

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
THIRD HONORS COLLEGE CONVOCATION  
SEPTEMBER TWENTY-NINTH ~ TWO THOUSAND THREE

*Honors College Reflections Series*



Keynote Address:

*“Dice and a Few Keynotes:  
Mallarmé, Messiaen and Audubon”*

PROF. PETER A. MACHONIS, PH.D.

## The Mission and Aims of The Honors College

The mission of The Honors College is to provide an intellectual community where outstanding students and dedicated teachers and scholars pursue intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and personal and professional enrichment marked by excellence in all engagements. It is guided by the FIU Value Statement, which espouses a commitment to: freedom of thought and expression; excellence in the pursuit, generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge; respect for the dignity of the individual; respect for the environment; honesty, integrity, and truth; diversity; and service excellence.

The aims of The Honors College are to:

- 1. Attract the "best and brightest" students from within and outside FIU and provide them a high quality trans-disciplinary educational experience.*
- 2. Enable students to develop critical, integrative, and creative thinking skills and to make connections among domains of knowledge.*
- 3. Facilitate engagement of students in applied and other research collaboration with the finest research faculty as learners and teachers in the scholarly community.*
- 4. Provide mentoring and internship experiences to complement and enrich the knowledge acquired in the classroom and through research collaboration.*
- 5. Offer scope for service learning engagement as a way to build bridges between domains of knowledge and service activity that enhances civic responsibility.*
- 6. Foster a sense of community among students and faculty as citizens with special talents and responsibilities to self, the scholarly community, and society.*



*Honors Convocation Speaker*

**Peter A. Machonis, Ph.D.**

Fellow of The Honors College

Professor Machonis has taught in The Honor College since 1995. A quintessential Honors professor, he is truly a renaissance man. A French linguistics instructor, Professor Machonis is also a lover of music and a fine pianist. An enthusiastic gardener, he raises magnificent orchids. He has navigated the Amazon and slogged through the Everglades, another area of expertise. No one understands the meaning of interdisciplinary more than Professor Machonis.

Not surprisingly, he is currently teaching a fourth year Honors seminar called *Looking to the Future: The Everglades from Beginning to End?* In his class students canoe, bike, birdwatch, and slough slog as they learn about the “river of grass.” Student projects from the class have been displayed at the Everglades National Park Visitors Center. Professor Machonis and his students have made presentations at both national and state conferences. Last year he was a winner of an Outstanding Honors Fellow Award in recognition of his exemplary teaching, mentoring and service.

One of his main research interests is the history of the French Language, and his textbook, *Histoire de la langue: du latin à l'ancien français* (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1990) is currently used by many American universities. In the Fall of 1999, he was featured in four segments of the Canadian Broadcast Company's *Histoire de Parler*, an hourly Sunday broadcast about the French language. Since 1980, when he was awarded a French Government Grant to work with Prof. Maurice Gross at the Université de Paris VII, Peter Machonis has worked extensively on the English lexicon. He is presently an Associate Professor of French and Linguistics in the Department of Modern Languages, where he regularly teaches courses in French Phonetics, History of the French Language, and General Linguistics. He is likewise the director of the FIU à Angers, France Summer Study Program, which sends FIU students to the Loire Valley for total French immersion courses and family stays.

## Dice and a Few Keynotes: Mallarmé, Messiaen and Audubon by Professor Peter A. Machonis, Ph.D.

“P.S. Have a nice war.” reads a sarcastic e-mail last spring from a French linguist colleague in Paris. “You’re not still going to France this summer are you?” questions my mom about FIU in Angers France Program. Terrorism or threats to Americans in France were the least of my worries. Strikes and train connections were the things on my mind. Upon arrival in France, “Thank you for coming to France, in spite of the war, in spite of the euro” we hear from the overseas director. Oh the euro, I said cluelessly, until I realized that paying for FIU à Angers was suddenly 10-20% more expensive than budgeted for. Oh well, you can’t think of everything.

