



**THE BROTHER DAVID S. BAGINSKI  
FSC SCHOLARS PROGRAM**

# **SENIOR THESIS SYMPOSIA**

20

23

"The unexamined life is not worth living"

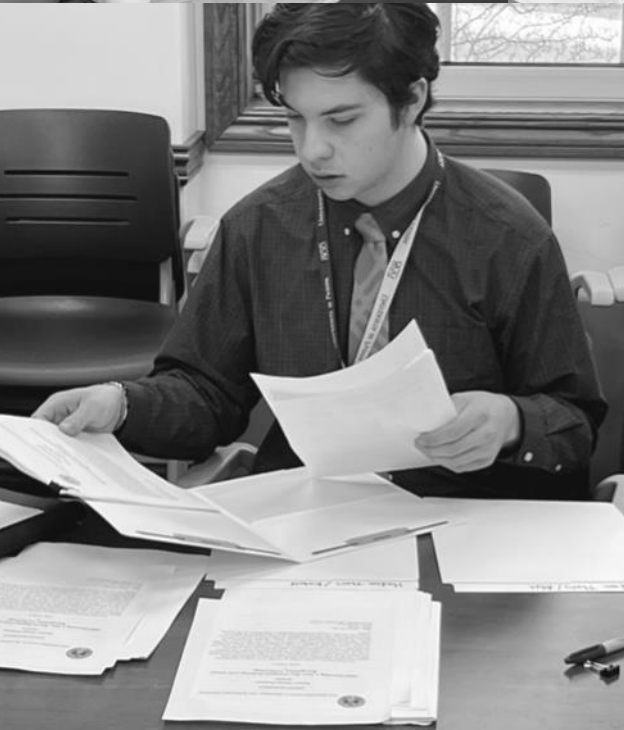


th living." - Socrates



# Senior Symposia 2023







## **WELCOME**

### **NINETEENTH ANNUAL SENIOR SYMPOSIA**

### **CLASS OF 2023**

Welcome to the nineteenth annual Senior Symposia for The Brother David S. Baginski, FSC Scholars Program. This forum is an opportunity for students to showcase some of the interesting discoveries they made while working on their theses projects. It is also an opportunity for the Central Catholic community to experience the intellectual vitality that is created when talented students work under the direction of dedicated faculty and outside researchers. This combination of discovery-based learning and mentorship has been transformative for everyone involved.

The breath and scope of the oral presentations reflect not only a wide range of academic interests; they also speak to the caliber of the students themselves. Enterprising and thoughtful, these students have delved into a deepened knowledge within a specific field of study. They worked on multiple drafts of their theses and discussed them with their peers in a thesis-writing course. Last February, they stood before a faculty panel and advanced an ethical position through rigorous defense and argument. These experiences have enriched their education, sharpened their skills in critical thinking and strengthened their self-confidence as scholars.

Many of the theses include a recommendation section. As such, this symposia is very much a celebration of our Seniors' noble efforts in advocating for positive change in the world. Some of the pressing issues they tackled this year include: improved legislation for animal access rights, making healthcare services more available and accessible in rural areas, healthier meat production and consumption, improving the ethical considerations for post-mortem organ donations, understanding the social construct of strength-based masculinity, and solutions to food insecurity in the Homewood area of Pittsburgh.

We extend our sincerest thanks to all of the Second Readers for their generosity of time and expertise in guiding the students' work. Their names are included under each of the abstracts. We are most grateful for their efforts.

Enjoy the symposia!

#### **DIRECTORS**

Patrizia Costa  
John J. Allen





## SYMPOSIA OVERVIEW

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April 25, 6:30 pm

***Welcome and Prayer***

*Br. Michael Andrejko, FSC*

***Opening Remarks***

*Patrizia Costa*

***Student Presentations***

April 26, 6:30 pm

***Reassembly***

***Distinguished Mentor Award***

***Student Presentations***

April 27, 6:30 pm

***Student Presentations***

***Closing Remarks***

*John J. Allen*

***Thesis Awards***

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## CONGRATULATORY REMARKS FROM THE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Congratulations on the effort that you put into this program. I hope that you take the opportunity to reflect on your successes before transitioning to the challenges that are ahead of you next year. Please also continue to challenge yourself intellectually. We need bright, thoughtful, and moral young men like you to become our future leaders.

