



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

ARTS & LETTERS



2022

SENIOR THESIS PROJECTS

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Greetings!

I'm delighted to present this collection highlighting senior thesis projects completed by students in the College of Arts & Letters Class of 2022.

Within these pages, 280 seniors describe their 298 theses, capstones and creative projects. This package represents countless hours of original research, practice, analysis, interviews, writing, and creative work.

The projects detailed here are as interesting and diverse as the students who chose them. They include exploring the foundation for cluster algebras, writing a musical comedy, studying the role of faith in political participation, preserving an endangered language, and examining discrimination in the mortgage lending market.

During these endeavors, seniors have worked one-on-one with their advisors, who have provided valuable support, expertise and guidance. Many students also have benefited from generous grants that enabled them to travel, view archived manuscripts, purchase materials, and gain knowledge and cultural experiences. They have also demonstrated tremendous resiliency throughout the many challenges that COVID-19 has posed to their undergraduate careers — including the ways it forced many of them to reshape or recalibrate their projects.

Each year, seniors affirm that both the process and knowledge gained are invaluable, and often transformative.

I am proud of these seniors for pursuing their interests, making discoveries, and contributing to academic scholarship and the creative arts. I'm also extremely pleased that the percentage of Arts & Letters seniors completing theses, capstones, and creative projects has increased from 8% in 2008 to approximately 40% the last few years.

I hope that you enjoy learning about their projects as much as I have.

Sarah A. Mustillo

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I.A. O'Shaughnessy Dean
College of Arts & Letters



Yuehan An

- Major: Art History
- Minor: Business Economics
- Advisor: Ingrid Rowland

Renaissance Palaces in Rome

I used the field research that I conducted while studying in Italy during the fall semester of my senior year, as well as research in Europe, to explore the relationship between the “ideal palace” and the real Renaissance palaces in Rome. I compared architectural treatises and examples of palaces in Rome to note similarities and discrepancies between these sources, and I explored the meanings behind them.

I have always had a passion for architectural history, and wanted to use my honors thesis as an opportunity to train my research skills in this area. I went to Hungary and Serbia to study the international influences of Italian architecture. This trip was delayed twice due to the pandemic, so I started working on my project before conducting field research. However, since my Rome study abroad was pushed to the fall semester of my senior year due to the pandemic, I had the rare experience of researching in Rome while writing my thesis.

Traveled to Italy, Hungary, and Serbia with funding from the Nanovic Institute for European Studies.



Emma Connors

- Major: Design (Concentration in Visual Communication Design)
- Minor: Anthropology
- Advisor: Neeta Verma

Enhancing Educational Experiences of Visitors to Public Lands

Knowledge is power. Our world needs us to use our power positively. Public lands, “America’s Best Idea,” conserve ecosystems, culture, and playgrounds to explore. But they’re in danger. In Glacier National Park, glaciers are melting, but most visitors don’t know that. Knowing something fosters care about it; care compels positive action. Enter Park Pack, trading cards I designed that encourage visitors to hike, explore visitor centers, and ask rangers questions. Cards about wildlife, Indigenous history, and more can be collected physically and digitally — encouraging folks to collect, care, conserve.

Hiking and skiing mountains, fly-fishing rivers, camping in Yellowstone, and backpacking in GNP made me who I am. I gained respect for diversity, care for the vulnerable, confidence, and grit. Following my curiosity fostered a deep care for public lands that manifests in action. I pursued a thesis to enhance the education of visitors to public lands, guided by a belief that knowledge fosters care; care fosters positive action.

In the fall, I visited Glacier National Park to explore, take photos for my trading cards design, collect materials, and chat with park rangers and visitors. I visited both sides of the park, hiked five different trails, and talked with six groups of visitors about their reasons for visiting, what they know about the park, and how they’d like to learn more about it.

Received funding from the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program to travel to Glacier National Park in Montana.



Jonathan Couri

- Major: Biological Sciences
- Minors: Studio Art and Theology
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Stamps Scholars Program
- Advisor: Lacey Ahern

The Difficulty of Breaking Bad News: Experiences and Perspectives of Pediatric Healthcare Workers at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (QECH) in Malawi

My project was a mixed-methods study that investigated why pediatric health care workers may not be successfully communicating to patients and families so that they understand their diagnosis. Surveys were distributed to pediatric health care workers at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (QECH) in Malawi and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of this group. Due to COVID-19, I did not have the option to travel to Blantyre, Malawi, to conduct the study at QECH. As a result, my international study was conducted through an all-virtual research collaboration.

