On the Importance of Honor in IUHPFL

Whenever we sign up to become a part of an institution, we relinquish some rights so that we may achieve a desired outcome. By being an American citizen, we are no longer 100% free to do whatever we want. Rather, originating from the enlightenment thinkers of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the political idea of a “social contract” between the people and government is formed not only out of necessity to prevent evils committed among human beings in their natural states, but also to allow human beings to work together for the purpose of the community, which, in turn, allows for the progression of the individual.

When participating in the Indiana University Honors Program in Foreign Languages, one must acknowledge that drugs, alcohol, boyfriends, girlfriends, and English are forbidden, and that immersing oneself as much as possible in the foreign country is required. However, this is not a bad thing. If one’s purpose for desiring language immersion is to truly learn a language, then having these rules is a good thing because it establishes a foundation on which all students in the program have the same motivations, attitudes, and goals. The entire group will be bounded to work together for a common goal, which in turn, will allow for the progression of the linguistic facility of each individual.

With this specific goal in mind, it is one’s duty to follow the Honor Code. If this idealistic state of everyone working together for a common goal is to be achieved, everyone must have honor. For if they do not, the entire basis of achieving language proficiency may be ruined because disobeying the assumed state of nature of the program undermines the purpose of the program. Since honor can be defined as integrity, or saying what you are going to do and then doing it, then everyone, by simply applying for the Honors Program, is promising that, if accepted, they will strive to their utmost ability to follow the Honor Code and immerse themselves fully into the foreign language and country.

This foundational principle of honor in IUHPFL, however, means so much more than following the rules. It means purposeful engagement with the Host Family and in foreign everyday activities. It means intellectual stimulation in the political, economic, and social customs of the country. It means taking an interest in and caring for all of one another’s classmates in the program. It means living up to the standards of and maintaining the idealism of the program. It means enjoying oneself as an immersed member of the foreign society.

So this is my message to the potential IU Honors applicant and participant. Understand that this is an immersion program: you will be diving head first into unknown waters. You will not know how to respond to common phenomena because of the Language Commitment. You will not know how to be yourself because you will not be able to express yourself. But thirty people just like you have made the same dive. You are all working together for the same goal. Trust the foundation of honor on which the program is built, and together, throughout the seven weeks, you will build a boat on which all of you may not simply float, but thrive.

-Joshua Silver ’11 Oviedo, Spain