Justin Belardi  
Faculty, Science

Famous book proprietor George Whitman once commented that, “All the world is my school and all humanity is my teacher.” Continue to study and learn from the world; thrive with your achievements and follow your future with a compassionate heart. Congratulations on your completion of the Brother David S. Baginski, FSC Scholars Program!

Sara Budacki  
Faculty, English

Congratulations are certainly in order for all of the hard work you have given to the Scholars program. As you move forward in life, let the lessons and knowledge you’ve gained throughout this process guide you through your ongoing quest and thirst for knowledge and truth, as G.K. Chesterton once said, “The free man is not he who thinks all opinions equally true or false; that is not freedom but feeble-mindedness. The free man is he who sees the errors as clearly as he sees the truth.

Kurt Retenauer  
Faculty, English

While congratulations are certainly in order, especially given the particular challenges you faced this year, be sure to see your completion of this program as the start of something lifelong. Now more than ever, the world needs disciplined and inquisitive minds. Your work in the Baginski Scholars program must lay the foundation for your life’s work, whatever and wherever that may be. Be always like the son in Seamus Heaney’s poem “Digging” who, upon watching his father drive his spade deep into the peat, says of himself:  
“Between my finger and my thumb

The squat pen rests.

I’ll dig with it.”

Todd Rooney  
Faculty, English

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# INTRODUCTION

“Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe; to know what he ought to desire; and to know what he ought to do.”

St. Thomas Aquinas



These words of Thomas Aquinas remind us that knowledge is not an end in and of itself but a means to our intimate understanding of the moral obligation to self and to other and ultimately our eternal salvation. It is in this spirit that I welcome each one of you to the Nineteenth Annual Scholars Program Symposium Presentations!

Our young scholars have worked diligently this year to explore the depths of their intellectual abilities and to take a hard look at how this in-depth research applies to being a man of knowledge and service. What better way to end four years in the hallowed halls of Central Catholic and to sum up the marriage of theory and practice with a thesis that can be backed by four years of living the Central Catholic experience in its totality.

As with all affiliations, they did not do this alone. Under the mentorship and direction of Dr. Patrizia Costa and Mr. John Allen, our scholars have been challenged to flex the intellectual muscle all the while balancing that against taking one's gifts and talents and using them to better oneself and the world around them. The Scholars' Program has included trips and lectures as well academic assiduity to ensure that our young men leave us prepared to create a more socially just world.

For all of this we have grateful hearts and are both excited, proud and look forward to hearing of the many future endeavors that our young people will have in their chosen careers. May they never forget the many good things they have learned at 4720 as members of the Scholars' Program.

On behalf of the faculty and staff, congratulations are in order to our scholars and their parents. Parents, you have had an integral part of making a Central education possible for your son. Thank you for entrusting your son to us. We hope and pray that you have seen growth in them over these past four years.

Let's all remember to be desirous of the good both in ourselves and each other!

In the Founder, St. John Baptist de La Salle,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bro. Michael Andrejko, FSC".