To coordinate the research team, I was the point person and scheduled biweekly Zoom meetings with my supervisors in Africa and the United States. In research meetings, I led discussions in study design and implementation, while learning about Malawi's culture and context. I also remotely checked in with our two local research assistants to talk about their roles in data collection and analysis. Results identified the scope of palliative care training received by pediatric health care workers at QECH and factors influencing their ability and willingness to break bad news to pediatric patients and their families.

I find global palliative care to be resonant and understand that breaking bad news is crucial, as it determines what patients are able to hear, process, and understand. In many areas, especially lower-middle-income countries, the task is not done well. I saw this topic as a step toward improving communication.

Received funding from the Glynn Family Honors Program.



Elizabeth Cunningham

- Major: Design (Concentration in Industrial Design)
- Minor: Italian
- Advisor: Ann-Marie Conrado

Communication and Statistics in Sports

I worked to design a system that allows for coaches and players to have more communication about specific and personalized training. The system has two components: a physical statistics tracker and an app. The app has a calendar, messaging, and an area where statistics are uploaded from the physical product. Coaches can then comment on players' workouts/training to help them improve their skills.

I picked this topic because I want to venture into design for sports. After doing interviews with a target audience of athletes age 14 and older, I found communication between coaches and athletes to be one of the biggest problem areas and decided to go forward with it.

**Anna Frericks**

- Major: Design (Concentration in Visual Communication Design)
- Advisors: Clinton Carlson and Neeta Verma

Facilitating Poultry Consumers' Ethical Decision-Making Through Education and Transparency

My project considered poultry consumers' engagement at the point-of-purchase, and how this experience can be enhanced to become a place of education. My design intervention focused on a reinvention of the current animal welfare certification system and implementing this hypothetical into a grocery store environment (Whole Foods, specifically). My goal was to help consumers paint a clearer picture of the environment in which chickens are raised so they could make a more educated purchasing decision.

Animal welfare is a topic that has always caught my attention. I narrowed this to farm animals since the factory farming industry is so destructive. I learned that chickens are not protected by any federal animal welfare laws in the United States, and decided to build off this.

Received funding through a William and Connie Greif Art Award from the Department of Art, Art History & Design.

**Sophie Kressler**

- Major: Art History
- Minor: Digital Marketing
- Advisor: Nicole Woods

Italian Futurist Architecture in the First World War Era

My thesis examined the work of Antonio Sant'Elia of the Futurist movement, with particular attention paid to his project *La Città Nuova*. I attempted to prove the importance of his legacy and recast him as a leader in his field and a founder of modern architecture. Sant'Elia died in World War I before most of his work could be realized, but hundreds of his drawings prove him to be innovative and an avid appreciator of the marvels of modern technology.

I knew I wanted to write about modern art, and I speak some Italian, so that led me to the Futurist movement. I used to be an architecture student and am very interested in architectural history. I thought that discussing that was a strength that I had that most others did not. So, I settled on looking mainly at Sant'Elia because he was the lead architect of the movement and one of Italy's most famous architects at that time.

Traveled to Milan and Como, Italy, with funding from the Nanovic Institute for European Studies.



Marie Latham

- Major: Art History
- Minors: Business Economics, Digital Marketing, and Italian
- Advisor: Tatiana Reinoza

Mosaic Modernism: Tracing Emilio Pettoruti's Painting from Italy to Argentina

I argued that Italian-Argentine painter Emilio Pettoruti was able to synthesize his distinctive geometric paintings because of his study of Byzantine mosaics. His theories on light, movement, and color advanced modern art in Argentina and abroad. Many of his works, however, are read in a Eurocentric manner, assuming him to be a disciple of French Cubism or Italian Futurism. I traced elements which are uniquely Argentine in his works and writings to dismantle these current structures of external categorization.

While working with Tatiana Reinoza in a 20th-century Latin American Art course, I was introduced to Pettoruti's vibrant paintings. He represents a generation of young Latin American artists who studied abroad in Europe, and I was intrigued by how that dynamic impacted art movements in their home countries. In January, I traveled to Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and La Plata in Argentina and conducted visual analysis on his large-scale mosaic pieces which form the central focus of my paper, including *Primavera* (1914) at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata and *Meditazione* (1915) at the Museo Municipal de La Plata.

