



# HONORS

PROGRAM

December 2008

## THE VIEW FROM HERE

BY DR. MONICA HALKA

The holiday season descends like a hurricane...all flurry in the approach and departure, but with an uneasy sort of calm in the middle. At least that's how it usually feels to me. First, there's the rush and stress of finals, then shopping for gifts and travel to the relatives' homes. For some of us it promises frustration in airports and cramped seats in the plane. Then, during the eye of the storm, you have to eat too much, pretend to be comfortable in a bed not your own, play cribbage or something for hours on end, and watch bad television. Then, pack up, fly back, ask what hit you. It can seem like just one big interruption in an otherwise productive life, rather than the welcome relief of a vacation. But if you're smart, you'll read a novel that got great reviews. If you're creative, your favorite nephew will never forget this visit. If you're just a little bit truly generous, you can make a homeless person smile. And if you're lucky, it'll snow. But remember, you're not the same person you were the last time your loved ones saw you. So be kind. And be patient. And have a happy holiday.



### Students and the Economy

BY CAROLA CONCES

In the 1992 presidential campaign between Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush, Clinton campaign strategist James Carville coined the phrase, "It's the economy, stupid." The slogan became at least as relevant in the most recent campaign, as current economic conditions have taken center stage in political discourse. But have they affected you personally? One hundred Honors Program students responded to a survey on the topic.

*See Economy pg. 2*

### Employment Opportunity

The Honors Program needs up to two *student office assistants* to work up to ten hours each per week. Duties will include word-processing, filing, website modifications, graphic layout of the HyPe newsletter, and other general office and reception duties

For more information, stop by the Honors Program office.

# Honors Program Special Topic Course Offerings for Spring 2009

<b>PST 3127 HP: Science, Technology, and Human Values</b>	Prof. Hans Klein
<b>MGT 4803 HP: Social Entrepreneurship</b>	Profs. Terry Blum and Robert Thomas
<b>EAS 2420 HP: Environmental Measures of Urban and Regional Change</b>	Prof. Michael Chang
<b>ECE 2813 HP: Innovation in Science &amp; Technology</b>	Prof. Ian Ferguson
<b>CS 3803 HP: Mobile Robotics: From Sensing to Action</b>	Profs. Jim Rehg and Henrik Christensen
<b>PSY 2803 HP: Psychology of Creativity and the Arts</b>	Prof. Paul Verhaeghen
<b>ARCH 4822 HP: Race, Space &amp; Architecture</b>	Prof. Benjy Flower & Andrea Ashmore
<b>COA 4803 HP: Becoming American: From the Melting Pot to the Food Court</b>	Prof. Sabir Khan

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## *Economy (cont.)*

Most are earning at least some income independently: 21% have a co-op; 4% have an internship now; 17% had an internship in the past; 36% have a part-time job; and three work full-time. Still, more than 75% rely on at least some parental support to finance college. Three quarters are also aided by scholarship money, while only a fifth have student loans.

Thus, while as a group we are financially responsible, we are far from financially independent. This allows us some insulation from the troubles of the times. In fact, only 16% follow the economic/financial news closely, and even fewer (9%) stick to a detailed personal budget.

Here are students' top suggestions for money management:

- Stay informed of market trends so you know what to expect.
- If you're on a meal plan, eat in the dining halls, and don't spend money on extra food.
- Keep your car in good condition to maximize gas mileage. Carpool whenever possible.
- Pay with cash so you can see how much you're spending.
- Make your own coffee instead of paying more at coffee shops. Use a refillable water bottle instead of buying disposable bottles.
- Thrift stores, coupons, student discounts, freebies, and buying in bulk are your friends!
- Look for freelance work, tutoring jobs, and semester break work.

# Arts & Leisure

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## Forget Studying for Finals – Let’s Write a Novel!

BY SARAH GILBREATH



Ah, winter. The air is crisp and cool, the leaves are dropping from trees in droves, and the library is buzzing with an overarching sense of pure panic. As we come to the close of what seems to have been a particularly hectic semester, everyone seems to be holding their breath in the final sprint to winter break. Naturally, the creative minds of the country decided that this would be the perfect time for National Novel Writing Month, a frenzied attempt by people across the country to write a 50,000 word novel in one month. All genres are welcome, from children’s literature to horror.

The main concept between National Novel Writing Month (more commonly known as NaNoWriMo) is that would-be authors often get too bogged down in editing their stories during the writing process to get anywhere, which leads to frustration and maybe even quitting before any real progress is made. NaNoWriMo encourages writing without editing at all, the idea being that once the author has 50,000 words and the novel is essentially done, then editing can be done without discouraging the author. The site is also built to encourage a writing community. “NaNo mail,” a within-site email, allows private communication between users, and the forums are subdivided into such categories as genre, geographical region, author age group, etc. This makes it easier for writers to get together online and in person; for example, there are several school-specific forum threads in which students can arrange meetings at coffeehouses or other popular locations to simply write together.

