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# Creativity Scholars Engage with Arts, Theater, Authors in Chicago

March 29, 2019

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — The first year of the Creativity Scholars [First-Year Experience](#) (FYE) culminated with an immersive Spring Break trip to Chicago for a week of artistic and cultural activities.

The Creativity Scholars FYE is co-taught by Associate Professor of Psychology Joe Williams and Assistant Professor of English Brandi Reissenweber. The class focused on incorporating research into a long-form creative project.

“Students this year are working on projects such as novels, short story collections, a book of poetry that is annotated by a secondary character and a hybrid animated, prose project that incorporates original music compositions,” explained Williams. The trip itself featured a number of events that involved incorporating research into creative projects while addressing both the creative process and the business side of publishing.

One of the highlights of the trip for the students was being able to see multiple theater productions, including the Lin-Manuel Miranda musical *Hamilton*, Lynn Nottage’s Pulitzer prize winning play *Sweat*, and Moises Kaufman’s *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*, which deals with the true-life story of celebrated author Oscar Wilde being put on trial for homosexuality, which was illegal in the United Kingdom at the time.

For most students, seeing *Hamilton* was a highlight of their trip. “We discussed how Miranda was able to incorporate the historical details of the time, with contemporary touches that addressed the relevance of Hamilton’s experiences with the world today,” said Williams.

In addition to the theater, the students also participated in a Q&A session with Todd Stocke '93, the Senior Vice-President and Editorial Director at Sourcebooks, a major Chicago publishing company. The Q&A also featured prize-winning children’s author Nancy J. Cavanaugh. Beyond the creative process, Stocke and Cavanaugh gave valuable advice and information pertaining to the business side of publishing, such as finding an agent, what happens after your book has been accepted by a publisher, what is the role of a publisher versus editor, the different types of editors, the revision process, and more.

“The talk gave students very valuable information on the more practical side of book publishing,” said Williams.

The students also enjoyed a visit to The American Writers Museum, where they saw temporary exhibits on Frederick Douglas and Bob Dylan, as well as items from the museum’s permanent collection.

“The Creativity Scholars FYE students were able to draw inspiration and learn about the history of American writers throughout the ages,” explained Williams. “The students also got to practice their writing on antique typewriters to get a feel for how past writers worked in the pre-computer era.”

The group took a trip to The John Hancock Center to see the private residence of photographer, author and poet Suzanne Seed to see her artwork and creative space, as well as that of her late husband, Art Paul. As the founding graphic illustrator of Playboy, Paul created the iconic Playboy Bunny logo and commissioned works from key art figures such as Salvador Dali and Andy Warhol.

With all these experiences, students “gained valuable insight into the ways in which artists draw inspiration and the many ways in which artists incorporate research into a project, but also transform the information as a part of the creative process,” according to Williams.

Experiences from the trip better equipped Creativity Scholars to incorporate research seamlessly into their own artistic projects.



Creativity Scholars attended a number of theater productions, including Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*.