

# odyssey oracle

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Welcome,  
Class of,  
2011!

[odyssey.wisc.edu](http://odyssey.wisc.edu)

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## Poem to Odyssey Class of 2011 by Angela Morgan

Don't be scared by what you hear  
and see,  
This odyssey is not for misery,  
Yeah, you're gonna write,  
and you better believe you're  
gonna read,  
But you've been accepted,  
so there must be a need.

I know it's exciting,  
it's just the first day,  
but you're starting a journey,  
and you're on your way,  
The food is good, the knowledge is better,  
The people in this room you'll remember forever.

Keep up with your homework, it's gonna get tough,  
just a reminder... do more than "just enough."  
These people are here to help you, remember that  
they want to keep you moving forward, not to go back.

Some Wednesdays will be better than others,  
but keep in touch with your classmates, check up on each other.  
You come from different places, have different names,  
But in this room, we are all the same.

You all have a common goal, education is key,  
And if you ever feel like quitting, pick up the phone... call Emily!  
She will not let you fail, she loves this place,  
If you don't wanna be here, get up, someone will take your space

So work hard, stay strong,  
do what you gotta do

I guarantee every Wednesday you will walk out feeling brand new!



# Letters from Class of 2010 to Class of 2011



Congratulations on being one of the special selected few to have the privilege of being in this class. I'm sure Emily told you how many people applied for these seats, but she saw something extra in you, which is why you're here.

The UW Odyssey Project is such a great program to be in.

Please do not confuse GREAT with EASY. You will only get out of this class what you put into it. Keep all of your handouts and put them into your binders, come to every class and do your homework and reading. If you are sick, come to class. If your car breaks down, ask someone for a ride or get on the bus. If your kids are sick, please try to find a babysitter. If you didn't finish your homework and you are ashamed, come to class. Don't worry, Emily won't put you on blast about it, but she might call you to see if you need some help.

I came to every class last year and I never went home feeling like my 3.5 hours were wasted. Pay attention to the vocabulary Coach teaches you. It will come up later in each semester. Maybe you know some people in this room today or maybe you don't, but I promise you, you and your classmates will soon become like family. You will laugh, debate, joke, learn, and maybe even go out outside of class.

Everyone—your classmates, professors, and alumni—is here for you. We all want to see you walk across that stage in May. If you need help, ASK! Do not let your pride get in the way. This is YOUR class. Pat yourself on the back, smile at the person next to you, and read, read, read, and write, write, write. You will definitely surprise yourself with your writing. **(Keena Atkinson)**

You are on the way to experiencing a wonderful journey. You're probably nervous, scared, and wondering, "What the heck have I gotten myself into? I can't do this, etc." Honestly, that's exactly how I was, too. Just remember to always give yourself credit for at least taking that first step. Take advantage of this blessed opportunity and walk through as many doors as possible. If you get stuck, just remember you have a marvelous group of people ready to help you. Just send an email, pick up the phone, or pop into the office. For me, this has been the greatest experience that I will treasure deeply with all my heart. Take in every minute of every class you have because it's the greatest learning experience I've ever had. But I'm just getting started, as you are too. Wishing you all the best.

**(Brenda Carmona de Jiminez)**

You have been given an amazing opportunity to reach for your goals and a chance for higher learning. It will be an experience that you'll always remember. It might feel a little overwhelming at first, but in time your class will start to grow into a family.



You will receive wonderful books in poetry and literature, and you will have class time to discuss them with such great professors. It's up to you to take full advantage of all the possibilities the Odyssey Project can help you achieve.

**(Gaby Garcia)**



Here's a hand-me-down for you: don't take anything for granted because it can all be taken away in a flash. I'm speaking from pure experience and I'm blessed to be able to even leave you with my hand-me-down words of advice. I've made mistakes along the way and so will a lot of you, but you must not

give in or give up. I was on the verge of giving up and Emily fought me tooth and nail until I came to my senses. I just encourage you guys to continue to press forward regardless of the circumstances, and believe me, there will be circumstances that arise in your lives during this journey. Stay focused and be encouraged. Inmate 410159

**(Shurone Johnson)**



What a fortunate group you are. You are about to embark on an adventure, the likes of which I doubt that you've experienced... You are about to learn to love knowledge.

I implore you to keep an open mind and to absorb all that is put in front of you. At the

end of it all, you will become a much better person.

**(Tim Johnson)**

Keep your eyes open and stay focused. This is truly the ride of your life. Hold on to your seat and take in as much of the journey as possible.

