

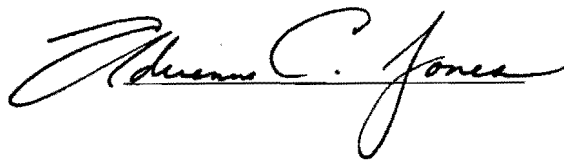
**Muncie 101 and Muncie 202:
Bridging Campus and Community**

An Honors Thesis

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adrienne C. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

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Abstract

What is the final product when thirty-seven freshmen students, six upperclassmen mentors, one semester, over fifteen guest speakers, five university vans, over fifteen field trips, and the city of Muncie are combined? Muncie 101, an Honors general elective class offered in the 2003 Fall semester at Ball State University. This field trip based course provides freshmen with an in-depth look of Muncie, Indiana, the city that they will call home during their college years. Instead of sitting in a classroom, the students travel to various locations within the city to meet with individuals who share information about that particular resource. Furthermore, guest speakers are incorporated into the curriculum so freshmen can receive first hand knowledge about different aspects of the city. A similar course, Muncie 202, was offered in the 2004 Spring semester as an Honors College colloquium for upperclassmen. This course placed more emphasis on volunteering and allowed each student to plan one week of the curriculum.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the permission and support of the Honors College. Adrienne Jones, my thesis advisor, was an invaluable resource to me throughout the entire thesis project. Thanks also to the entire Honors College staff, including Dr. James Ruebel, Dr. Joanne Edmonds, Dianna Monks, and Sue Rooney. Their constant support for this project helped to make it so successful.

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Finally, thanks to my parents, Harvey and Sally Warrner, and to my sister, Erin Warrner, for their constant support and involvement in the project. From donating the Muncie 101 memory jars to offering me advice about my curriculum, they have been my primary source of support and praise.

**Muncie 101 and Muncie 202:
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“If you think Muncie is a boring place, then you are a boring person.” These words, spoken by Tim Wade, became the motto for Muncie 101 and Muncie 202, my Ball State University Honors College thesis project. When I walked onto the campus of Ball State four years ago, I knew that I would have to complete a senior project in order to graduate from the Honors College. At that time, as a freshman, I knew that I had years to formulate an idea for this seemingly daunting project. I would not have imagined that my undergraduate Honors College thesis project would become one the accomplishments in my life of which I would be the most proud.

As a junior, I enrolled in a course, Honors 390Z, an Honors College colloquium taught by Adrienne Jones and Lauren Brady, the two Honors College academic advisors. This colloq was to be an exploration of the city of Muncie, Indiana, the hometown of Ball State University. I was often considered to be the “Muncie Expert” in my group of friends because my father was raised in Muncie. I had been traveling to Muncie at least once a month for my entire life to visit my grandparents. I enrolled in Honors 390Z expecting to learn more about the community and to find new resources to explore. This course met my expectations, and I thought that I could somehow assist with the course as part of my thesis project. I approached the two instructors, and Muncie 101 was brainstormed and created.

Muncie 101, or Honors 299X, was an Honors College general elective course offered to freshmen in the 2003 Fall semester. This field trip and guest speaker based course was to provide students with an in-depth look at Muncie, Indiana, the city that they would be calling home for at least the next four years. At orientation at Ball State, freshmen are often told,

“There’s nothing to do in Muncie.” Muncie might not be a typical college community, but the city has many resources, attractions, and locations that can be beneficial to college students. Muncie 101 did not simply tell students about these resources. Each week, during the two hour class time, the students either piled into a van or listened to a guest speaker to learn more about Muncie.

Planning and preparing for this course provided me with a variety of challenges. I spent the summer before my senior year planning the curriculum and making contacts within the Muncie community. As I worked on the curriculum, I focused on meeting my goals and objectives. I wanted to show these freshmen that Ball State is a part of Muncie, instead of Muncie being a part of Ball State. Ball State is a very self sufficient campus. A student can find food, housing, and entertainment on campus. I wanted students to realize Muncie was comprised of so much more than the university on McKinley Avenue. I also wanted each student to connect with the Muncie community. Perhaps that connection would be to a local restaurant or to a community volunteering opportunity. Whatever the case, I hoped the students would feel like they were not only part of Ball State, but also part of Muncie. My third goal was for Muncie 101 to be a social experience. I remember that one of my primary concerns my freshmen year was meeting people and finding friends. The somewhat informal and exploratory nature of this course allowed for social interaction among the students. The majority of the thirty-seven students had spent very little time in Muncie, so they were exploring the community for the first time. Sharing these Muncie adventures proved to be a very bonding experience for the students.