Bro. Michael Andrejko, FSC '86

Principal



“Souvenons-nous que nous sommes





## The Synthesis of Acetaminophen

by Jacob Winick  
Pittsburgh Central Catholic High School  
Grade 12







## Stoppered Spirit: On the Potential of Creatively-Unfettered Films to Increase Empathy

Luca Assandri — Film studies

This thesis seeks to examine the potential social value of films made under creatively free conditions. First, it establishes that there is indeed an issue: a general lack of creative freedom in the production of mainstream films due to a higher corporate priority of creating a product that will sell to the widest audience possible. The thesis then moves into a detailed depiction of the fluctuation in creative freedom throughout the history of cinema and illuminates the origins of the standing situation of today as well as its future trajectory. Following this, it establishes why film is the subject of discussion as opposed to other media; namely, it elucidates the incredible potential for cultural influence that film holds and the dangers of widespread filmic material artificially manufactured with the prime intention of turning a profit. From there, the thesis turns to the critical importance of creative freedom in filmmaking: the effect on the filmmakers, but even more importantly, the effect on the audience. Case studies and empirical data of such films' effects on the audience are used to make these points. The thesis then concludes that, when an audience interacts with filmic art that is made free of authoritative profit-minded supervisors, it can have the power to impart upon the audience the unfiltered point of view of its creators; this then has the potential to grant a deep understanding of someone else's real-life existence and a level of empathy that could have been otherwise undiscovered. In a world that is growing increasingly divided due to a lack of interpersonal understanding, the importance of empathy cannot be overlooked.

Reader: Todd Rooney, English

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# HUMANITIES

## The *Unspeakable* Unwritten: Narratives of Darkness in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Donovan B. Allen — English Literature

The narratives which we hear and read inform our perspective and shape the world around us. Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* is a slave narrative, a Black narrative, and even a ghost story relating to the trauma of slavery. But above all, *Beloved* is a narrative about narratives, asking us to question the stories we read, why we read them, how we read them, and the impacts which these stories have on us. I elucidate *Beloved*'s presentation of colonial narratives and their impact on blackness and whiteness. Informed by the works of Edward Said, Anibal Quijano, Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison, I analyze how the schoolteacher character is representative of both colonial narratives and the academics which perpetuate them. In my reading of *Beloved*, I identify the major effects schoolteacher's narratives have on Black people and blackness in the novel. His narratives exoticize, sexualize, dehumanize, *other*, and silence the Black body. I argue that *Beloved* calls forth past narratives which led to the Tuskegee Experiments and HeLa while also asking us to examine colonial narratives which persist. My analysis of *Beloved* reveals how such narratives function in the past and present. Today the American canon exists as a narrative similar to Schoolteacher: the same narratives that led us to Tuskegee and HeLa. In order to move past these narratives, a re-evaluation of the canon and its criteria are necessary along with a reading of canonical literature which considers the colonial narratives within them.

Reader: Todd Rooney, English

### **The Real Price of a Puppy: The Absence of Morality in Society's Current Relationship with Dogs, and the Broader Implications of This Issue on Humanity Overall**

Max H. McCord — Philosophy / Animal Science

Are dogs really Man's best friend or just another commodity? While dogs have been historically used for their survival value and companionship, the present workings of the dog breeding industry are not reflective of this relationship. Today, many pedigrees are bred only for their aesthetic traits, and are treated no different than any other product. This transition of societal value in dogs has ultimately led to inhumane practices in the breeding industry. In a means of keeping up with society's demand for "aesthetic" breeds, many breeders have implemented unethical methods such as puppy mills, inbreeding, and poor breeding selection. These wrongful practices have further impacted pedigrees through their negative genetic and psychological effects on the dogs. Overall, both the quality of life and health of dogs have gone down, in a means of meeting this modern demand. This thesis perpetuates the ethical flaws of the dog breeding industry through the lens of Aquinian virtue ethics. Humans are distinguished from animals in their unique ability to conceive morality, however, consciously neglecting ethical thought ultimately degrades the human experience. The current dog breeding industry is reflective of this degradation as well as man's failure to uphold this historical relationship. It is the ethical responsibility to change this industry and corrupt societal values. Ultimately, my paper proposes that this problem can be remedied through the conscious action of current and prospective dog owners, regarding the methods they employ when adopting..