Enjoy yourself and continue to learn. This is the beginning of the opening of many doors. Education is an opportunity. Be sure you take full advantage of it. The journey is fun, the work is hard, the rewards are many, but the odyssey is going to last a lifetime. Be open, be diligent, come often, and be ready to work. Best of luck to you. **(Sanford Jones)**



This class is going to change your life, I promise you. Right now, as you look around your new class at these new (and maybe some familiar) faces, you may be thinking, "What did I get myself into?" Just know that the person next to you is probably thinking it too. Seriously, these

strangers and friends are going to become your family. You are going to look forward to class a lot more than you think.

I will not lead you astray and say it's easy



because it's not. You will read a lot as well as write a lot. It's called learning. I learned to understand writing that I would have never even tried to figure out before Odyssey. You will love every teacher. Don't be fooled by Emily's size; that little lady packs a powerful punch. She does not accept failure, so with that said, congratulations to the journey of Odyssey Class of 2011.

Words of advice: try not to miss any class. Your classmates will look forward to seeing you and each other every week. Do not put your homework off until the last minute. It takes time to understand what it is you're reading, and you have to understand to answer the questions or to write a paper about it. Have fun with it and be creative. As you read this, start to think about your goals and how your alumni have made it and how you will be next. Also prepare yourself for the knowledge you get to pass on to Odyssey 2012. Here is your chance to get the education you thought you couldn't do or were told you couldn't get—the kind of education you wanted for yourself, your kids. By the end of class you will be looking forward to moving on with school and getting that degree you always wanted, starting with or adding six UW-Madison credits to your transcript. I am proud of each and every person reading this. You have just made a major step toward your success. So, once again, congratulations Odyssey Class of 2011. **(Stacey Morris)**



The Odyssey Project is a great start in your life. It's like a fuel that anyone needs to go to school and finish a career. I congratulate each of you on making this decision.

I'm from Lima, Peru. I am a person who came from a foreign country imagining that the American Dream

was easy to get. After working so hard, being

verbally abused by employers and my ex-husband, I decided that I had to stop this. I didn't know how ignorant I was, how easy it was to take advantage of me because I didn't know my rights...

This is a great opportunity; don't waste it. I know sometimes you will feel that you can't handle the homework or maybe you don't understand the lectures, but let me tell you, I have been there, and there is always someone to help you and rescue you for whatever reason. Emily, the teachers, and staff are a great team. They will be able to help you with your needs. Don't give up. You can do it!

Now I am going to MATC. I am in the nursing program, planning to transfer to UW eventually. Odyssey is a door that opened to knowledge and helped me get my citizenship. Today I can say that the American Dream— finishing school— is there, and I am close to getting it. **(Liliana Peleck)**

The day you begin your Odyssey is here. Look around you: these people will be taking an odyssey right along with you but everyone's odyssey is different. At times you might get scared, want to give up, or just second-guess yourself. Know you're not alone; each and every one of you will face fears of some sort at one point or another during this odyssey. You have a great support system to help you when times get rough. Use the support system, call each other, share notes, thoughts, or even learning techniques.

Come with an open mind. Be willing to learn from others as well as give help. During the next nine months you're going to see these people every week and you're going to grow to care for them. Remember to do your homework; when you fall behind it can be hard to catch back up. But don't



miss class because you didn't do your work. When you miss class you miss out on a lot. Good luck and enjoy your Odyssey.

**(Monique Porter)**



You're about to embark on a life change. First and foremost, congratulate yourself on being selected into the program; you're in college now and doors are beginning to open for you. Over the next two semesters your classmates will evolve into friends and family. Be prepared to learn so much

from each other, and don't be afraid to teach others. Express your opinions. If you already love to read, you'll enjoy the broad spectrum the material covers—from history to philosophy—and if you don't love to read I guarantee you will by the time you graduate. **(Tamir Smith)**



When I applied for this class I was filled from head to toe with doubts, excuses for not being able to pursue college, and even a back-up plan for my time had I not been accepted. I was also around six months pregnant when I applied...

I began this class with a promise to God and myself: I

promise to push past my fears, boundaries, and out of my comfort zone so that I may get the most out of this experience. I stand here now, bolder and much more confident in myself, because of this class. Class of 2011, I dare you to make the same promise to yourselves. Hold nothing back and watch yourselves soar to excellence and beyond. Emily, Coach, and the rest of the Odyssey staff will take you as far as you want to go and they will be by your side every step of the way. You have been given a tremendous opportunity to jumpstart your life. Take it and run with it, and let's not forget, have lots of fun!