Overall, the site acts as a support system. When writers sign up, they begin receiving weekly inspirational emails from such well-known authors as Judy Blume encouraging them to keep at it, as well as tips for laying out the structure of a novel, developing a character, and more. They also receive their own homepage on the site, which they can update with facts about their book, their current word count, and more. There are even inspirational lists of published NaNo books, including the well-known *Once Bitten* and *Water for Elephants*.

Personally, I think this is a great site. However, the timing of the whole event could not be worse if they tried. What with most classes trying to squeeze in one last test before finals, I don’t know how anyone has any time to devote to writing. I think this might do better at the beginning of the semester, when classes have just started. Additionally, the site doesn’t seem to offer much help as to the next step after you’ve written your novel; links for publishing sites or a page on how to get published would be helpful. Still, if you’re looking for a creative outlet, this is one fun (and crazy) way to delve into writing!

**"Luck is what happens when  
preparation meets opportunity."**

**-Lucius Annaeus Seneca**

# Arts & Leisure

## Audiball

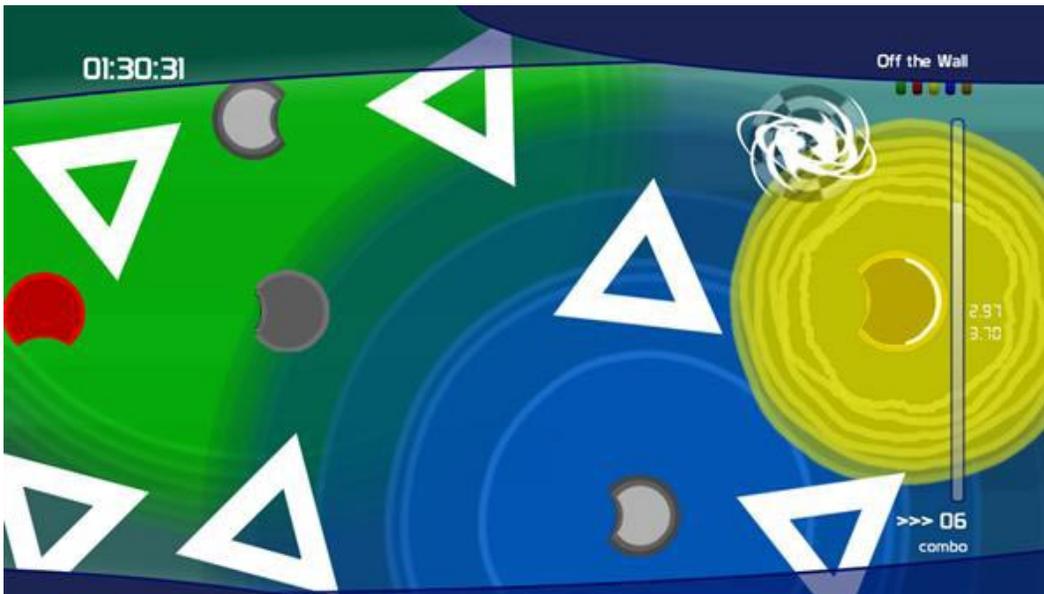
BY HOLDEN LINK

Seven months ago, I wrote an article about attending the Game Developer's Conference with two other Honors Program students. Since then, Cory Johnson, Ian Guthridge, and I have started a company and produced an Xbox 360 game from the ground up. It was finally released for sale to the public on November 20 as a launch title for Microsoft's new "Community Games" service.

Audiball is a puzzle-based rhythm action game that can be played with a guitar controller, such as those bundled with Rock Band or Guitar Hero. Players use sounds in the game to manipulate the paths of "Audiballs," or small spheres that cause sound to become audible when they pass through them, to move them through music tracks. Everything you do in the game influences the soundtrack: if you play quickly and chain audiballs together through sounds, the music

could become more intense. If you miss a targeted sound, the music may become more simplistic.

If you're confused, it's ok: the game is so different from anything else on the market that the concept is bound to be confusing until you play it for yourself. It was designed to give players a completely new way to use their guitar controllers, so it plays nothing like any game before it.



The concept for Audiball first came about while we were at the Game Developer's Conference in February. We decided that we wanted to submit a game to the Independent Games Festival, and we wanted to do something different with a guitar controller. We made the game mostly during the fall semester, while all three of us were enrolled as full time students. We were the only Georgia Tech students to enter the festival this year, and we're honored to be representing the school and the Honors Program. If selected as finalists, we will be able to show our game on stage to tens of thousands of people at the 2009 Game Developer's Conference in March.