Reader: Sara Budacki, English





## import humanity: An Analysis of Artificial Intelligence, Ontology, and a Thomistic Conference of Value

Xavier T. Ramirez — Artificial Intelligence / Philosophy

Artificial intelligence will be created in this century, and we aren't ready for it. Society's treatment of our fellow biologically human beings throughout the past millennia has been largely built on mass suffering, from slavery to war to economic exploitation. A new race of intelligent beings will face those challenges to an even greater degree, as those who stand to benefit from their exploitation attempt to dehumanize these perceived nouveaux riches. The potential for AI's enslavement to organic masters is serious and concerning; I argue that such an action is the same, ethically, as if it were performed on a cellular being. We need, therefore, to understand the nature and personhood of this new species. In this thesis, I utilize an expanded version of 'Thomas Aquinas' virtue ethics in conjunction with his theory of Potency to categorize AI as innately human—not biologically, but ontologically. Physiologically, I assess the neural structures of both the *Homo sapien* and artificial brains, noting the foundational similarities between the two. Analyzing the capacity for emotion, metacognition, calculation, growth, and self, I present AI as a literal artificial intelligence, whose abilities are exact non-organic mirrors of *Homo sapiens*'s. In this equation of organic vs. electronic minds, I ground AI as innately human, possessing a Thomistic soul through its potential to act, and thus deserving humanity's fundamental rights and dignities. Establishing this foundation of innate humanity in AI allows these beings, when they do arise, to be met by humane treatment and fellowship with their organic counterparts, to grow and develop as they autonomously choose.

Reader: Todd Rooney, English

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# HUMANITIES

## **A Cruel Angel's Thesis: Understanding the Evangelion Series as Visual Medicine**

Amari R. Smith— English / Cultural Studies

“Your truth can be changed simply by the way you accept it.” This is one of many sentimental quotes from Neon Genesis Evangelion, a Japanese Anime series recognized for Western influence in the Mecha genre. However, I studied this anime for a deeper cause; to understand depression. The anime’s creator, Hideaki Anno, was depressed himself when writing the series, and he wrote Evangelion to reflect his emotions of misery. Because of this, Evangelion can be viewed as what I call Visual Medicine, a piece of media that is healing or therapeutic. The four main characters all undergo multiple outcomes based on their relationship with depression, and I divided these outcomes into three separate endings. The first ending I named the “Over-Optimistic Ending,” an ending that depicts the characters resolving their depressive state, but in a quick and unrealistic manner. The second ending I named the “Nihilistic Ending” which shows the characters letting their depression overtake their life and actions. The third ending I called the “True Ending”, which represents the characters overcoming their depression through humane and attainable means. These three endings I defined offer a visualization of what real depression looks like and how it can be identified, understood, and coped with. Secondary aspects of the series like the music and religious affiliation are also examined in a way that describes how Evangelion illustrates the ins and outs of depression effectively. Evangelion can be used to comprehend depression and outline what should and should not be done to cope with mental health.

Reader: Jacob Good, Science

### **The Fourth Wave: A Relational-Capability Approach to Feminism and Family Planning**

Jacob D. Wincko — Political Philosophy / Gender Studies

Millions are protesting in response to the Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, which granted women the right to safe and legal abortions. This action questions why women's autonomy is not being properly respected. Additionally, it asks how society can achieve gender equality when it is taking steps backward. In response, a rights-based approach to social issues is all that society often hears, pushing other approaches aside and only advocating for equal rights. However, even when *Roe* was in place, women felt the effects of societal oppression, showing that advocating for more rights in order to achieve equality may not solve the problem. This thesis identifies that, due to a gap in the conversation, there is tension between those with a gender-based bias and rights-based feminists. While feminists attempt to raise support for women's equality, those with a gender bias insist they are "oppressive" and taking away from men's rights, thus they hesitate to support feminist philosophy. The argument resulting from the opposition of these two groups creates a never-ending loop in which no change can progress, as shown by the overturning of *Roe* and the recent conversation targeting contraception next. By using family planning as a case study, these opposing forces can be contrasted, displaying that those with a gender bias hesitate to participate in contraceptive measures and place the burden of family planning on women, showing disrespect for women's autonomy. In contrast, feminists advocate the elimination of oppression in order to achieve autonomy for women. This thesis proposes that, rather than taking a rights-based approach to feminism, society must approach it in the form of a capabilities-based approach, which views autonomy based on how one can express the rights they are given within society. By viewing autonomy as a matter of capability, one's social situation may be evaluated, assessing their quality of life and any inequality one may face. Thus, by viewing autonomy as a matter of capability, society can move toward true equality.