**(Nativity Townsel)**

Congratulations and welcome aboard. You are setting sail into an ocean of knowledge and an adventure of the mind. Roll up your sleeves and man your oars; you are setting sail into the thoughts, beliefs, and sacrifices of some of the great minds in human history. Your journey will take you into ancient Athens, Greece and deposit you into a jail cell in Birmingham, Alabama. You will learn of the great promise and vision of mankind's future.



Always keep an open and curious mindset. It is up to each and every one of you to help and nurture each other on this adventure of your mind and spirit. Wednesday after Wednesday will enlighten and stimulate you in ways you never thought possible. You will marvel at the dedication of your instructors and be forever grateful for being a part of this outstanding program. So prepare yourselves for the journey of higher education and a true sense of family. Let's go to work.

**(Jesse Woodard)**



## I Love Odyssey By Juanita Wilson '07

I love Odyssey because before Odyssey I always felt like an outsider when I was among a group of people. I now feel that I can contribute to the conversation and feel that I am no longer a slow learner. I feel that I can accomplish whatever I set out to do. I am happy most of the time now.

I am going to be a lifelong learner.

I feel that I am not alone anymore if I need help with a problem. I feel that I am loved by my teachers and classmates. I feel that life is beautiful this year and the rest of my life because of Odyssey. I feel that there will always be help available to me. I feel blessed.



## My Journey By René Robinson '08

My journey started about eight months ago,  
 How I would fare, I really didn't know.  
 Reading, writing for sure there would be,  
 But from six to nine, that I couldn't see.  
 The professors were there for all to meet,  
 Outlining History, Humanities, and Philosophy.  
 I was scared but I didn't know why,  
 Maybe it was the thirty years that had quickly gone by.  
 Getting acclimated was a little rough at first,  
 But soon thereafter to read books I would thirst.  
 See, prior to Odyssey, I didn't read,  
 All the info I got was from the TV.  
 But things have changed  
 Mainly the screen  
 From the TV to the computer  
 I'm now a Google Queen.  
 My journey, my journey,  
 Who would have thought  
 Would be the beginning of me being taught,  
 Being taught the importance of opening my mind,  
 Instead of sitting around wasting my time.  
 Thank you, Odyssey, for choosing me,  
 I've found knowledge,  
 My greatest discovery.



*René will be volunteering time to help encourage and motivate Odyssey students in the Class of 2011.*



Basically, that's you.

That's right. You are the staff of *Odyssey Oracle*. You're going to write about yourselves and each other. You're going to report on what takes place in this classroom all year (and what happens in your heads and hearts as a result).

You're going to explore the humanities together and in this newsletter. You're going to give testimony for the students who will follow you in years to come. Your Oracle editors, Emily Auerbach and Kegan Carter, will help you make it happen—and make sure it happens. Emily will be here each week, and you can contact her between classes for assistance or questions.

The *Odyssey Oracle* will capture your feelings and thoughts and chart your progress on the journey. At the beginning of each class, you'll receive

the latest edition of this newsletter. We'll publish your essays and poems so that we can all share them. The *Oracle* will circulate to other people, too: graduates of the first six Odyssey classes, people interested in the program, and anyone you'd like to share it with. If you don't want something you write to be printed in the Oracle, just say so by writing "don't share" on the paper. We'll always respect your wishes (although we might try to change your mind).

Here's your chance to earn a byline in the big *OO*. Pick a category, create a topic, clear it with Emily or Kegan, and start writing.

\*We may be able to arrange tickets for you if you give us advanced notice of an event you'd like to attend.

## Tineisha Scott, Class of 2004, Community Resource Consultant

Being a part of the Odyssey Project has been a blessing for me. The Odyssey Project is not just a class you take or credits you earn. It is much more than that: it's inspiring, powerful, joyful; a place where you can be safe and not be judged, it's where you feel like you belong (a family).

I was raised primarily by my mother. My father was in and out of prison my entire life. As a young child I witnessed domestic abuse, crime, drug addiction, and many other tragic events. As an adolescent I began having children at 19. After I had my second child, I realized that I wanted something different for my children than I had as a youngster, so I decided to go to school. I started out at MATC taking six credits a semester. Shortly after, I applied to the Odyssey Project and was invited to join the class. I went on to complete a four year degree at Edgewood College. In May of 2006 I received a BS in Psychology.

