

Sleeping Bag Seminars

are thematic, site-specific, active learning experiences -- mini-versions of the Honors Semester. At Sleeping Bag Seminars, honors students and faculty from the NRHC gather at a host institution for a weekend of discussions, workshops, tours, and outings. Organized by students from the host honors program and supported in part by a financial contribution from NRHC, the Sleeping Bag Seminars provide a way of investigating a topic or theme in some depth and from a unique local perspective by using various campus and community resources.

Recent topics have included "Eastern Shore Life: Assateague and Chincoteague Islands," hosted by Salisbury State University (Maryland); "Rhythm: The Back Beat of Our Lives," at Montclair State University (New Jersey); "Reflected Images: The Illustration of Poetry," Long Island University (C. W. Post Campus); and "Tracking the Black Bear," at Frostburg State University (Maryland).

Sleeping Bag Seminars utilize a variety of approaches to implement their themes. For example, participants in "Rhythm" attended a performance of Stomp in New York City. "Tracking the Black Bear" took participants into the woods of Western Maryland to learn tracking techniques. And "Eastern Shore Life" featured travel to Assateague and Chincoteague Islands. Seminars often feature conversations with experts in relevant fields, trips to museums, and performances.

Each Sleeping Bag Seminar is hosted and organized by an NRHC member institution. NRHC can assist in Seminar planning and ultimately reviews and officially sanctions the Seminar through its Sleeping Bag Seminar committee. NRHC offers stipends of up to \$500 to help the institution defray the cost of the Seminar.

The number of participants in a Sleeping Bag Seminar depends on the activities planned and the institution's resources, especially sleeping space. Traditionally, to keep costs low and to foster camaraderie, visiting students have camped out in sleeping bags in host honors students' rooms. Hence the name Sleeping Bag Seminars. (Commuter schools have had host students invite visiting students into their homes.) Seminar costs are thus kept reasonable, typically \$30 or \$35 for the weekend, including most meals.

TO GET A SENSE of the organization and activities of a Sleeping Bag Seminar, consider the program for "Reflected Images: The Illustration of Poetry:"

Friday Afternoon

- Participants arrive throughout afternoon
- Dinner and poetry slam
- Posting of poetry and illustrations
- Student performances of poetry set to music

Saturday

- Breakfast
- Poetry and illustration workshops
- Visit to Hillwood Museum
- Lecture by rare book curator
- Lunch
- Visit to Walt Whitman birthplace and museum
- Dinner
- Poetry reading

Sunday

- Breakfast
- Preparation for publication on website and/or in print in collaboration with C. W. Post design and computer graphics students
- Lunch and Departure

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