

YEAR 2, ISSUE 1



SEPTEMBER 2024

ODYSSEY BEYOND WARS ORACLE

WELCOME TO THE ODYSSEY BEYOND WARS CLASS OF 2025



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LETTERS TO THE CLASS OF 2025

FROM THE CLASS OF 2024



Hello, My Odyssey Warriors,

I was admitted by Professor Emily into the UW / Odyssey Beyond Wars Course and was taught and mentored by Professor Erin throughout the entire program.

"WE have a long way to go and a short time to get there."

Thank you Professor Emily and Professor Erin, and good luck, my fellow Odyssey Warriors.

Welcome aboard!

JERG (Juan Eugenio Ramirez Gaona)

I have recently graduated from said course and now I am a proud Odyssey Lifetime Alumni. My Odyssey trek did not end during my graduation. This journey has just started.

I bid you great academic fortunes in your near term and long term scholarly goals.

You will learn, as I have learned, that it is not about finally reaching your destination but about the incredible insightful journey itself that lies ahead.



Class of 2025,

When I started the Odyssey Beyond Wars program, I had problems following through and problems with commitment. I was new to the Madison area and didn't know what I was

getting myself into.

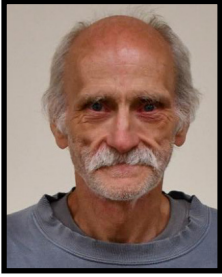
For two semesters, with some struggle, I picked

myself up and dusted myself off and assured myself, "You've got this, Erik!" Struggles are each in themselves different. Learning to love myself during these times, and at all times, was so difficult for me to grasp, but this class helped with that.

I am really going to miss class every week and the laughs, jokes, and food, but also our discussions and writing. Thank you for believing in me, and it hopefully is just a goodbye for now.

Gratefully,
Erik Huelsbeck





Dear Class of 2025:

We started going to English class at the beginning of September, 2023 through December 2023. Then we started

a writing class from January, 2024 until April, 30, 2024. This is when we got our certificate from the University of Wisconsin for the Odyssey Beyond Wars Project. We had to write poems, do an affirmation, writing demons, Important, an essay about How Music can be used in My Life, Lithography, watch and talk about "All Is Calm-The Christmas Truce of 1914" at the Overture Center. Missing in action building tour to learn about how they search for soldiers missing in action for English class. In January we had to read and rehearse several *Iliad* scripts, watch and talk about a live Hello Girl concert at the Overture Center, wrote more poems, talk and write an essay about courageous women, had to write a short story to talk in front of the class and at the graduation ceremony. On the 30th of April we all received our diploma for finishing the Odyssey Beyond Wars Certificate. I also went to a Norwegian Orchestra- Masterwork Series concert at the Overture Center. This class will be worth six college credits towards your next degree or to the next level. We had a lot of fun, made friends, and met a lot of new people, and you will too!

Gary Lothe



Dear OBW Students;

I am writing to assure you will have a very enjoyable adventure during your OBW classes. I must warn you that as you start your year with an anxious desperation for it to start, you will be very

sad to see it end. I truly enjoyed the journey inward during the course. It was a very challenging class and there was no time to slow down as the gifts

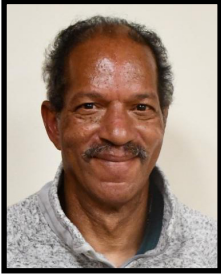


of reading and writing increased in quality as well as quantity. And the best gift you ever will receive is an instructor like Erin and her staff, as well as the many field trips, guests, and exercises you will experience.

My recommendation is to be fully present, engage with your fellow comrades, and enjoy yourself, as you learn to express the things that matter and observe your life through the looking glass. Be courageous and share your stories and tell them what your journey has been like to get to where you are at this time.

Do not be intimidated by the books: there are always a lot of resources to help you understand, and the instructor is very kind with deadlines. It was a very valuable process for me, as I was able to write a poem of my perspectives of life as it was ingrained in my life. I discovered that I am a valuable person and every role I play in life is very important. Love yourself, love your journey, and love being present. Every day is a new day to start again!