It made me think of an art exhibit I had seen in Miami just before leaving: “Visual Poetics: Art and the Word” at the Miami Art Museum (it’s still there until November 16, 2003). The reason I went is because at the JAM at MAM in June they were featuring a live performance of Stéphane Mallarmé’s enigmatic poem, “Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard”– A throw of the dice never will do away with chance. This I had to see. Linguists don’t have too many favorite poems. The actors really did imitate some of the visual patterns, such as the rolling of the dice, the sinking ship, and created an atmosphere of fortuitousness. A sizeable portion of the exhibit is dedicated to Mallarmé’s poem, “Un coup de dés”– A throw of the dice. No matter what you rolled last year, last semester, last week, yesterday, last time, the last moment in time, your chances are always the same. And so it is in real life according to Mallarmé. Bifurcations are imminent. Life has that element of chance in it. Recognize it. Live with it. ... Play with it.

So today, I welcome you all to another year as part of the FIU Honors College in a perhaps perversely random order. May you take advantage of your rolls of the dice this year.

[ROLL DICE] Sophomores – where are you in-ha-bi-ting? Please don’t leave the honors college because of your hokey course title. It’s really dealing with the simple concept of otherness. Who am I? and Who is the other? I met all of your professors this past summer at retreat and can say that they will all encourage you to examine your beliefs about yourself and others this year. Where are your small section professors inhabiting or hiding today? Can you find them? I know, some of us look like priests today with our academic garb. But in a sense that is our job. We profess. We mentor. And we get excited about stuff. For instance, if you are part of the Honors College which only allows the “best and brightest” to get in, and other students “need not apply,” then YOU are a minority, no? Welcome to the world of “otherness.” This is one particular year that is destined to prepare you “for the long haul” (Merci Monsieur Fjellman) – for the rest of your life, so to speak. So, ... , pay attention.

[ROLL DICE] Welcome Honors Place students. I welcome you with Mallarmé:  
“RIEN N’AURA LIEU QUE LE LIEU EXCEPTE PEUT-ETRE UNE CONSTELLATION”  
NOTHING WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE BUT THE PLACE EXCEPT PERHAPS A CON-  
STELLATION”

Don’t be afraid to get to know your fellow students in Honors Place, to rub against one another, to exchange and discuss ideas, to be involved with campus life. You are a very diverse, intelli-

gent, FIU Honors group. May Panther Hall not be just another place for you, but a part of your everyday constellation.

[ROLL DICE] Welcome Seniors, class of 2004, and in particular my 4th year Seminar on the Florida Everglades. Thank you for coming to campus today. May your experiences this year lead you to believe that the Everglades is indeed a beautiful place, rather than a big useless swamp, and that it should be saved from “terraforming.” Yes, the destruction brought on by developers, and Big Sugar and us is just as destructive as going to another planet and making it inhabitable for humans. “The Honors Curriculum is not about the knowledge of a subject ... but rather the ways we come to ‘know’ it and understand it.” (Merci, Victoria Gitman). And this will be particularly true for you. Every class will be out in the field. No more classrooms. Hands-on learning is also especially true for our Study Abroad Seniors, who will be doing even more Place as Text type learning this coming summer.

For all seniors, you are or will be involved with some sort of individual or group project. Enjoy this independent research, but don’t forget about the connections and interconnections that you’ve learned about last year and the years before. Stay connected to the Honors College and above all, be creative. And after you finish FIU, keep in touch with the Honors College, we want to know about you. When you become rich and famous, our Development Officer will especially want to hear from you. Our Honors alumni are part of the FIU Honors College family, too. So along with the seniors, super seniors, and graduate students, welcome to another year in the honors college.

[ROLL DICE] Let’s welcome our administration -- President Madique, Provost Rosenberg, Dean Griffith.