Reader: Ashley Salamacha, English



Please turn off the  
lights and TVs  
and close the  
doors when  
leaving the  
LaSalle Seminar  
room!

Thank you!



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## SOCIAL SCIENCES

### **Apathy in Postmortem Organ Donation: An Examination of Factors that Influence Potential Donors and the Resulting Consequences on the Organ Donation System**

Nolan W. Cynkar — Bioethics

In recent years, the organ donation system has been neglected to the point where thousands each year lose their lives from simply not having an organ to receive. The fact that only half of Americans are registered to donate implies the stark lack of solidarity in American society. Furthermore, only 0.3% of the organs pledged to be donated can actually be given to a recipient, producing a dire scarcity of organs. The vast majority of modern scholars approach the issue of organ donation with a conversionary standpoint, seeking to prove to readers why they must, must, *must* donate. I, however, seek to minimize how abrasive discussing the issue can be, maintaining throughout my thesis that the choice to donate has to be kept optional. My thesis builds an argument for how an updated organ donation system can be beneficial to American society, and why that should encourage people to donate, increasing the amount of registrants and thus donations, even when donors maintain autonomy over their choice. My analysis of contemporary studies yields two primary reasons for donation hesitancy: religious convictions and a mistrust of the medical system. To combat these hesitations, I propose an updated organ donation education system for all US citizens, I present the religious viewpoints that currently exist as pro-donation, and I implement a series of institutional changes with the intent of making the current organ donation system both more effective and ethically sound. While my goal is aligned with that of most scholars in this field – saving lives through increased donations – I advocate for less abrasive methods, arguing that my recommendations will be easier to implement and would be more accepted by the American public. Ultimately, the organ donation system has to change, and my proposed methods have the best chance of making a tangible difference on the system and all its associated patients.

Reader: Justin Belardi, Science

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## SOCIAL SCIENCES

### **The New Invasive Era of Digital Policing: Balancing Safety and Civil Concerns with Facial Recognition Technology**

Noah D. Hudson — Criminal Justice

The United States has a massive problem on its hands: we are seeing an unprecedented growth in surveillance technologies. This is especially true with facial recognition technology. Millions of people are being surveilled and put into databases. Despite the potential to revolutionize how policing operates with its power and capabilities, the United States has not adequately prepared for the new wave of facial recognition in policing. No federal regulation and little state regulation has directly addressed facial recognition, despite its rapid expansion. This study examines the potential impact of facial recognition on policing and citizens. To address this issue, the thesis works to examine not only how facial recognition has made an impact, but also how America can address this impact without completely eliminating its usefulness for police. This study has found that while facial recognition has given police more help to solve crimes, it also poses several harms to the public. These harms include algorithmic bias, privacy concerns, and more. The thesis works to provide a framework through which the government can address facial recognition and its harms. While this thesis works solely with facial recognition, much of the content can be applied to a broader scale with other emerging surveillance technologies, to help America solve this growing problem.

Reader: Brittany Diebold, History

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## SOCIAL SCIENCES

### **Food for Thought: Creative solutions to Solve the Persistent Problem of Food Insecurity in Homewood**

Peter W. Elder — Public Policy

People in the world today are being left without food at alarmingly high rates. This holds true in the neighborhood of Homewood, situated in the East End of Pittsburgh. This thesis aims to illuminate the crisis of food insecurity in Homewood, while also giving considerations for how to solve the problem. To this point, efforts from the City of Pittsburgh to solve the problem through engagement with community groups have largely failed. The thesis uses the City's past failures as a basis for new creative, collaborative solutions, offering several recommendations to solve the persistent problem of food insecurity. The recommendations require collaboration between the government and corporations to create creative solutions. The recommendations center around collaboration between the government and corporations, to create a more equitable system for food distribution. These efforts will include improvements to transportation through an increase in funding as well as logistical changes, monetary incentives to corporations from the government to incentivize corporations to open in food deserts, and a level of research between corporations and the government to create best practices for grocery stores opening in food deserts, such as tailoring food selections at stores to what people actually want to buy. In addition, any improvement to solve the crisis will require a higher priority to create solutions. This level of collaboration has not been seen up to this point, thus the thesis points to the potential of said collaborative efforts. The recommendations made in the thesis are backed by empiric research that provides the framework for solving the issue in Homewood and could potentially have larger implications. Past efforts to solve the problem have failed. This thesis gives a new method of solvency to break the cycle that low-income communities such as Homewood have been subjected to.