Respectfully yours,
Marlene Toledo



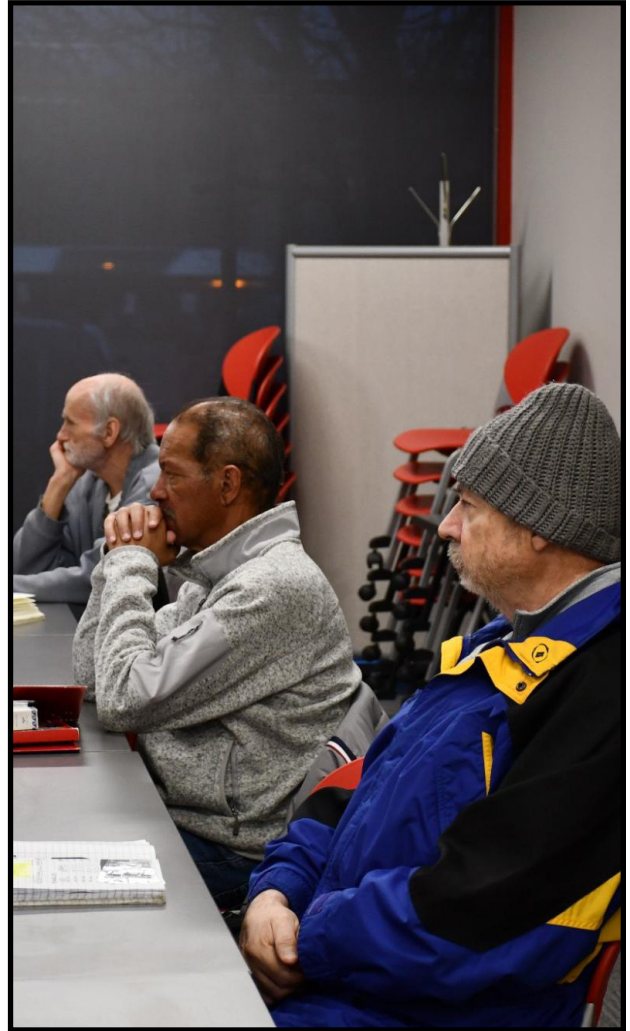
Dear Odyssey Beyond Wars students:

You're about to embark on an unforgettable journey.

As a former student, this was a journey that expanded my knowledge (from the readings, lectures, and fellow students) and I enjoyed every moment, as each of you will. I was able to look at various parts of the readings and how they closely related to things taking place in our time. Whether or not your time in the service involved being in actual conflicts, you'll come to understand that no matter how things may change over time, sometimes they remain the same!

So, use the things you learn from the various aspects of the class and as time goes on from that, you may find a deeper understanding of yourself in the process. As I said at the class before our graduation, this course gave us the opportunity to discover what is in each one of us: the freedom to express thoughts, feelings, and emotions. It brought to the surface things some of us didn't understand or didn't even think we were capable of! We went from 'Odyssey Beyond Wars' to 'Odyssey Beyond Ourselves!'

Ortese "TC" Lomax



ODYSSEY BEYOND WARS GRADUATION CLASS OF 2024



ALUMNI CORNER

DON'T QUIT

BY JOE ROBINSON '04

My advice to the new Odyssey class is don't quit. No matter how hard it gets, don't quit.

When you get off work at 5:30, and you only have 30 minutes to get the kids situated and get to class, don't quit.

When you get stuck in the middle of writing a paper or doing a project, don't quit.

When you find out that your father has cancer and has to have surgery and treatment, don't quit.

When you have circumstances that occur that make you miss a class and you get behind on your work, don't quit.

When you feel as if you're not getting anything out of a particular subject, don't quit. When people tell you you are wasting your time, don't quit. When your car breaks down, and it's twenty below outside, and the only way to get here is on the city bus, don't quit. When your spouse is complaining that your five children are driving her crazy every Wednesday night, don't quit. When one of your classmates makes you feel stupid for voicing your opinion, don't quit. When your boyfriend or girlfriend accuses you of cheating on them because you had to turn your cell phone off during class, don't quit.

And if you get to the point where you just can't find any more motivation to force yourself to keep coming to this class, my advice is to call Emily, and I guarantee you that she won't let you quit! There were many times that I wanted to just give up, but Emily would not let me. She believed in us more than some of us believed in ourselves.

Finally, I would like to say that, the first couple of weeks, I was in class trying to figure out, what is the catch? Why are these people offering us this course for free? There must be a catch. I found out what the catch was. Each one of the teachers was trying to trick us into believing that our lives would somehow be better if we completed this Odyssey class and then go on to graduate from college. I guess I must be a little naïve, because I fell for it, hook, line, and sinker.

Joe also had this to say about Odyssey Beyond Wars:

The Odyssey program is an excellent resource for military veterans attempting to adapt to life after serving our country. As an Army veteran who served back in the 1980's, I would have benefited tremendously from a program like Odyssey Beyond Wars.

I enlisted in the Army's delayed entry program my senior year in high school because I simply had no idea what I was going to do with my life when I graduated. I was a star athlete, but I didn't have the grades to get into college. My mindset throughout high school was just graduating. The job I took to get in the Army wasn't based on the choice of what I wanted to do as a career, it was based on the score that I made on the ASVAB test to be eligible to enlist. I figured I could join and make some money to help my mom.



Joe Robinson with classmate Tineisha Scott, who earned her Master's Degree at Edgewood College

Because I joined for all the wrong reasons, I hated it. I did 4 years and got out. I ended up back in my hometown as a 22 year old with no job, no education, and Army training that didn't help me in my pursuit to find a career. I ended up working minimum wage jobs for a long time. I had friends who had the exact same experience, and I know young men the age of my sons that are experiencing this today.