Audiball can be purchased right now from the Xbox Live Marketplace for 200 Microsoft Points (or \$2.50). There's also a free trial version available, so check it out and share your thoughts with us online at [www.indiecisivegames.com](http://www.indiecisivegames.com).

# Thailand: Bpen Baan Kong Beth

BY BETH WEST

Known to the rest of the world as the Land of Smiles, Thailand is renowned for its food and hospitality. Truly, it has much to offer on both of these fronts, and at a comparably low cost to most foreigners. The weather is nice and warm, tropical plants and wildlife abound, and fresh fruit is literally available on every street corner for less than fifty cents. As the moniker might suggest, Thai people are quite welcoming, gracefully smiling through all the lingual mishaps and social blunders so frequent among farang (western foreigners). There is an abundance of cultural, historical, and natural attractions, making Thailand a popular tourist destination. Over the past six months, however, Thailand has become, to me, much more than a destination or a series of attractions; Thailand is home.

Home? How can I feel at home in a country where people point and say (though only seldom whisper) “farang” as you pass? How can I feel at home in a land where I’m hopelessly (but just shy of completely) illiterate? How can I feel at home in a place where my 5 foot 4 inch tall, 115 pound body is considered somewhat gigantic? So far, I’ve come up with a bunch of great answers that include words like assimilation, cross-cultural parallels, adaptation, and learning process. All are relevant in their own ways, but they have the unfortunate tendency of turning something very fluid and experiential into something very stiff and academic.

What really makes Thailand home for me is people. In a world where I stick out and can’t seem to do anything right, I find myself vulnerable and depending on people more and more. Towards friends and strangers alike, I am constantly faced with a sense of deep gratitude, respect, and ultimately love. Everyone needs love, both given and received. The only thing that could possibly be better than being a hero to a little kid on the street is letting that little kid be your hero, if only for a moment. That’s home.



Beth West and roommate display their Thai food creation in Nakorn Ratchasima, Thailand.

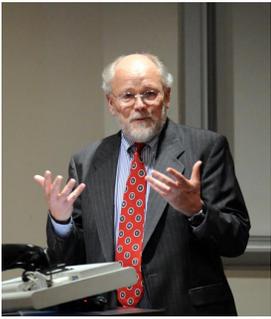
PHOTO BY BETH WEST

# Message from the Director

## International Education, Indeed

BY DR. GREG NOBLES

**How in the world did the rest of the world react to our recent presidential election?**



That's a question we explored a week after the election in an Honors Program special topics course called Selective Scholarship Seminar, which I'm teaching this fall with Paul Hurst, Georgia Tech's advisor for Rhodes and Truman scholarships, and which has

thirteen students, some of them in the Honors Program, some not, but all of them bright and energetic. Since the course helps prepare students for various sorts of overseas opportunities – Rhodes, Marshall, Fulbright, and the like – it has a pretty strong international emphasis in the first place, but Paul and I had no idea how broad a reach our students would take. It turned out that they took us – and each other – on a wide-ranging and well-informed tour of the globe in only seventy-five minutes of class time.

We gave the students an assignment of finding a foreign perspective on the election, and to get things started we gave them a couple of anglophone articles from *The Economist* and *The Guardian* in Great Britain – pretty obvious and readily accessible stuff, I have to admit. But when the students came to class, they brought in languages and locations that really expanded

our collective vision. One student, for instance, not only gave us francophone feedback from France and Quebec, but she also used her knowledge of Lithuanian to offer a report from Eastern Europe: in a pre-election survey, she told us, some 79 percent of Lithuanians said they were pulling for Barack Obama. Who knew he was so big in the Baltic? Another student gave us a survey of opinion pieces from Colombia, Honduras, and Mexico, doing a quick simultaneous translation as he read. Still another brought in a Chinese-language newspaper – the real paper edition, a brightly-colored, highly illustrated issue that looked as garish as *USA Today* – and he too translated on the fly. By the end of the class, we had heard additional perspectives in Polish, Hindi, and German, not to mention the news from New Zealand.

More importantly, by the end of the class, we had all learned much more about the international reaction than any one of us could have discovered alone. To me, that sharing of information and observation defined the essence of the special topics experience, the smartest part of the Honors Program approach to learning. When we as professors have the confidence – or maybe just the good sense – to make the most of our students' backgrounds and interests, we make teachers of everyone at the table. And I know that Paul Hurst and I, who probably differed about our respective presidential picks, could certainly agree on one post-election opinion: with teachers like that, it felt great for us to be students again.

**GT**  
**GeT**  
**HyPed**

### NEWSLETTER STAFF

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Dr. Monica Halka, Associate Director  
Georgia Tech Honors Program  
WRITERS: Carola Conces, Sarah Gilbreath,  
& Nicole Leonard  
FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT: Beth West  
ARTS LAYOUT: Dani Slaton  
LAYOUT: John Watson