Since then I have received my social worker certification. Through my employment, I provide a lead role in implementing social service coordination by providing ongoing comprehensive support and case management services to assigned families.

I have worked for the Secretary of State (SOS), Dane County Parent Council (DCPC), and Domestic Abuse Intervention Services (DAIS). At the SOS I oversaw all changes with municipalities in Wisconsin. At DCPC I work with first-time mothers and their children, and at DAIS I work with women and children who have been or are currently being abused. I enjoyed all of my experiences at my jobs.

The Odyssey Project has contributed significantly to my success. Before attending the Odyssey Project I had no confidence in myself. Coming from my circle of life, college was just something no one did and no one really talked about. Going to college was stepping outside of the box for me. I did not know anyone who went to college, so when I began I didn't have anyone who could relate to what I was going through. I didn't have anyone supporting me. I found that with the Odyssey Project—people who supported me and could relate to what I was going through. I found

people to share my successes with; people who gave me the tools I needed to succeed. The Odyssey Project gave me the strength I needed to continue and complete my education. The Odyssey Project stayed by my side until I got that BS; they didn't just disregard me after I completed their course. I have truly been blessed by being able to be a part of the Odyssey Project. Thank you for choosing me as a 2003-2004 Odyssey student!

As a way for me to be able to still be a part of the Odyssey Project, I started a community resource book for current Odyssey students. This book is an ongoing project and will be updated annually. In order for this book to be the best it can be, I am calling on all Odyssey students to please inform me of resources that should be added or described differently. Please contact me with any comments, suggestions, or comments. I am also available as a consultant this year for helping people with housing issues, domestic violence, etc.

*Tineisha is enrolled in Edgewood's Marriage and Family Therapy graduate school program. She is working for the Dane County Parent Council as a family advocate and as a social worker for the department of corrections while raising three daughters.*





## Diane Dennis, Class of 2007, Project Coordinator

I've been working as an administrative assistant in the Division of Continuing Studies at the University for many years, during which time I have raised two children.

Odyssey is only a part of our department. We provide Independent Learning courses in English, Math, Music, Foreign Languages, and other subjects to people who live all over the world. We offer continuing education classes to students of all ages in our community.

For example, Emily teaches a book discussion group at the downtown library on Tuesday mornings, and she coordinates a free lecture series by retired faculty. I help with the paperwork to make these and other classes successful. Being the Odyssey Project coordinator is the most rewarding, challenging, and fulfilling part of my job. I tremendously enjoy meeting so many new people and take pleasure in watching your hunger for learning.

Four years ago Emily coaxed me into taking the class for credit myself and doing all the homework. I can now relate to the complexity of this course, the hard work, and the strong determination it takes to keep going. Learning is a lifelong process.

I am here to provide support for you if needed and can assist you with grammar, proofreading, and basic computer skills. I can help you set up your wisc.edu account for email. There is a lot

of behind the scenes work for the Odyssey Project, such as registering students, chartering buses, ordering textbooks, administering grants, locating community resources, stocking supplies for dinner, and duplicating handouts. I'm here to help you in whatever way I can or just to listen, so feel free to email me at [ddennis@dcs.wisc.edu](mailto:ddennis@dcs.wisc.edu) or call me at 262-3885. Thank you for letting me be part of your Wednesday evenings.



## Kegan Carter, Class of 2004, Oracle Designer

I have had a lot of obstacles and setbacks in my 33 (today!) years of life, and many times I considered giving up and succumbing to the lure of the streets. Many of my childhood dreams have been deferred or thwarted, but slowly and surely, I know my true destiny will be realized.

I am a single mother of three children. Emily will tell you that I'm not one to speak very well about all that I've done (I'm quite shy), so I'll give a brief rundown of my life since Odyssey. I graduated from the Odyssey Program in 2004. Since then, I earned my Associate of Arts degree from Madison Area Technical College and my bachelor's degree in English from UW-Madison. I have been designing the Oracle since 2006, and have designed the yearbooks for the Odyssey class since 2004.

Academically, I was on the Dean's List twice at MATC. One of my photographs was a finalist in a Nikon contest. I was inducted in Phi Theta Kappa, an honors society for students in community colleges with grade-point averages of 3.5 or higher.

My determination to succeed has kept me focused on my goals. There have been many times that I thought about quitting because the work was too hard or LIFE threw me a curveball. But those were the times that I looked to my children. If I quit, that would show them that it's okay to give up when things are difficult. And I refuse to set that type of example.