With these goals in mind, I began to call, to write, and to email individuals and organizations who I thought should be represented in the Muncie 101 syllabus. The course met in three different sections, and as the summer progressed, I realized that each section would have a

slightly different Muncie experience. For example, I wanted each section to learn about politics in Muncie, but I understood that it was not be feasible to ask Mayor Dan Canan to take three different afternoons from his schedule to talk to each section. Therefore, the other two sections were able to hear about politics from City Council President Chuck Leonard and local political hopeful and Ball State University graduate, Tom Rector. After four months of making Muncie contacts, I had created the official course schedule. Each section was introduced to the MITS bus system, Muncie as Middletown, The Muncie Public Library, Minnetrista Cultural Center, local recreation opportunities, East Central Indiana Recycling, local restaurants, the Cardinal Greenway, Muncie politics, downtown Muncie, and South Muncie. For the three sections combined, over fifty different guest speakers and field trips were arranged for the students. As I worked on determining the class schedule, I was often amazed at the willingness of community members, organizations, and local offices to talk with my students. The community support exceeded all of my expectations. Without that support, my project would not have been as successful or as meaningful.

Another unique aspect to Muncie 101 was the utilization of upperclassmen Honors College students as “Muncie Mentors,” or the instructors of the course. I was present for each of the three course sections, but five other upperclassmen assisted me throughout the week. I argue that this course would not have been as effective with a professor as the instructor. However, the likelihood that most students would ever follow a professor in an exploration of Muncie is very slim. Using upperclassmen as the teachers of this course enabled the freshmen to connect with older Honors College students. Furthermore, when the upperclassmen showed interest or enthusiasm in a course activity, that electric energy often spread to the freshmen. If an upperclassmen finds an activity, such as riding the MITS or exploring the grounds of

Minnetrissa, to be fulfilling, freshmen could realize that these activities are not frowned upon by older Ball State students and that students do participate in these activities and use these local resources.

Muncie 101 was not simply field trips, fun, and games. Attendance was the primary course requirement. The students were expected to be in class each week. Students who missed class had to complete additional assignments to take the place of the missed lesson. Muncie 101 students also had to write weekly journals about the week's course activity. I had hoped that the students would be completely open in these journals, and I was not disappointed. For example, very few students found the field trip to East Central Indiana Recycling beneficial. On the other hand, I thought the field trip provided a detailed behind the scene look at the recycling industry. After reading the journals, I learned what others thought about this class experience. In addition to the weekly journals, each student was required to complete two OCAs, or out of class activities. OCAs could include roller skating at Gibson's Skating Arena, attending a free program at the Muncie Public Library, eating at a local church dinner, or exploring a local museum. Basically, any event or activity that was not associated with Ball State and occurred within the community was considered an OCA. These activities were another tool to make students enter the Muncie community. The OCAs provided another opportunity for students to connect with the community. Perhaps a student attending a library program about scrapbooking met several Muncie residents who also enjoyed this hobby. A student who visited the Muncie Children's Museum could have realized that he or she wanted to volunteer with this organization to help to educate children in the community. The OCAs provided proof that students could find their own entertainment away from campus. The required restaurant review assignment made the students try a local eatery. Muncie has a wide selection of chain restaurants, and most

students head to McGalliard Road and eat at these chains when they venture off of campus to eat. On many evenings, especially on the weekends, people can encounter long waits and lines at many of these establishments. The restaurant review introduced students to local restaurants. For example, instead of eating Italian at The Olive Garden, one can eat at Psgetti to Go. Students are often not aware of local restaurants or their menu offerings. Hopefully, each student found at least one local restaurant that he or she enjoyed and will continue to eat there while at Ball State. Eating at these local establishments will help to ensure that business' longevity and will continue to provide Muncie with local, unique businesses. Another required assignment was attending a religious ceremony in the city. The purpose of this assignment was for the students to be introduced to another aspect of the community. Churches and other faith organizations provide many social opportunities for a community. The assignment showed students another section of the population of Muncie. The final course required assignment was a volunteer experience. Volunteerism is a major part of my life, and I feel as though everyone should give back to his or her community. Whether Ball State students like it or not, Muncie will have a role in influencing their lives and personalities while they attend Ball State. The very least each Ball State student can do is spend one afternoon helping the community. As a group, two Muncie 101 volunteer activities were arranged, one at the Red Cross and another at the Alpha Center, a local senior citizen day care facility. Yet many students found their own volunteer activities. For example, many students expressed an interest in working with children because while at college, they had few interactions with children. The local Boys and Girls Club, community centers, and schools provided opportunities to work with the younger population of Muncie.