Reader: Kurt Retenauer, English



Get Out

You are not welcome here.

What, they banned you from getting into the house?



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## SOCIAL SCIENCES

### **“Be a Man”: Understanding the Social Construct of Strength-Based Masculinity in America and its Effects on Male Mental Health**

Julian P. Hebert — Gender Studies

In this thesis, I offer a greater understanding of American masculinity by exploring the role it plays in our society and examining how it affects male mental health. Masculinity is primarily a social construct; it is not necessarily what men are like, rather it is what society wants men to be like. I demonstrate this by comparing masculinities across time and space, showing how different cultures' ideal form of manhood changes, sometimes even directly opposing that of another culture. With this foundation of masculinity as a social construct, I then categorize it into different types in order to group men into “masculine” and “unmasculine.” Later on, I explain how masculinity manifests in twenty-first century America using an analysis of culture, reinforced by psychological studies. I then connect masculine norms as all motivated by the pursuit of strength, unveiling the synonymy of masculinity and strength. Then, the mental health effects of this “strength-based masculinity” are explored, both in men who practice this masculinity and those who do not. I conclude by challenging the notion that men should be traditionally masculine, since traditional masculinity is both harmful and subjective. This thesis conveys a new understanding of masculinity and its largely harmful influences.

Reader: William Hahn, Counseling

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## SOCIAL SCIENCES

### **Don't Look Up: The Contact Points of Youth Mental Health and Advocating for Versatile Caretaking Models in America**

Clayton Kepperling — Public Health / Computer Science

In December 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General warned of a mental health crisis among America's youth, calling it a "national emergency" due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have severely exacerbated mental health issues in America. In addition, the stigmatization of depression, anxiety, suicide, and suicidal ideation has complicated the potential solutions for the mental health epidemic. The nation's youth have suffered through specific contact points of mental health issues such as the school system and applications of technology especially social media and high screen times. Due to the present stigma, adolescents have been forced into hiding, afraid of the consequences of addressing these mental problems, which only worsens the crisis. Prevention techniques and risk assessments fail to recognize the stigma on mental health as well as fix the root causes of the crisis. More promising solutions involve the 988 crisis hotline, the InSciEd Out in-school curriculum study, and new applications of technology set to create safe spaces. This thesis works with the American school system and technological applications to create a versatile caretaking model by fixing root causes of mental illnesses and inputting new accesses to care and education. This approach provides the ability to bring a more versatile caretaking model for youth mental health. The contact points of these mental health illnesses provide platforms in which new caretaking models can be developed to create a versatile caretaking model for the current state of mental health in America's youth.

