with other students that I might not have otherwise known.  
Campus Involvement: Office Assistant and Telecounselor for Admissions  
Post Graduation Plans: Attending grad school at Manhattanville for my masters in education  
Advice for Castle Scholars: Don’t doubt yourself and think that you can’t do it; work hard and put in the effort and you will see success.
**Name:** Jillian Donnellan  
**Major & Minor:** Major: Music Performance Minor: French  
**Favorite Castle Scholars Class:** Music and Politics because it allowed me to view my field of study through a lens most music classes don’t spend much time evaluating.  
**Favorite Castle Scholar Memory:** The Salem Witch Trials class trip to Salem freshman year!  
**Campus Involvement:** I work as the choral librarian, as well as a music peer tutor. I have been on board for the school’s chapter of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) as Treasurer, President, and Vice-President in my Sophomore, Junior, and Senior years respectively.  
**Post Graduation Plans:** As a performing artist, my job field is especially difficult to find work in at the moment. However, I am looking forward to using my time to further my skills (performance-based and others.)  
**Advice for Castle Scholars:** Don’t overwhelm yourself! Being allowed to take more credits than the average student – coupled with the probability of having been an overachiever in high school – may make you think that more equals better, but it doesn’t! Taking advantage of all the opportunities Castle Schools get is wonderful; however, learning your limits BEFORE you get burnt out is just as important as exploring new horizons!
Name: Ashley Thomas

Major & Minor: Double Major in English Literature with a concentration in Creative Writing and Apart of the Five Year Early Childhood/Childhood Education Program and minor in Art History

Favorite Castle Scholars Class: My favorite Castle Scholars class was definitely Professor Cherry’s Social Theories through the arts class. From the field trips to our discussions in class, it was always a great time that was engaging. Professor Cherry really made me enjoy every second of it.

Favorite Castle Scholar Memory: I have two for sure. The first launching of the Castle Voices newsletter when we threw a party in the at the time newly renovated Honors Commons. All the hardwork that the whole board put together to complete it in one month and the guidance of Professor Freeman was so fun to celebrate together. Also, I loved the experience of putting together the Research and Creative Achievement fair and seeing it all come together!

Campus Involvement: Castle Voices Newsletter

Post Graduation Plans: I graduated in December 2019, so I have since continued the masters portion of my 5 year program in Early Childhood/Childhood Education. Ever since December, I have been working full time at Children’s Corner Learning Center as the one of the Infant teachers. It has been one of the most amazing and rewarding experiences. I plan on continuing to work there as long as possible until I receive my Master’s Degree. After that, the goal is to work in a public school in the area teaching any of the younger grades! I am excited to see what the future holds because so far the journey has been amazing!

Advice for Castle Scholars: My advice for Castle Scholars is to definitely always put your best work forward and really dedicate yourself to your studies. It all pays off. Also, get to know the professors that you work closely with during your time at Manhattanville. I know some of the professors I have had have helped me through so much and have guided me in all my endeavors. They are special people. More importantly, make the best of all your time here! Enjoy every second it goes by quick!
Name: Christopher Singh  
**Major & Minor:** Finance and English  
**Favorite Castle Scholars Class:** Social Theory through the Arts because we got to see how different sociological theories have been displayed through various forms of paintings, music, and literature.  
**Favorite Castle Scholar Memory:** Field trip to the Museum of Modern Art  
**Campus Involvement:** Castle Scholar Newsletter, Clark Scholar  
**Post Graduation Plans:** Attending the School of Professional Studies and obtain my Masters degree  
**Advice for Castle Scholars:** Do your best and don’t be afraid to ask for help or critiques

Name: Adia Edmondson  
**Major & Minor:** Dance and Theater (Dance Therapy concentration) major and a minor in Studio Art and Psychology  
**Favorite Castle Scholars Class:** Chemistry of Cannabis; very interesting class where we explore a holistic view of cannabis in the United States, including the politics, chemistry, production, legalization, etc.  
**Favorite Castle Scholar Memory:** First Year seminar; I made great relationships with people in my class that lasted all four years  
**Campus Involvement:** Minds in Motion dance team, Royalty Steppers step team, Latin Fusion dance team, Sister Mary T. Clark scholar, MVL radio, Set/Scene Shop Assistant for the Dance and Theater department, Coachmen Tutor, Zumba Instructor, CASA (formally known as SOCA) club  
**Post Graduation Plans:** Americorp CityYear in NYC 2020-2021, then I plan on getting my Masters in either Social Work or Dance Therapy  
**Advice for Castle Scholars:** Be involved in as much as you can manage.
Poll Results

Are you a Resident or Commuter?
39 responses

What area are you majoring in?
39 responses
Do you hold a job on or off campus?
39 responses

What Type of Clubs/Organizations are you involved in?
28 responses

Where are you from?
39 responses
Special Thanks

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Editor's Note

Jeanine Castagna, ‘20

This semester has been quite a rollercoaster. I’d like to formally thank the Manhattanville College faculty and staff for doing everything they can to support us students during this time. It has been a pleasure to serve as the Editor-in-Chief for this year’s Castle Voices. This year, thanks to the amazing design skills of Toni Marie Perilli, we were able to give this edition a new look. We hope you all enjoy it.

I also want to thank my editorial team: Christopher Singh, Rosanna Vuksanaj, and Toni Marie Perilli, for being so resilient during this time and keeping up with putting this together. It could not have been possible without you all. We did have many other ideas we wanted to execute, such as faculty spotlights and bringing back the launch party, but, unfortunately, the campus closure made these extremely difficult to accomplish.

To my fellow Seniors, I know this is not the way we wished to end our Manhattanville careers. But, I hope to see all of you again and say our goodbyes. It has been a pleasure knowing all of you, and I wish you best of luck in your future.

To our Director, Professor Adhia, thank you for all of your support throughout my years at Manhattanville. Being a Castle Scholar has been an awesome experience that I will never forget.