As the semester progressed, the students, Muncie Mentors, and I shared many memorable Muncie adventures and moments. My goal was to have at least one OCA each week that

students from all three sections could attend. Many of the students knew students in one of the other sections, and the OCAs provided a time when all of the students could meet each other and talk about their various class experiences. One of my favorite highlights of the semester was when thirty of us went to Puerto Vallarta for mariachi band night. This event was quite a production because I had made a reservation, and the staff was waiting for our large group. We sat down, ordered, and waited. I had been speaking highly of the band all semester and told each class how much fun the evening would be. A problem quickly arose. The band had canceled. I verified this with the man at the front counter. I then had to return to the table and inform everyone that there was no band that evening. In fact, the band has yet to return to any of the three Puerto Vallarta locations in Muncie. I am certain that my Muncie 101 students think that the mariachi band never existed. Nevertheless, everyone had an enjoyable evening interacting and eating free chips.

Other course highlights include a road trip to the Farmland Corn Maze, introducing the students to legendary QL's Barbeque, spending a free evening at the Muncie Dragway, and taking a road trip to Ivanhoe's for ice cream. Without these activities, the students probably would not have realized these places and events existed. One section of students was able to ride the free Community Cruiser bicycles on the Cardinal Greenway. Any MITS ride was always an adventure. Being able to ride this public transportation system for free was a tremendously valuable resource for the class and for all Ball State students in general. Muncie 101 normally met when the local middle school was releasing for the school day, so the class often rode the bus with groups of middle school students. Those rides probably provided just as much education about Muncie as did that day's class lesson. Early in the semester, I introduced each section to Concannon's Bakery, one of Muncie's best resources for sweets. Throughout the

semester, the class vans would often find their way to Concannon's for a sweet treat. Several of the employees there came to recognize me, and if I ever go to the bakery alone, they ask me why I did not bring my class. I believe that learning about Muncie as Middletown was a highlight for each section because only one or two students were familiar with the Lynd study and its significance on this community and on the world. Bowling was a definite class highlight, simply because of the amount of interaction that occurred on that day. Several competitions, including boys against girls and lane against lane, arose, which added another fun aspect to the day. Furthermore, many Ball State students bowl at the Student Center on campus because of its location, and it could easily be the only bowling alley of which they are familiar. Clancy's Village Bowl is extremely close to campus, has over fifty lanes, and is significantly cheaper than the bowling alley in the Student Center. The class trip to Clancy's introduced the students to this recreational facility. In order to document their semester of Muncie memories, each student was given a Ball canning jar thanks to a generous donation of jars from my parents, Harvey and Sally Warner. The jar gave each student part of Muncie's history and was a great place to put ticket stubs, menus, and other items pertaining to Muncie.

Was Muncie 101 a beneficial course? Yes, for Ball State, for the students involved, and for Muncie. The course allowed students to make connections with the Muncie community. Even though I do not have empirical evidence, I would argue that students are less likely transfer if they feel connected to both a university and the city or town in which it is housed. I could not spend four years in a community that I hated. A major reinforcing factor for me was after Ball State's family weekend. Many of the freshmen's parents came for this yearly event, and the following week in class, many students told me that they showed their parents places we had explored in class. Instead of taking them to eat at a typical chain restaurant, they had eaten at a

local establishment. The students had been able to show their parents what helps to make Muncie a unique community. As far as additional student benefits, knowing resources, restaurants, and attractions in town helps to make Muncie feel more like home. Living in an unexplored, unknown city for almost nine months of the year can be both boring and frustrating. During the first day of class, each student was given a pretest of basic Muncie knowledge, with questions pertaining to local roads, the history of Muncie, and identifying different places and people within the Muncie community. Obviously, as new college freshmen, the majority of the questions were left blank or answered humorously. Yet at the end of the semester, after many Muncie adventures, I gave the students the exact same test. Many more answers were correct and each student's knowledge of Muncie had increased over the semester. The students felt as though they belonged in the Muncie community and were far more familiar with its transportation systems and educational, recreational, and eating opportunities. On many of our field trips, such as to the Cardinal Greenway and Minnetrista Cultural Center, the classes learned of internship opportunities available in Muncie. Students might not realize that these opportunities exist in Muncie. Yet these freshmen are now aware of these experiences and can perhaps plan to work with a local organization later in their college years. I would also argue that this course has the potential to help the local economy of Muncie. My students will return to their favorite local restaurants. They know of local shops, such as the Broadway Antique Mall, Wishbone Gifts, or F.B. Fogg, where they can purchase unique gifts for themselves, for friends, or for family members.

