

## Report on the Student-led honours seminar

I remember the first time I heard about the student-led honors seminar. The opportunity at that time seemed so appealing but also very distant and difficult. Fortunately, after a couple of days, Thijs Korsten informed me that he and his friend Andrej wanted to do the student-led honors seminar, which would be an interdisciplinary study of the region of Balkans. I was happy and scared at the same time, but I guess these are the two emotions that one feels when something challenging and important is coming up.

The Student-led honors seminar turned out to be exactly that: challenging and important at the same time. I want to speak about roughly two dimensions of this course in this report: educational and personal. Let me start with educational.

There is one big disadvantage of being part of the Student-led honors seminar, which is the fact that after taking this course the standards of the kind of education that one wants to get rises extremely high. Once it is possible to experience the sweet taste of being in charge of your education, it is hard to go back. This does not mean that it is easy to hold this kind of responsibility, especially when you are part of a group, but it does mean that everything that you learn is very valuable and personal for you. Our course was an interdisciplinary study of the region of Balkans, the people who were part of this course shared the interest, passion and the will to learn about this region. The topics that we learned together were from disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology, international relations, etc. We were discussing the topics such as communism, social movements, revolutions, war and nation-building, identity, violence, you name it. The good part about our group was the fact that most of us came from different disciplines, from different parts of the world, so we had an opportunity to share our previous knowledge and our personal stories from where we came from.

The Student-led honors seminar is definitely challenging on a personal level too. There were moments when I had to be more attentive than I could, when I had to be extremely good at time management because I had to teach a class, which requires more time than preparing for a class as only a student. Our group got quite close to the very beginning, as we all understood the simple fact that we are part of this *together*. However, there were some challenges in keeping the group dynamics always alive. When I look back at those 5 months of the student-led honors seminar, I believe that it helped to grow as a person in relation to others. There were some mistakes due to the simple fact that we are all individual human beings who have specific preferences and sometimes it is hard to find the middle ground, but at the same time you also understand the importance of sharing ideas, the vitality of disagreement and the crucial need to find the contact zone where different opinions meet. All of these were a huge part of the student-led honors seminar, as no teacher tells you to act in a certain way or learn in a certain way, but the confusion that you feel in the beginning results in valuable knowledge in the end.

If someone asks me to name one of the most challenging and important experiences of my student life, I will say that this was one of them. And yes, I would definitely do it again and again, every time I would get the chance to.