As chance would have it, we have something unique here at FIU in the Honors College. We “own” the only Honors College like it in the country! Thank you for your continued support. But as we continue to discuss the Honors College curriculum this coming year, please remember that our classics are as original as the College itself. Our classics are sometimes “One book One Florida” type reads like Matthiessen’s *Killing Mr. Watson*. This is the story of Ed Watson, an affable, hard-working guy (He lived in the late 19th early 20th century) who had a suspicious past and became associated with a number of deaths along the southwest coast of Florida. His neighbors, about 20 men, all shot him shortly after a hurricane, on October 24, 1910, when he reappeared in town. And thus started the Watson legend. This story is retold by one of America’s best writers today, Peter Matthiessen, who tries to get at the truth from many different perspectives. Yes, it’s a classic about truth. And this is but one example of an Honors College classic. In addition, our class will discuss it on location – where poor Mr. Watson, or was it “Bloody Watson,” was gunned down in Chokoloskee. We often take a creative and active approach to learning in the Honors College. Is there not something magical about the Honors College? A Parade to celebrate learning and achieving and excellence? At times, I believe that, excluding the Greek Houses, The Honors College is the closest thing we have to an esprit de corps at FIU.

[ROLL DICE] Welcome Honors College Staff – this coming semester will be different, and it will be unique because you are at FIU -- you are the greatest! Thank you for being part of our family and putting up with our antics. May you enjoy this year. We are no longer under con-

struction and our new home looks great, professional, spacious. But don't get too comfortable.

Remember Mallarmé's "Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard"—A throw of the dice never will do away with chance. No matter what you rolled last year, last semester, last week, your chances are always the same. The next partition is just around the corner.

[ROLL DICE] A special welcome to our Honors College Biscayne Bay Campus students and faculty! Thank you for driving or taking the bus all the way here today. Driving to University Park can be as complicated and frustrating as getting through Mallarmé's syntax – at times his sentence structures could take either one of two directions, just like your drive from up north, just like your next roll of the dice, or flip of the coin. Heads? Tails? North? South? Leave early for your meetings down here. Drive safely. If you're late, you've got the perfect excuse: "Un coup de dés."

[ROLL DICE] Welcome Freshmen, welcome to ideas of ideas of ideas! Who are we? What is faith? What's an idea? What's with the dice? ... This is beyond the Catechism. Your answers will perhaps take you from Nietzsche's "opium of the people" to Pascal's "Le cœur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connaît point" – "the heart has its reasons that reason does not know". The first year seminar "The idea of origins – origin of ideas" – will be a far cry from your High school biology, philosophy or theology class. You will examine mankind's uncertain role in the universe, while at the same time examining your own (Hope it's not also uncertain.) life here at FIU. Good luck.

This is your first of many firsts this first year at FIU. First time away from home, first time you have four or five profs in one class, it might be your first time in a real discussion class – a first time for this ... a first time for that ..." once wrote an Honors student of mine. So, don't be shy; jump in and explore new ideas with a your small group. Your classmates will remind you to look at life from many different perspectives in a fun non-threatening way. Remember "Toute Pensée émet un Coup de Dés." – All thought emits a Throw of the Dice.

[ROLL DICE] Welcome juniors, welcome to the world of aesthetics, the world of beauty, the world of fashion! If the first two years were too philosophical for you, this year will definitely be down to earth, and quite simple: something is aesthetically beautiful or ugly because some authority figure (parent, rock star, politician, professor) is imposing these values on you. Why do we always go back to painters that we know in a museum? What is the purpose of literature? These might be some of the questions you will explore this year. What is music? What is the purpose of music? Does it convey ideas? Emotions? Can it bring you closer to the unknown? The French composer, Olivier Messiaen, thought so. One of his great works for piano is *Vingt Regards Sur l'Enfant Jesus*. Twenty Gazes Upon the Infant Jesus.

A great conductor whom I saw in Paris in the early 1980s when living in Paris, Olivier Messiaen was also an amateur ornithologist, and tried to imitate as precisely as possible actual European bird calls in many of his musical compositions. He himself said that he was transcribing actual birdcalls, adding his own musical style, of course. So today, if you'd permit me, I'd like to welcome you with a few keynotes, in particular an ornithological work for piano. Messiaen called song birds "petits serviteurs de l'immatérielle joie" -- "small servants of imma-

terial joy. I hope you enjoy our anti-Madonna: “Le merle noir” or “the blackbird” composed by Olivier Messiaen in 1985. In between the dissonant background, listen for the triumphant call of the blackbird, some say that you can see the color and feel the plumage or hear the flight of the blackbird, too. Synesthesia is an aspect to Messiaen’s tonal language, that is, the hearing of these sounds might produce the visualization of a color or the sensation of a movement. A final note: the European “blackbird” is really a thrush, and not related to our American Red-winged Blackbird.