Granted, since this course was my thesis project, I hold a biased opinion and of course, will think that the course was beneficial. However, comments from many of the Muncie 101 students reinforce my beliefs. Some of those comments include:

- “I have really learned a lot about Muncie and sometimes I’ll catch myself explaining stuff about Muncie to other people. It’s nice to know so much about this city my first semester of school.”
- “I love this class. My friends and parents are amazed about how much I know my way around Muncie. I think they are getting tired of interesting Muncie facts by now.”
- “I know more about Muncie than I ever thought possible.”
- “I had hoped to become familiar with the community and have Muncie feel like home. I now feel like I am at home.”
- “I’m getting to explore Muncie. I probably never would have gone to most of the places we’ve gone to in class.”
- “I’m getting to see a lot of things around Muncie I’m sure I would never have seen otherwise. We learn practical stuff about the area.”
- “The class has made me much more aware of what it is like to live in a town like Muncie. I think the guest speakers gave a great explanation of not only what Muncie is, but also what it has been in the past and how it got to be what it is. What was probably the biggest benefit of the speakers was how much they enjoyed living in Muncie.”
- “I honestly think that Muncie 101 has had a big impact on what I do, especially on weekends. I now know places in Muncie to go on the MITS and things I can do that are cheap and fun.”
- “I have gained so much from this class. I have so much more knowledge of the many resources here in Muncie. I don’t feel like a fish out of water anymore. Instead, I feel like I belong in Muncie and it’s more like a home to me. I’m glad I’ve been able to think of it that way because it’s made the transition a whole lot easier.”
- “I would have said that Muncie is one of the worst places to live if I did not sign up for this class. If you did not know any better, you would say the only things to do are on or near campus, but Muncie is so much more than Ball State University. The Muncie community is amazing. If I had not taken this course, I would not have known about Muncie and what it really is. I now feel like I am at home in Muncie.”
- “My opinions about Muncie has definitely changed since the beginning of the year. I thought of Muncie as a small, backwards kind of town. There is plenty to do in Muncie, you just have to know where to look, and you will have to look a lot harder than in a large city.”

- “If I had not taken this class, I would not know anything about Muncie. I use this class a lot when people come to visit me. I can show my friends around the town and take them out on weekends for fun Muncie experiences.”
- “I thought that Muncie was only chain restaurants and the Muncie Mall. I thought that Muncie was not really as big as I realize it is now. This class was very helpful for a first semester freshmen in a strange town.”
- “This course gave me a definite head start from other freshmen. The hands-on approach to class gave the students a chance to really learn about Muncie, not just hear about it.”
- “I would say that my opinions of Muncie have changed quite a bit since the beginning of the semester. I guess I thought that Muncie was just a town built up around a college. I really had never thought about the fact that the college was built up inside the town.”

The final assignment for the class was to write a reaction about the semester long Muncie 101 experience. Of the thirty-seven students, only two felt that the class was not worthwhile and did not meet their expectations. Overall, I was extremely pleased with the reactions to the course. I had thought that the course was beneficial and that the students had enjoyed the majority of the class components. Their comments simply reinforced my beliefs.

Due to the positive reactions and experiences of the Muncie 101 students, I was able to teach Muncie 202, an Honors College colloquium, in the 2004 Spring semester. This course was based on the same concept as Muncie 101. However, this course was designed for upperclassmen students who already held preconceived notions about Muncie. Furthermore, each Muncie 202 student was responsible for teaching and organizing one class lesson. From the Muncie 101 journals, I had learned that the class schedule had reflected my biases about the Muncie community. I showed the students what I felt was important and interesting. Yet over the course of the Muncie 202 semester, the students introduced their sections to a variety of new Muncie resources that I had not considered exploring. The lessons included visiting the Society