These pieces almost never travel from their local contexts, as they are difficult to transport and are understudied elements of Pettoruti's career. I also studied display tactics of local museums, including how they described Pettoruti's pieces for visitors, how they placed them in conjunction with his contemporaries, and the analytical structures they imposed.

Traveled to Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and La Plata, Argentina, with a Gero Family Travel Grant and funding from the Department of Art, Art History & Design.

**Dinah Lawan**

- Major: Political Science
- Minors: Peace Studies and Studio Art
- Balfour-Hesburgh Scholars Program
- Advisor: Caroline Hughes

The Impact of the Global Oil Market on Peacebuilding in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Natural resource/extractivism is considered to be one of the variables that contribute to social, political, and ethnic conflicts. Nigeria has crude oil in the Niger Delta in the southern part of the country, which has been one of the major factors that has triggered conflicts in the region. My capstone investigated how ethnic diversity and crude oil exploitation influence the conflicts in the Niger Delta and how the Nigerian government can govern the oil industry better — politically, socially, and economically.

The Niger Delta is a fascinating case study. Researching the relations between oil exploitation and peacebuilding is interesting and it's also kind of a better way to understand what is happening in the region of the Niger Delta, and in a region that I am not from.

**Dinah Lawan**

- Major: Political Science
- Minors: Peace Studies and Studio Art
- Balfour-Hesburgh Scholars Program
- Advisor: Ernesto Verdeja

Dismantling Terrorist Networks (Boko Haram, Northern Nigeria): A Review of Post-Conflict and Peace Resolution Strategies

What factors lead to the emergence of terrorist organizations? What are effective strategies for dismantling terrorist groups and promoting long-term peace? My senior project extensively investigated these issues in Africa, particularly in the case of Boko Haram in the North East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. I mainly focused on examining past and current efforts to defeat Boko Haram, including military approaches, civilian self-organizing, peace initiatives program, and deradicalization initiatives.

I proposed to apply the strategic peacebuilding framework, as it offered broader ways to think about the issue of terrorism and imagine possible solutions to dismantle Boko Haram and promote peace in northern Nigeria. One goal was to produce recommendations that can be useful to policymakers in Africa, particularly those of Nigeria. I took a lot of courses in my major and minor that involved research, which I enjoyed. I am also a victim and a survivor of Boko Haram, which influenced me to research this topic on a deeper level.



Samuel Mansfield

- Major: Design (Concentration in Industrial Design)
- Supplementary Major: Environmental Science
- Advisor: Jim Rudolph

Cultivating Urban Ecological Restoration

I explored how drone technology and organic materials can be leveraged to create 3D fiber structures, which can later be populated by organic plant matter. I created “co-fabricated” yarn/vine structures by placing climbing vines in close proximity to environmentally specific yarn structures. In doing so, I could guide the climbing vine to entwine itself into the yarn and populate the yarn structure with greenery. As plant matter is the foundation of the trophic pyramid, the remaining organisms which facilitate ecosystem homeostasis naturally begin to populate the city.

I chose the topic because I believe that humans have the power to design ecosystems that also provide human-centered functionalities, such as buffering wind, cooling cities, and dispersing precipitation.

Received funding from the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program and the Da Vinci Summer Grant Program.

**Mary Mueller**

- Major: Theology
- Minors: Philosophy, Studio Art, and Catholic Social Teaching (CST)
- Advisor: Ann Astell

Fear of the Lord in Julian of Norwich and Sirach

In the Book of Sirach, fear of the Lord is seen as an act of seeking toward the wisdom, which underlies the whole created order, and personified Wisdom Herself that gives wisdom to those who seek her. Julian of Norwich recovers Sirach's fear of the Lord that is a deep awe that longs toward Christ, who is the wisdom of the Trinity and who reveals the wisdom of His cross, which is overwhelming, undeniable love.

I chose this project because I saw that there was a common misconception of fear of the Lord. It is a virtue that allows one to see the beauty of the cross which was, ultimately, the greatest gift that the Catholic faith has ever revealed to me. An offshoot of my thesis will be my Catholic social teaching capstone, which will be on the ethics of Sirach and how fear of the Lord underlies Catholic social teaching discipline.



