



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

ARTS & LETTERS



2021

SENIOR THESIS PROJECTS

Study everything. Do anything.SM

**Andrew Peterson**

- Majors: Music (Concentration in Clarinet Performance) and Theology
- Advisor: Chris French

Senior Clarinet Recital

For my senior recital, I showcased my work with the clarinet, performing a number of pieces that highlight the beauty and versatility of this instrument. My repertoire included pieces such as Elliott Carter's Pastorale, Camille Saint-Saens' Clarinet Sonata, and Malcolm Arnold's Fantasy for B-flat Clarinet, as well as an arrangement of George Gerschwin's Rhapsody in Blue for a clarinet quartet.

My recital program was chosen to capture a wide range of the styles, time periods, and techniques found within the clarinet repertoire. Moreover, each piece contains something that I could not have done prior to my years of study at Notre Dame. For this reason, my preparation for my recital has been thoughtful as I reflect on my growth as a musician, a student, and a person.



Catherine Hyry

- Majors: Mathematics and Music (Concentration in Vocal Performance)
- Minor: Theology
- Advisor: Kiera Duffy

Senior Vocal Recital

As a culmination of my music major, I presented a senior vocal recital on April 11, 2021. The works I performed included pieces by Buxtehude, Mozart, Boulanger, Mendelssohn, Liszt, and MacMillan.

I chose these pieces because I find them both musically satisfying and technically challenging.

**Catherine O'Leary**

- Major: Theology
- Supplementary Major: Arts and Letters Pre-Health
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Hesburgh-Yusko Scholar
- Advisor: Vania Smith-Oka

Retinopathy of Prematurity and Hispanic Infants

I conducted a literature review on studies investigating retinopathy of prematurity, and existing evidence showed increased incidence of ROP in Hispanic infants. I then reassessed the literature through an anthropological lens of race and ethnicity. Finally, I made suggestions for the medical community for future investigations of racial disparities in health, based on these anthropological assertions.

During the summer of 2019, I researched ROP at Vanderbilt University Medical Center with Dr. Dolly Ann Padovani-Claudio. This piqued my interest in the disease and the potential effects of race and ethnicity on its progression and prevalence.

Received funding from the Hesburgh-Yusko Scholars Program.

**Christopher Gamboa**

- Major: International Economics (Spanish)
- Minor: Theology
- Advisor: Forest Spence

Hispanic Multigeneration Households

Why has there been a recent influx in Hispanic people choosing to live in multigenerational households? Is this a cultural phenomenon or a financial decision? My paper explores the motivations behind this recent trend and the economic outcomes for families who make this choice. I chose to study this topic because it combines my interest in macroeconomics with my background in Hispanic culture. This paper allows me to analyze the influence that culture can have on economic decisions.



Edwin Donnelly

- Majors: Theology and Classics
- Minor: Liturgical Music Ministry
- CEC Sorin Fellow
- Advisors: Aldo Tagliabue and Max Johnson

Mark: The Secret Narrative

In this thesis project, I explore how the narratological principles of immersion and distance function in the Gospel of Mark to invite the reader into two dispositions of prayer: participation and contemplation.

Because I enjoy studying early Christianity, namely its texts, writing two theses — one on the Gospel of Mark and the other on the Didache — is a result of Providence. As I progressed in both the classics and theology majors, I developed an appreciation for Greek that has proven to complement my vocation as a theologian.

**Edwin Donnelly**

- Majors: Theology and Classics
- Minor: Liturgical Music Ministry
- CEC Sorin Fellow
- Advisors: Aldo Tagliabue and Max Johnson

The Rites of Christian Initiation in the Didache Communities

In this project, I offer an exegesis of the Didache and its surrounding texts in order to better understand the shape of Christian Initiation in the early Church.

Because I enjoy studying early Christianity, namely its texts, writing two theses — one on the Gospel of Mark and the other on the Didache — is a result of Providence. As I progressed in both the classics and theology majors, I developed an appreciation for Greek that has proven to complement my vocation as a theologian.