The transition from military life back into the civilian world is a lot more difficult than most people realize. As an alum of the Odyssey program, I can attest that Odyssey is life changing in so many different ways. The opportunity to have a program that plants a seed for anyone from any walk of life to have a chance to pursue higher education is such a blessing. Getting together weekly with the professors, the classmates and the community partners that come into class, and all of the resources that Odyssey provides would definitely benefit any veteran, no matter if they are recently discharged and trying to transition back into civilian life, or they exited the military years ago and never had the opportunity pursue higher education until they were introduced to Odyssey.

The men and women of the Armed Forces sacrifice not only their personal life, but their families sacrifice a lot as well. Wives and children have to go months, and sometimes years without seeing the service member, not to mention most military children don't attend the same school for more than a few years. The way Odyssey is structured, it is a resource for the entire family, so that's another benefit for the veteran. I can go on and on about how many different ways I think the Odyssey program is a wonderful asset to Veterans. I hope my words give you some insight on how beneficial this collaboration is.



Joe Robinson with his family



WE ATE DOG FOOD

BY ALICE MCDANIEL '09

WRITTEN FOR KEVIN MULLEN'S ODYSSEY ALUMNI COMPOSITION CLASS

. . . You can only write about what you feel and know really. I know that my mom was not a high school graduate, but no one else would have known that unless she told you herself. She was a very well-versed, super-intelligent, beautiful, spiritual, and loving woman.

My dad, on the other hand, could hardly read or write. He has lived most of his life with those limitations. He is a very funny, kind-hearted, spiritual, and good-looking man.

While in the care of my dad, my four other siblings and I ate dog food. That is what we were told some years later, and our mom confirmed that story. You are probably wondering how that happened. Well, I will tell you what we have been told.

My dad went to the grocery store. He was in the canned goods section, or so he thought. He looked at the picture on the can of some corn beef hash. "Ha, ha!" he said and grabbed it.

When my mom arrived home from work, she asked him if we had eaten yet. His reply was “Yes.” My mom asked him, “What did you feed the children?” He said, “some hash.” For those of you who have never eaten it and never want to, hash, according to Webster’s Dictionary, comes from the French *hacher*, to chop, and means “to chop up meat and vegetables for cooking; usually a baked mixture, a muddled mess.” She asked him again, “What did you say you fed them?” My dad replied again, “Hash. The cans are in the trash can.”

My mom went to the trash can. As she lifted each of the cans out, she screamed at my dad, “You fool! You gave my children dog food, with your ‘no reading’ ass!” It goes without saying that he was not asked to go shopping for groceries again.

My parents didn’t have the opportunity to complete their education due to obstacles. My dad was from the small town of Stamps, Arkansas. By the age of four, his mom was now a single parent. His father had left them. As the oldest of her two sons, he was now the man of the house. He went to school on a regular basis only up to the third grade. He had to work in the fields, either having to stay home or be pulled from his class at school whenever it was time for crops to be harvest.

Mother was from a large family of eleven and also from Arkansas. She got to go to school every day until she met my dad. With her parents’ permission, they got married a year later.

They moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin several years later along with their two daughters. During their marriage they had some economic struggles. It was not for lack of ambition and determination and drive. Both of them would work—Dad as a laborer and Mom as a waitress or maid. I remember she would wear a black and white uniform when she rode the bus to the eastside of the city where the rich people lived. . .

Both of my parents instilled in their children that we should do our best at whatever we chose to do in life. “‘Can’t’ is not a word,” my mother would say. We could not use it at all as an excuse or reason not to go for things in life, like getting an education. . . .

Education is the key to freedom, to advancing your world. Wealth is not only of material and financial means; it is also knowledge.

We ate dog food, but we were rich.

ODYSSEY POEM

BY ANTHONY JEFFERSON ‘17

Odyssey is the pencil of life with which we can erase past regrets and rewrite our future.

Every “word” formed solidifies our resolve, those periods at the end a proud stamp of success.

Sentence by sentence, we forge a new tale.



SPECIAL ODYSSEY MOMENTS



UW Chancellor Mnookin at Odyssey's 20th anniversary celebration; Jasmine Banks '13, Keena Atkinson '10, and Josephine Lorya '08 received YWCA Women of Distinction Awards; Stanley Sallay '07 and Tosumba Welch '13 meet *Just Mercy* author Bryan Stevenson; Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway pronounces April 20, 2023 "Odyssey Day" citywide; Class of 2014 students featured on Capital City Hues cover.



TV personality Tavis Smiley and scholar Cornel West taking Odyssey students out to dinner during their Poverty Tour; Senator Tammy Baldwin meets Brian Benford '07, Char Braxton '06, and Dominique Christian '09; scholar Henry Louis Gates with Kegan Carter '04 and Josephine Lorya '08; Yolanda King (daughter of the late Martin Luther King, Jr.) with Emily Auerbach, Juanita Wilson '07, Pamela Holmes '04, and Denise Maddox '04; author Jelissa Edwards '16 on cover of BRAVA Magazine.