

# MIZZOU

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## Around the Columns

### Scholarly Sundays

Sunday nights carry special meaning for MU's new Honors College director, Nancy West. When PBS first began airing Masterpiece Theatre in 1971, West, then 8 years old, gathered around the television with her mother each Sunday.

"For the two of us, it was this escape," she says. "I felt so smart and educated and loved the performances."

West, a professor of English, continues the Sunday night tradition with her mother, her 9-year-old son and her graduate and undergraduate students. One semester she dedicated Sundays to meeting with four honors students whose theses she directed.

"I wondered how I'd find time to work with four, and they were all working on different projects," West says. "But I invited them over to my house on Sundays, and they collaborated with each other."

As Honors College director, she sees it as her role to promote this collaborative spirit every day of the week. She plans to continue former director Stu Palonsky's legacy of creating a close honors community within a larger university while also focusing on important higher education trends, including undergraduate research, interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship, service learning and public scholarship.



MU Honors College director Nancy West hosts students at her home for Sunday night viewings of Masterpiece Theatre. Photo by Nicholas Benner

“More and more honors colleges are putting an emphasis not just on good grades but also individual research, good citizenship, travel, internships, and more broadly, being involved in shaping the world,” West says. She envisions the Honors College as a hub connecting students to opportunities in the Office of Undergraduate Research and Office of Service Learning as well as sponsoring public forums, interdisciplinary events and community outreach programs.




West’s dedication to mentoring and teaching have earned her several awards, including the 2004 William T. Kemper Fellowship for Teaching Excellence, two Gold Chalk Awards for Excellence in Graduate Teaching and the 2011 Outstanding Undergraduate Research Mentor Award. She’s become known for infusing collaboration into her courses by assigning each student a chapter to write in a class book. Her spring 2010 film class, for example, published *Noir Crazy: 27 Films to See Before You Die* using the Espresso Book Machine, and her fall 2011 NeoVictorian course did a similar book project. “They love that they’re not just handing their work to me at the end of the semester,” she says. “They’re a part of this project and take a book home at the end.”

In her spare time, West plans to continue her own research, including a cultural history of her childhood favorite Masterpiece Theatre.

“I’ve interviewed Andrew Davies, BBC script writer, and met the producers, and I think there’s a real sense that we’re collaborating on this book,” she says. “I think it’s important for the Honors College director to model scholarship and research.”

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