**Emileigh Evans**

- Majors: Theology and Economics
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Advisor: Francesca Murphy

She-Said, We-Said: Marian Apparitions and Their Societal Implications

My thesis analyzes Marian apparitions throughout history. In particular, I look at how the accounts of these apparitions are influenced by the recipients' cultures and how, in turn, the apparitions influence the culture. I also discuss the historical figure of Mary in an attempt to explain why she appears to certain demographics and brings specific types of messages.

At first, I had a broader topic that looked at visions and apparitions in general, but I noticed that the Virgin Mary was a very common figure in these types of events. This evolved into a desire to specifically examine Marian apparitions, which revealed connections between the images and ideas that the recipients were exposed to and the accounts that they gave about their experiences.

**Emily Yeager**

- Major: International Economics (Spanish)
- Minors: Theology and Constitutional Studies
- Advisor: Forrest Spence

Spanish Income and the Euro

My project uses global data to analyze how the currency transition from the peseta to the euro in Spain in January 2002 impacted Spanish regional income.

When I was studying abroad in Spain in 2020, I heard from my professors and my host family that the euro noticeably changed prices and the value of goods and services. I wanted to see if there really was a correlation between the adoption of a common currency and regional incomes.

**Fenian Kenney**

- Majors: Political Science and Theology
- Minor: French
- Advisor: Mim Thomas

The Micro-physics of Power: Ritual and Mythology in Capital Punishment

My thesis explores how the power of the state is manifested in the mythology and ritual surrounding the death penalty. I explore how such manifestations have changed over time and across different political structures. I also consider the way in which art, particularly 20th-century film, has historically reflected the existing power structure and contributed to the lore of execution.

I have long been fascinated by the types of political structures that undergird the death penalty and by the ways in which crime and execution are portrayed across different media. After reading the work of Michel Foucault, my interest in writing a thesis that explores the intersection between the political and social theory of capital punishment was solidified.

**Heather Christman**

- Majors: Theology and Music
- Minor: Education, Schooling, and Society (ESS)
- Advisor: Timothy O'Malley

A Chestertonian Pedagogy: Enchantment in Catholic Education

Modern schooling leaves many students disenchanted by reducing reality to the purely rational and utilitarian. In a tradition which recognizes reality as including the transcendent and the nature of creation as gift from God, such a mode of learning is antithetical to Catholic schooling. G.K. Chesterton offers a response to such disenchantment through a pedagogy of enchantment, which situates the student in a posture of wonder, capable of receiving the gift of reality through learning. This project was a convergence of all my areas of study — each of which taught me the importance of learning through beauty and gratitude. When I took David Fagerberg's class on Chesterton, I knew that Chesterton was the person who most fittingly embodied the ideas that had been forming in my mind over my time as an undergraduate. I wanted to write on this topic in order to better prepare to be a teacher myself.

**Jacob Gorman**

- Majors: Theology and Philosophy
- Advisor: Jay Martin

Catholicism in the Postmodern Condition: John Paul II and Jean-Francois Lyotard

My thesis looks at intersections between the Catholic Church and postmodern cultures. By studying Jean-Francois Lyotard's postmodernism and John Paul II's personalism, I propose that there are certain philosophical and theological overlaps which allow for a dialogue between Catholicism and postmodernism. These overlaps, in turn, can provide a framework for a genuine expression of Catholicism in the postmodern condition.

As a Catholic seminarian, I am especially interested in how to best communicate God's love to those around me. Since postmodernism has had a massive impact on contemporary Western cultures, I wanted to better understand how the Church can be present to individual people living within postmodernity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only deepened my desire to pursue this topic. Now more than ever, many people are searching for hope amidst the various challenges and tragedies of the past year. A Church that understands and dialogues with postmodern ideas will be better equipped to be a sign of hope and love to individuals living in postmodern cultures.

**Jessica Igiede**

- Majors: Sociology and Biology
- Minor: Theology
- Advisor: Calvin Zimmermann

Racial and Gendered Differences in Sunscreen Use and Other Sun-Protective Behaviors

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the sunscreen education provided to patients and the perception of patients' beliefs regarding sunscreen. My project addresses discrepancies in sunscreen use among people of color and highlights the importance of education to address sunscreen misconceptions and improve skin cancer prevention behavior in Black patients.