Piano Interlude: *Le Merle Noir* by Olivier Messiaen, 1957.

If this piece was a cultural blind spot for you, I hope this introduction wasn’t too painful.

[ROLL DICE] Welcome FIU Honors College Faculty. Welcome to another year. I realize our job involves more and more paper work. Reports for this, orders for that, don’t forget a few override cards for the first few days of class. We need FTE’s. Is this our school spirit? I hope not. Don’t let the bad rolls get to you. Honors is your chance to add new dimensions to your teaching, such as service learning, City as Text, fieldtrips and creative assignments, and a chance to explore your passions with some of FIU’s best and brightest students. . Robert Penn Warren in a great collection of short poems, “Audubon: A vision,” recreates various shots in Audubon’s life. Here is the moment that Audubon shot his first Great White Heron, a bird that he would later paint for his *Birds of America* or write about in his *Ornithological Biography*.

*Saw*

*It proceed across the inflamed distance.*

*Moccasins set in hoar frost, eyes fixed on the bird,*

*Thought: “On that sky it is black.”*

*Thought: “In my mind it is white.”*

*Thinking: “Ardea occidentalis, heron, the great one.”*

*Dawn: his heart shook in the tension of the world.*

*Dawn: and what is your passion?*

Don’t be afraid to share your humanity with your students. Don’t be afraid to learn from them. Each class is a constellation, and this is where our humaneness must shine through. Yes, be excited, be passionate, but be yourself. Welcome fellow Fellows.

As you can see though my various enumerations, we are quite a large family with different learning and teaching agendas, different responsibilities, but all with the capacity to evolve and learn more. To all, welcome to the Honors College. Welcome to the Honors College Family.

P.S. Have a great year!

# The Benefits of The Honors College:

## The Best of Two worlds

The Honors College at Florida International University in Miami offers the best of two worlds. It is a small community of outstanding students, dedicated scholars, and committed teachers who work together in an atmosphere usually associated with small private colleges. Yet, we do so with all the resources of a major state university, which is one of the nation's top doctoral / research extensive universities. Only 152 universities in the United States hold this superior rank.

The Honors College provides a broad foundation for dedicated students who want to get the most out of their undergraduate education. The undergraduate experience it provides is significantly enhanced by the broad interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum and opportunities to work closely with expert faculty and in the community. The opportunities for graduate or professional study and for employment are greatly expanded because of the range of unique activities and academic experiences made available to students in the College.

## The Honors Curriculum

You may pursue almost any major available in the University and at the same time complete the honors curriculum. The curriculum emphasizes the following activities: Critical, integrative, and creative thinking; Group and independent research; Oral presentation; Close contact between students and faculty; Integration of class work with the broader community.

## Outstanding Professors and Researchers

“Knowledgeable, caring, enthusiastic, and approachable.” These are some of the characteristics students use to describe the diverse honors faculty. Carefully selected from the more than 1,400 faculty members at the University for their accomplishments as both teachers and scholars, members of the honors faculty take great pride in their close association with their students and are committed to excellence.

## Honors Place at Panther Hall

“Honors Place is remarkable. It’s like home and everyone there is family. We work hard and play hard, driven by our friendship and common pursuit of excellence” - Damion Dunn, Honors Place Resident.

The Honors Place at Florida International University is on-campus residence living. As an Honors College student, you will have the opportunity to participate in this special campus housing program.

## Study Abroad Opportunities

The Honors College has been conducting study abroad programs since 1994 and currently offers opportunities for its students in Spain, Italy, and Jamaica. The summer programs are designed to fulfill one year (six credits) of Honors College curriculum requirement, while the Spain Fall Program offers from nine to fifteen credit hours. The Honors College Study Abroad Programs offer students the opportunity to experience immersion in another culture while pursuing a rigorous academic program integrated with the honors curriculum. Instruction is in English in all the programs.