Mary Mueller

- Major: Theology
- Minors: Philosophy, Studio Art, and Catholic Social Teaching (CST)
- Advisor: David Lantigua

Catholic Social Tradition in the Book of Sirach

This capstone looked at how the biblical Book of Sirach exemplifies Catholic social tradition. I chose this topic as an extension of my theology thesis. There is a space in CST thought for a connection to Scripture, and a book from the wisdom literature is an unusual choice. This project will be an opening path for more connections between CST and wisdom literature in particular.



**Marc Philippon Jr.**

- Major: Studio Art
- Supplementary Major: Arts & Letters Pre-Health
- Advisor: Jason Lahr

Addressing Gender and Identity Through Traditions in Oil Painting

For my thesis project, I produced a series of surrealist portraits of male figures that reference and combine the styles of Renaissance figure painting and 18th-century flower painting. Through this approach, I aimed to satirize some of the rigid barriers of gender prevalent in the history of oil painting and male self-expression in general, and depict the male figure in harmony with nature and the passage of seasonal time.

I believe gender identity is a powerful and restrictive force that has influenced me profoundly without my being aware of it. My goal is to create imagery that merges subject matter and concepts that have traditionally been separated by barriers of gender in order to produce a more liberating presentation of male identity.



Wendy Ruan

- Major: Science Pre-Professional Studies
- Supplementary Major: Asian Studies
- Minor: Studio Art
- Advisor: Sharon Yoon

Diplomatic Cooperation and Harmony in East Asia

I made a case for why a particular issue is important and constructed a feasible policy that seeks to address this issue.



**Kerry Schneeman**

- Major: Design (Concentration in Visual Communication Design)
- Minor: Digital Marketing
- Advisor: Neeta Verma

Brain Break: McWell Art as Wellness Initiative

Brain Break offers students the opportunity to destress using tactile art. Distributed by the McDonald Center for Student Well-Being, these kits provide students with activities designed to get them out of their head. Tactile art has been used as a therapy tool, giving physical form to intangible problems. While completing these activities, a guide sheet asks students to consider how the process makes them feel, combining art with reflection to offer a new way to destress.

I find art to be a therapeutic experience, and wondered if there was a distinct area that I could explore at the intersection between mental well-being and art activities. After discovering art therapy, I extracted specific techniques to make them more accessible for students.

Received funding from the Department of Art, Art History & Design.



Sophie Schroth

- Major: Design (Concentration in Industrial Design)
- Advisor: Ann-Marie Conrado

Altitude: Hiking Preparation + Safety

This thesis explored a new age of hike tracking, safety, and community. With a website and GPS tracker, Altitude reduces barriers to safety and hike planning. The website allows users to join a community of outdoor enthusiasts, get up-to-date safety and trail information, and log hikes for rewards. The GPS tracker embedded in a carabiner allows hikers to create geofences for specific hikes and alerts them when they leave the customized area.

Hiking has been a passion of mine for many years, and serves as a way to get a break from our world of distractions and technology. I wanted to help more people get outdoors to enjoy nature and be safe and engaged while doing so. COVID-19 allowed me to start my research early over the summer while I was home, and do extensive immersion with consumers. It also gave me a way to think about research differently — connecting with a more global consumer because of access to, and greater understanding of, online technologies such as Zoom.

Received funding from the Department of Art, Art History & Design's Judith A. Wrappe Memorial Award and the William and Connie Greif Art Award.



Godiya Simon

- Major: Anthropology
- Minor: Studio Art
- Balfour-Hesburgh Scholar
- Advisors: Eric Haanstad and Brian O'Conchubhair

Preserving My Endangered Language: Toward an Expanded Dictionary of Cibak (Kibaku)

My research project focused on the documentation and preservation of an endangered language, Kibaku, that is spoken by more than 200,000 people in Northern Nigeria. Over the last century, historical events have resulted in a rapid decline in the number of Kibaku speakers in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains. This has resulted in lower probabilities of people passing it from one generation to the next. To address this issue, I constructed an English-Kibaku dictionary that includes basic English grammar and unique terms used by Kibaku people on social media.

