Kuyper Honors Program

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KUYPER HONORS PROGRAM

On Fridays at 3 p.m., 33 students briefly gather in the Kuyper Honors Room before breaking into smaller, socially distanced group discussions both in the Hulst Library and the Eckardt Lounge. This is the seminar portion of the Kuyper Honors Program 110 course. The students have their fair share of readings this semester: Wisdom and Wonder by Abraham Kuyper, Liturgy of the Ordinary by Tish Harrison Warren, essays from On Kuyper: A Collection of Readings on the Life, Work, and Legacy of Abraham Kuyper, and Knowing God by J.I. Packer. The purpose behind the readings? To help students ask questions and gain an understanding of Christian scholarship, worldview, and the impact of a Christian perspective in scholarly calling.

Criminal Justice Professor Donald Roth ('07) and Social Work Professor Dr. Abby Jansen, '02) Foreman, co-directors of the Kuyper Honors Program, mill about between discussion groups, but they mostly just listen. After all, the Kuyper Honors students are highly motivated and academically gifted—they want to actively engage in the readings and challenge one another, says Roth.

“We talk about what it means to be a Christian university and what Christian scholarship really is. And I have been really impressed with the type of questions these students naturally ask,” he says.

In addition to seminar work, students have the chance to engage in shared learning through the Kuyper Honors Program. “Students create and organize their own experiences, including reading groups,” says Foreman.

“We had a number of students interested in reformed theology, particularly Bavinck, who is foundational to the tradition at Dordt,” says Roth. A new translation of Herman Bavinck’s Wonderful Works of God came out, and Roth is leading a group through it.

Two other groups are learning from C.S. Lewis—one is reading Chronicles of Narnia and looking at the allegorical principles at play in Narnia, and the other the science trilogy. After meeting to discuss the books, students will write a paper or present on what they have learned.

Kuyper Scholars have other shared learning opportunities, too. As part of a shared learning contract, Katie Ribbens is working with fellow psychology major Abi Schescke to create giant watercolor paintings on canvas for the new KHP room. Caleb Kroeze, an engineering major, is working with his hometown high school to consider how to apply Dordt’s perspectival approach to engineering to a high school-level engineering curriculum.

“It’s true that Kuyper Honors Program is hard work and, as such, you need to dedicate time to it,” says Ribbens. “However, the contracts especially give you the freedom to explore your interests. If you’re already spending hours a week developing a skill or hobby, do a contract on it. You can use the opportunity to push yourself to learn more about a concept and put yourself outside of your comfort zone.”

“I love seeing what the students come up with when they’re developing their contracts, but I also enjoy listening to their discussions. They connect what they’re learning in other classes or experiences to the readings in a way that’s really exciting for me as a professor,” says Foreman. “Our students are wonderful, and it’s fun to be around them and learn from them.”

SARAH MOSS (’10)