for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Youth Opportunity Center, The Hotel Roberts, The Muncie Mission, The Muncie Civic Theatre, Meals on Wheels, Hartmeyer Stables, Muncie Fire Station Number One, Farmland, Indiana, and the old Wilson Middle School senior housing project. In addition to these field trips, I planned several weeks of the course to introduce the students to some of the more popular Muncie attractions, such as Minnetrista Cultural Center, the Muncie Public Library, and Muncie as Middletown. The eleven total Muncie 202 students in two sections were also shown several local restaurant and recreational options. Each class also took the infamous “Jen Warner Driving Tour,” which travels from one side of town to the other to show students various locations in both North and South Muncie. Instead of writing weekly journals, each Muncie 202 student was required to complete ten OCAs. I wanted the focus of this course to be experiencing life in Muncie. Students attended events ranging from a local gun show to public library programs to shows at the Muncie Civic Theatre. Muncie 202 also had a much larger volunteer requirement. Each student had to complete twenty-five volunteer hours over the course of the semester. Ideally, this requirement was completed with the same organization so that the students could feel as though they were a part of a Muncie organization. Several of the selected volunteer locations included the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity, the Muncie Public Library, local elementary schools, and the American Red Cross local chapter. The students had to write a two page reaction about this semester long volunteer experience. A restaurant review and a religious experience were also part of the course requirements. In addition, I attempted to plan events that would count as OCAs. These events were a way to bring together students from not only the two Muncie 202 sections, but also students from the Muncie 101 classes. Several students and I attended a local high school basketball game, ate at local restaurants, attended the Muncie

Central versus Milan anniversary basketball game, and skated at Gibson's Skating Arena. These events provided additional opportunities to experience Muncie life with fellow Ball State students. Additionally, during the spring semester, I began to compose a weekly Muncie Top email that was sent to all Muncie 101 and Muncie 202 students. This email highlights activities and events that occurred in Muncie each weekend. Therefore, none of these students can say, "There is nothing to do in Muncie." Ranging from plays to dinners to special art events, these emails let students be aware of Muncie events and occurrences.

Ideally, both Muncie 101 and Muncie 202 created a ripple effect among the students. If each student showed one other student a local restaurant, shop, or recreational attraction, more students will be aware of local resources. Those students could then share the same resource with some of their friends, who could continue this pattern. Students' perceptions of Muncie as a boring, dull community could each change. This could be a very lofty goal, but often it is the tiniest efforts that can lead to the greatest changes and effects.

My last year of college was absolutely amazing because of my thesis project. Working with my students both semesters enabled me to establish relationships with some awesome individuals. The enthusiasm that many of the students showed for the class and for Muncie was fantastic. Without my students, I would not have had a thesis project. Without their constant feedback, participation, and enthusiasm, the project would not have been as successful. I feel much more connected to Muncie because of my experiences with this project. I have lived in Muncie year round since my freshmen year of college, and I often find myself referring to Muncie as home, even though I spent eighteen years of my life in my hometown of Indianapolis. I am extremely proud of the city of Muncie and have come to love many of the resources that it has to offer. When I have visitors, I have a difficult time choosing what local restaurant at which

to eat or what highlights of town to share with them. I have met some phenomenal people through this project. This project would not have been possible without the support and guidance of the Ball State University Honors College, including Dean James Ruebel, Associate Dean Joanne Edmonds, and my thesis advisor, Adrienne Jones. I was given a tremendous amount of freedom to use my creativity to develop this project, and I have benefited so much from the many experiences pertaining to my thesis. In addition to the Honors College staff, Dr. Warren Vander Hill, former Provost of Ball State University, and Rick Rowray, Chief Executive Officer of the Youth Opportunity Center in Muncie, have donated many hours presenting to the Muncie 101 and Muncie 202 classes as well as providing me with steady support, advice, and feedback about the project. All of the other community members who took time from their schedules to assist with the classes both semester not only helped to make the project a success but helped to display the city of Muncie in a more positive light for my students. All of our perspectives of Muncie will be forever changed because of these individuals' efforts and cooperation.

Muncie, Indiana is not a bustling metropolis such as Chicago or Indianapolis. The city does not have the vast amount of resources of a much larger community. However, with some exploration, permanent residents and college students can find variety in the local restaurants, shops, recreational opportunities, and attractions that Muncie has to offer. This city is an amazing place with abundant resources. My Muncie 101 and Muncie 202 students are now more aware of the options that this city has to offer. Sharing these resources with other students can help to change the somewhat negative attitudes some Ball State University students have about the Muncie community. Ball State is not a distinctly separate entity from Muncie. Ball State is a component of Muncie's identity. Hopefully, as more students become aware of the vast options

that Muncie has to offer, they will begin to tell others, “There’s nothing you can’t do in Muncie.” My life has been changed as a result of this project, and this community has had a significant impact on my personality and on my life. Regardless of where life takes me, I will always speak fondly of my years as both a Munsonian and a Ball State University Cardinal.