In my second semester of freshman year, I was inspired to pursue this project after taking an excellent class, Fundamentals of Linguistic Anthropology, with Professor Susan Blum. I learned that about 90% of all languages may be replaced by dominant languages by the end of the 21st century. As a native speaker of Kibaku, I knew that I could make a unique contribution and I became focused on how to help the next generation learn and read in Kibaku.

Received funding from the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts and Keough-Naughton Institute for Irish Studies to travel to the University of Hawaii Manoa's Language Documentation Training Center.

**Claire Stein**

- Majors: Political Science and Design (Concentration in Visual Communication Design)
- Advisor: Sebastian Rosato

What Are the Effects of Narrative on State Behavior?

I reviewed the theoretical framework of master narratives and examined China's century of humiliation master narrative and territorial disputes.

According to my analysis, whether or not the century of humiliation narrative indicted a disputant state impacted the status of its territorial disputes with China. Therefore, I submitted domestic narratives as a partial explanation for international state behavior.

My interest in Chinese politics began in my sophomore year in Karrie Koesel's Politics of China course. It grew as I researched Chinese direct investments under the direction of Jazmin Sierra. Though I took my first course in international relations as a junior, it quickly became my favorite subfield within political science.

**Naya Tadavarthy**

- Majors: Studio Art (Concentration in Painting) and German
- Minor: History
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Advisors: Denise Della Rossa and Martin Lam

Once Upon an Author: A Children's Book on Gisela von Arnim

I wrote and illustrated a children's book about Gisela von Arnim, a 19th-century German author who published proto-feminist fairy tales and founded a female-focused literary circle as a teenager. My fairy tale-style biography with watercolor illustrations subverts traditional gender tropes.

Geared toward students in mid-to-late elementary school, I hope the book empowers young people to share their narratives through their own creative process, fostering the same sense of personal and artistic agency that von Arnim and I demonstrate by telling tales.

I have wanted to write and illustrate a children's book since elementary school, and this thesis offered the perfect opportunity to combine my majors in studio art and German and minor in history.

Received funding from the Glynn Family Honors Program to take a children's book illustration course at the Rhode Island School of Design during summer 2020.

**Natalie Truscott**

- Major: History
- Minor: Art History
- Advisor: Darren Dochuk

The American Catholic Student Encounter with Civil Rights and the New Left

My project explored the experiences of Catholic university students, particularly in the urban Midwest, and their encounters with civil rights and radical politics, as they have been largely neglected by the current historiography. I examined the role a 1964 visit from Alabama Gov. George Wallace played in the shift from a Notre Dame campus unconcerned with politics to one willing to adapt the spirit of the '60s to a Catholic university context. I also considered the Omaha DePorres Club, a radical Catholic student group founded in 1947 at Creighton University and how its civil rights advocacy reflected larger trends in American Catholicism after World War II.

I chose this topic after working during the summer in the University Archives in the Hesburgh Library and encountering primary sources related to student life and politics on campus in the 1950s and 1960s. Living in Omaha, I learned about the DePorres Club in theology class at my Catholic high school and was fascinated by it and its rarely told story. I am interested in midcentury America and religious history, so it seemed a natural choice.

Received funding from the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts.



Sienna Wilson

- Major: Studio Art (Concentration in Photography)
- Advisor: Martina Lopez

Immaterial in the Physical World

My thesis recontextualized loss by creating a visual representation of an immaterial presence in our physical world. My images represented the space between the material and the ephemeral, turning this fleeting presence into an ethereal permanence.

While our bodies exist temporarily, our energy in this world persists. While capturing this energy is an impossible endeavor, photography allows us to create an interpretation of what is not visible to the naked eye. Through the use of the natural world, I wanted to evoke feelings of calmness and acceptance. With my photographs, I wanted to communicate a perspective on how we can imagine the fragility and temporality of our existence.

My mother — who has a significantly life-shortening genetic disease — inspired my topic. Long ago, she wrote me a note to give me comfort, knowing that even when she wasn't physically with me anymore, she'd still be by my side through the beauty in the natural world. I wanted to put these words into my own imagery to create a different perspective on loss. I did image exploration and experimentation in Lost Coast, California, and Valley of Fire, Nevada, as well as throughout Indiana and Kentucky

Received funding from the Department of Art, Art History, and Design to travel to California, Nevada, Indiana, and Kentucky.