I noticed that in everyday conversation, there was a misconception that Black people do not need to use sunscreen or engage in other skin cancer preventative behaviors. I became interested in learning why these mistaken beliefs exist and how they can best be corrected to improve health outcomes for Black patients.

**John Draves**

- Majors: American Studies and Philosophy
- Minor: Theology
- Advisor: Peter Cajka

Where Have All the Brothers Gone: Exploring the Identity and Mission of Religious Brothers in American Catholicism

For my American studies thesis project, I studied religious brothers in American Catholicism because I wanted to find out how the identity and mission of brothers changed amid changes in the Church to help my reader understand why the number of brothers' vocations has declined by 66 percent since 1965.

I am presently discerning brotherhood in the Congregation of Holy Cross as my possible vocation so I wanted to gain insights into and a framework to talk about this often overlooked and underappreciated vocation that is, nevertheless, a gift to the Church and the world.

**Karli Siefker**

- Major: Theology
- Minors: Sustainability; Catholic Social Tradition; and Education, Schooling, and Society (ESS)
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Advisor: Margaret Pfeil

Creaturely Communion: A Liberationist Lens on Creation Theology

My project uses liberation theology to develop a theology of creation that includes non-human creation in salvation. To do so, my project relies on an understanding of salvation as communion and integrates all creation into this communion. I draw on the work of liberation theologians to build a spirituality of creation care that responds to the climate crisis in theological terms.

I believe theology is important because it aids humanity in understanding and responding to our world. Theology offers rich insight into creation care. In the context of the climate crisis, this theology is needed to develop a holistic spirituality that can address the brokenness of our world. I choose this topic in the hopes of adding to the theological response to the climate crisis.

**Karli Siefker**

- Major: Theology
- Minors: Sustainability; Catholic Social Tradition; and Education, Schooling, and Society (ESS)
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Advisor: Maria Mckenna

Fertile Ground: Sustainability Education as a Restorative Justice Practice

For this capstone project in collaboration with biology major Elsa Barron, we designed and implemented a sustainability and environmental justice curriculum for DePaul Academy in South Bend, which provides an alternative to incarceration for youth. Our curriculum allows students to learn about climate science, environmental justice, and community action and also provides ways to engage hands-on with nature, a tool for healing from trauma.

We chose this topic because of our desire to engage in a community-based project and build on the inspiring mission of DePaul Academy. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, we had to implement our curriculum via Zoom, but we were able to do so in collaboration with the faculty at DePaul Academy and engage remotely in hands-on activities like seed germination.

Received funding from the Center for Social Concerns Community Impact Grant.

**Kevin Fox**

- Major: Sociology
- Supplementary Major: Theology
- Minors: Poverty Studies and Business Economics
- Advisor: David Gibson

Social Elusiveness Among Advantaged Groups

For this project, I created a survey to measure people's desires to discuss certain subjects. I analyzed how advantaged groups wanted to discuss the topic of oppression at slower rates than the disadvantaged groups.

I was inspired to do this research after reading *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo and hearing her speak on campus as well.

Received funding from the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program.

**Laura Rubino**

- Major: Psychology
- Minors: Theology and Business Economics
- Advisor: Mark Cummings

The Prospective Relations Between Parental Depression and Adolescent Disordered Eating: Investigating Emotional Security as a Mediator

Given the severity of eating disorders, it is important to understand the factors contributing to their etiology and maintenance to help inform interventions. One promising relationship is the connection between emotion dysregulation, parental depression, and disordered eating. We investigated the relationship with two cross-lagged panel models. Parental depression (paternal and maternal separately) were the predictors, emotional insecurity was the mediator, and disordered eating was the outcome. Although the model fit well, the relationship was not significant.

Eating disorders are serious mental illnesses that impact not only the individual, but his/her family, friends, and society as a whole. However, eating disorders are not well understood, and treatment success rates are not satisfactory. I am hoping to investigate eating disorders in future research and was grateful and excited to have the opportunity to begin such work with my thesis.