### Additional Opportunities in The Honors College

*Scholarships*

*Priority Registration*

*Special Advising*

*Research and Artistic Initiatives Program*

*Part of a Special Community of Students and Faculty*

*Excellence Lectures and Forums with Leading Scholars and Policymakers*

*Only College in FIU with an Interdisciplinary Curriculum*

*Curriculum Broadens the Horizon, Making for Well-rounded Individuals*

*Team-taught and Individually-taught Seminars*

*Student Information Technology Centers*

*Gamma Epsilon Phi—The Honors College Student Society*

*Funding to Attend National and International Conferences*

*Small Classes and Close Relationships with Professors*

*Honors Convocation with Recognition of Student Excellence*

*Internship, Mentoring, and Service Learning Opportunities*

*College Presence at Both University Park and Biscayne Bay*

*Awards Assembly for Graduating Seniors*

*Special Recognition at Commencement*

*Notation on Transcript: “Graduated through the University Honors College”*

# The Honors College Administration and Faculty

## Administration

Ivelaw L. Griffith, Ph.D. (City University of New York), Dean & Fellow  
Stephen M. Fjellman, Ph.D. (Stanford University), Associate Dean & Fellow  
Caryl Myers Grof, M.A. (Florida International University), Assistant Dean & Fellow  
John S. Kneski, M.Arch II (Syracuse University), Assistant Dean & Fellow  
Sharon Placide, M.A. (Florida International University), Director of Academic Services

## Faculty Fellows

Irma T. de Alonso, Ph.D. (University of York), Economics  
Regina C. Bailey, M.F.A. (Pratt Institute), Art  
William K. Beesting, Ph.D. (Florida State University), English  
Christopher Brown, Ph.D. (University of Delaware), Biological Sciences  
Manuel J. Carvajal, Ph.D. (University of Florida) Economics  
Ricardo Castells, Ph.D. (Duke University), Modern Languages  
Stephen M. Fain, Ed.D. (Columbia University), Educational Leadership & Policy Studies  
Mary G. Free, Ph.D.(University of Georgia), English  
Bernard S. Gerstman, Ph.D. (Princeton University), Physics  
Bruce Harvey, Ph.D. (Stanford University), English  
Bruce W. Hauptli, Ph.D. (Washington University), Philosophy  
Marilyn Hoder-Salmon, Ph.D. (University of New Mexico), English  
Robert H. Hogner, Ph.D. (University of Pittsburgh), Marketing & Business Environment  
James E. Huchingson, Ph.D. (Emory University), Religious Studies  
Krishnaswamy Jayachandran, Ph.D. (Kansas State University), Soil Microbiology  
Barry B. Levine, Ph.D. (New School for Social Research), Sociology/Anthropology  
Felice Lifshitz, Ph.D. (Columbia University), History  
Peter A. Machonis, Ph.D. (Pennsylvania State University), Modern Languages  
Anthony Maingot, Ph.D. (University of Florida), Sociology and Anthropology  
Tomislav Mandakovic, Ph.D. (University of Pittsburgh), Decision Sciences  
Pete E.C. Markowitz, Ph.D. (College of William and Mary), Physics  
Florentin Maurrasse, Ph.D. (Columbia University), Earth Sciences  
Lesley A. Northup, Ph.D. (Catholic University), Religious Studies  
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Meri-Jane Rochelson, Ph.D. (University of Chicago), English  
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John Stuart, M.Arch. (Columbia University), Architecture  
Kimberly Taylor, Ph.D. (University of Pennsylvania), Marketing  
Lorna Veraldi, J.D. (New York School of Law), Journalism & Mass Communications  
Michael Wagner, Ph.D. (Florida State University), Music  
Christopher Warren, D.A. (Lehigh University), Political Science

## Office Staff

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Ana Cortada, Office Manager  
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Larissa Ramos, Coordinator of Student Services  
Elizabeth Williams, Coordinator of Research & Programs

Dean's Thought for Fall 2003

“Not everything that can  
be counted counts,  
and not everything that  
counts can be counted.”

~ Albert Einstein



**THE HONORS COLLEGE**  
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