Being in Odyssey cleared the cobwebs from my mind, and helped me realize that knowledge doesn't expire. Had I not been accepted into Odyssey, I would have probably continued my pattern of

working one menial, low-paying job after another, dreaming about going back to school eventually, but never finding the time to do so.

Odyssey is a true blessing, and I encourage each of you to make the most of all the information you'll be immersed in. Keep your minds and hearts open because you'll get to know many people from different walks of life that may have different opinions from your own. Soon, despite your differences, you may feel that these people are like family. This is the hidden benefit of Odyssey. If you don't believe me, you'll soon see for yourselves.

I'll be dropping by from time to time, so if you have any suggestions, comments, or questions, please feel free to speak with me then. You can also contact me more immediately by using the information provided on the cover of the Oracles. Perfectionism drives me to work well into the night so that my class work and the Oracles are just right, but there is always room for improvement.

Good luck this year, and I look forward to meeting all of you!



## Oroki Rice, Class of 2007, Office Assistant

I am a survivor of child abuse and neglect, drug addiction, mental illness, teen-pregnancy, incarceration, and poor choices. Reading helped me to survive each of these traumas.

I grew up in a family that did not have money for books, yet my mother instilled a love of learning through reading. Subsequently I read anything I could get my hands on: library books, milk cartons, cereal boxes, sale papers, church bulletins, instruction manuals, anything. Educated in Chicago's segregated public system of the 50's and 60's, I don't think I ever saw an unused textbook until I got to the newly integrated Lake View High (1967). Reading laid a foundation that would open doors for me throughout my life.

In fact it was while serving time in a correctional drug treatment program that I applied for and was accepted into The Odyssey Project (2006). I was so exhilarated that someone (Emily) was willing to give me one more chance to get my life in order. I knew that being accepted into Odyssey was something to be grateful for but had no idea of the magnitude of change that would take place. To show my gratitude I never missed a class, completed all assignments (including extra credit), and soaked up every opportunity to be engaged with the top notch instructors and my Odyssey peers.

After my graduation (2007) the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation financed several months of employment with Odyssey. I've been blessed to be employed as an Office Assistant. I have held positions at Neighborhood House Community Center and as a work-study student at MATC. Three years ago I commuted from Madison to Chicago to complete three classes in my major (Applied Behavioral Sciences) at National Louis University. I've created and performed several self-featured productions, been interviewed on television, radio, and in newspapers, and published my first chapbook. All three of my daughters have since returned to or started college since

my graduation. One of them, Mandisa Hayes, is an alum of the Odyssey class of 2008. I would like to believe that each of our successes feeds upon the others.

Imagine standing on one side of the Beltline. You can clearly see your destination on the other side of the highway, yet you cannot get there because of the cars whizzing by and the barrier that separates you from your goal. You stand there forlornly wishing, almost about to give up and go home. You pray and ask for help. Then along comes The Odyssey Project. You find yourself transplanted to the place you almost thought you'd never arrive. You now know if you faced the challenge of speeding cars and other obstructions, you can do anything!





## The Faculty of the Odyssey Project

So, you received your acceptance letter for the Odyssey Project, celebrated, and anticipated what to expect. The first day is finally here, and you can't wait to dive into your assignments. But just who *are* these people giving you homework on the first day of school? Here is a little information about them. To find out more, feel free to visit the Odyssey Project website at [www.odyssey.wisc.edu](http://www.odyssey.wisc.edu) and read their biographies.

Emily Auerbach is a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as the director of the Odyssey Project. She will be teaching literature and writing.

Marshall Cook is the writing coach for Odyssey students and is a retired writing professor from UW-Madison. He was the founding editor for the Oracle. He is also a Cubs fan.

Jean Feraca is Wisconsin Public Radio's

Distinguished Senior Broadcaster. She helped found the Odyssey Project and is its philosophy instructor. She is also famous for her wicked interpretation of Lady Macbeth.

Gene Phillips has chaired the UW-Madison Art History Department. He will give you a new appreciation for art and may even inspire you to be more creative. Look forward to a tour through the Chazen Art Museum.

Craig Werner has chaired the African-American Studies Department and teaches African-American culture at the UW-Madison. He will guide you through U.S. history.

These instructors will be more than happy to assist you with your course work if you feel stuck. Please ask questions and above all, make your opinions known. Now is your opportunity to find your voice and use it!