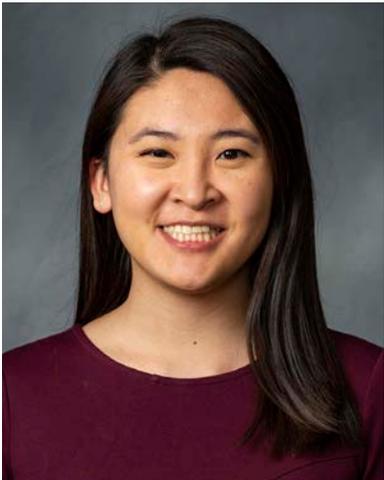
Madeline Foley

- Major: Program of Liberal Studies
- Minors: Theology and Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE)
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Kellogg International Scholar
- Advisor: Emma Planinc

Life After Death: The Relational Emancipation from Queer Refusal

My project is an articulation of the queer refusal, or the refusal of normative narratives, as a form of relational self-sacrifice which is paradoxically undertaken in the name of self-preservation. Through a close reading of *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, I used Lee Edelman's psychoanalytic framework to introduce a mode of personhood that is constituted by an act of self-dissolving love undertaken with an unrecognizable, incoherent other. Such self-dissolving love has the capacity to dismantle oppressive institutions.

This topic developed out of months of reading queer, feminist, and critical theory. I come from a Catholic background and was interested in resonances that I saw between Edelman's rejection of teleological time, the political world, and reproduction and the apocalyptic thrust of certain strains of Christianity. I wanted to explore the so-called anti-social thesis and see if Edelman's compelling negation of oppression could be understood more clearly as an act of truly apocalyptic love. I read critical theory because I wanted to understand the relationship between the preservation of one's lifestyle and the forced death and slow killing of those who are not privileged under capitalism. The pandemic exacerbated this, especially in the first few months, as the rich and powerful pushed to "keep the economy open" while spreading misinformation about masks, tests, and the danger of the disease. I wanted to know what would motivate such a "culture of death." I was immediately captured by Edelman's analysis, which says that the need to keep civilization perpetually in motion towards some imagined future is immediately related to present-tense oppression.

**Maria D'Ambrose**

- Major: Neuroscience and Behavior
- Minors: Theology and Education, Schooling, and Society (ESS)
- Advisor: Daniel Lapsley

A New Measure of Science Identity Utilizing A Self-Determination Theory Approach

This project reports on the development of the Motivation and Identity in Science Scale (MISS-ND) that assesses science identity along the continuum of motivation specified by self-determination theory. Three reliable subscales emerged, labeled amotivation, introjected, and intrinsic. Preliminary evidence of convergent and concurrent validity is reported.

The formation of science identity is considered crucial to keeping students, especially underrepresented minorities, in the STEM pipeline. Because standard assessments of science identity are limited to simplified rating scales, a more in-depth approach is needed to capture the varying degrees of student motivation that drive identification with science and the degree to which it is internalized as an essential personalized identity.

**Mary Regan Fitzgerald**

- Major: Political Science
- Minor: Theology
- Kellogg International Scholar
- Advisor: Andrew Gould

Inclusion Through Engagement: Roma Political Participation in Central and Eastern Europe

My project examines the political participation of the Roma minority in Europe, with a particular focus on Central and Eastern Europe. I examine the factors that aid or inhibit Roma participation, and I then rely on three case studies to analyze how such participation can influence non-Roma attitudes.

The Roma are Europe's largest minority, and yet their marginalization and experiences of discrimination are relatively unknown to many in the U.S. Further, the situation of the Roma is routinely ignored as an issue worthy of attention or study in Europe. I therefore chose this topic because I wanted to call attention to this issue while also contributing to a still nascent literature.

Received funding from the Nanovic Institute for European Studies.



Noah Passinault

- Major: Joint Major in Philosophy and Theology
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Advisor: John Cavadini

Approaching Problems in Scriptural Interpretation Through Origen of Alexandria's *Homilies on Joshua*

In this thesis, I investigate three problems in Scriptural exegesis — historicity, relevance, and contradiction — with an analysis of Origen of Alexandria's *Homilies on Joshua*. Origen's unique method of interpretation, which draws on the literal, moral, and spiritual senses of understanding, proves to be an enlightening approach to engaging with these problems.

I discovered Origen of Alexandria's writings on Scripture through the theology classes in my major. I found them deeply engaging, if a little esoteric, and I wanted to understand how this at times strange approach to interpretation could be useful for a contemporary interpreter of Sacred Scripture.

**Olivia Wright**

- Major: English
- Minors: Theology and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
- Advisor: Lisa Oglesbee

TESOL Practicum

During the fall 2020 semester, I completed my TESOL practicum by teaching a Spoken English Skills course for postdocs and visiting scholars. The class met virtually twice a week for an hour per session, and we split up the course between casual and professional English. As a part of the practicum, I compiled a portfolio of lesson plans, self-observations, and observations of other classes.

I was able to create the syllabus and lesson plans as I saw fit, and as I did, I attempted to create an experience that called for a lot of participation and speaking practice. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed my class to the virtual realm, so I had to figure out ways to engage my students over the computer without worksheets or writing on white boards.

**Robert Hernandez**

- Major: Joint Major in Philosophy and Theology
- Minor: Medieval Studies
- Advisor: John Betz

Stoic Motifs in the Active Night of St. John of the Cross

My thesis analyzes the moral theology of St. John of the Cross — a 16th-century Carmelite mystic and now doctor of the Church. I identify several Stoic motifs present in his theology and argue that St. John was likely influenced, at least tangentially, by Stoic thought. However the Stoic influence in his work is by no means systematic, and I think that it would be a serious misrepresentation to label him as a Stoic.

I read St. Teresa's *Interior Castle* for one of my theology classes sophomore year. It turned out to be one of the most important books I would ever read in my life and dramatically transformed my personal understanding of spiritual life. Consequently, I had a strong desire to read and carefully study the other great Carmelite thinker, St. John of the Cross.

**Seung Yi**

- Majors: Theology and Applied and Computational Mathematics and Statistics
- Advisor: Neil Arner

An Ecumenical Ethic of Immigration in the U.S.

My thesis outlines a broadly unified position on immigration across ecclesial lines in the United States to present an ecumenical ethic of immigration. Recognizing that many of these church bodies look to the same few biblical passages, I suggest the prospect of a new biblical motif, Jubilee, that could be applied to the specific case of undocumented immigration, particularly of DREAMers.

As a Christian immigrant, I am interested in the situations of American immigrants. I am also passionate about ecumenism and ethics. Immigration continues to be a huge concern. However, little direction exists for laity to discern a faithful response. I believe that the ecumenical movement can be expanded to deal with ethical crises, especially those as urgent as immigration, to develop more concrete solutions and voice a unified Christian position to the world.

**Spencer Bindel**

- Major: Political Science
- Supplementary Major: Theology
- Certificate in International Security Studies
- CEC Sorin Fellow
- Advisor: Eugene Gholz

Ethnic Lobbies and Foreign Policy: A Comparative Study of Ethnic Interest Group Influence

My thesis analyzes the mechanisms through which ethnic interest groups attempt to influence U.S. foreign policy. It compares the Indian lobby, the Albanian lobby, and the Jewish lobby to understand what makes ethnic lobbies influential and what, if anything, distinguishes them from other types of lobbies.

After visiting Israel during my sophomore year, I became interested in U.S. foreign policy toward Israel. Many academics believe the United States is staunchly pro-Israel because of extensive lobbying efforts by Jewish Americans. This made me wonder if there was anything unique about ethnic interest group lobbying and how this might contribute to the formation of U.S. foreign policy.

**Stephen Kawulicz**

- Major: Program of Liberal Studies
- Minors: Philosophy and Theology
- Advisor: Andrew Radde-Gallwitz

The Pedagogy of Variety in Erasmus

Desiderius Erasmus was an early Renaissance Catholic humanist who is remembered for his contributions to numerous academic fields. Throughout his diverse body of work, Erasmus argued for the pedagogical value of variety, drawing from various inspirations in both the content and the style of his writing. The primary method Erasmus used to incorporate variety into his works was imitation, with the goal of opening a person's mind to the imitation of Christ.

After reading *The Praise of Folly*, a satire that Erasmus wrote, I was intrigued by his elegant writing, his humor, and his insightful societal critiques. I initially thought that I would write my thesis about humor, until I learned about the breadth of Erasmus' style. Humor was one of the many tools that he used to argue for flexible thinking throughout his works, so I decided to write about this complex multi-dimensional style instead.