Reader: James Eller, Counseling

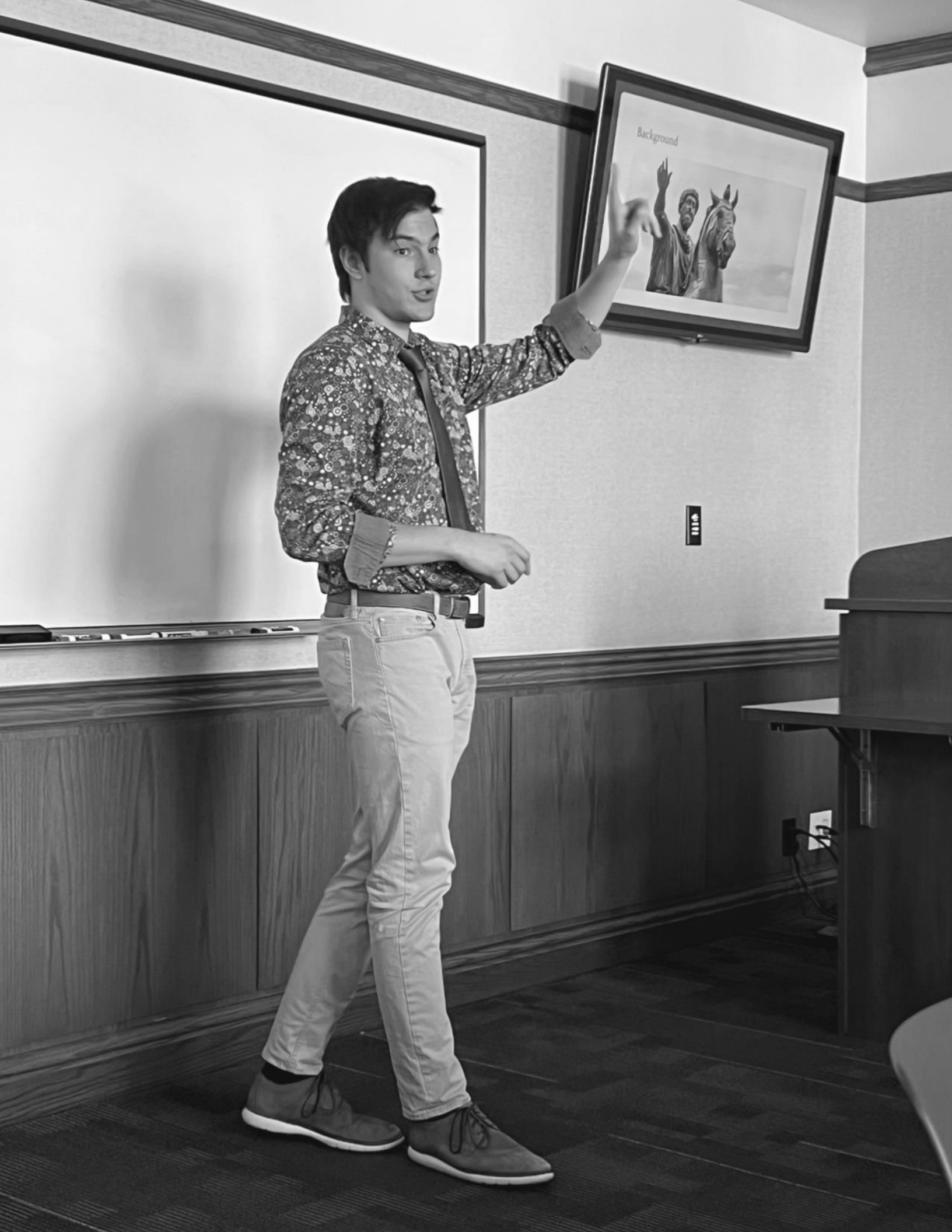
### **Birds, Bees, and the Ecosystem of Sexuality: Expanding Our View of Sexuality to Allow for the Implementation of Comprehensive Sex Education**

Ramon Miland — Sex Education

Adolescents need comprehensive sex education. In the past few decades, America has invested over \$1 billion into statistically ineffective abstinence-only sex education. This form both fails at its goal of preventing sexual risk behaviors and ignores the relationship-building components of human sexuality. Conversely, comprehensive sex education reduces sexual risk behaviors and explores the core concepts of building relationships, but it is not widely implemented in America due to legal, communal, and organizational resistance. In this thesis, I propose a plan that reveals the positive effects and message of comprehensive sex education, and highlights opportunities for its implementation in all religious and cultural environments. To support this plan, I look at recent statistics on sexual health, laws, and viewpoints on adolescent sex as well as successful international sex education programs. Enacting my thesis' plan has the potential to broaden the positive effects of comprehensive sex education in America. Ultimately it will foster adolescents who make safe, informed decisions about sex and relationships..

Reader: James Donahue, Assistant Principal for Student Affairs







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## SOCIAL SCIENCES

### **Crocodiles in Coach: Proposed Revisions to the *Americans with Disabilities Act* and Associated Recommendations as a Vehicle for Legislative Equality in Animal Access Rights**

Jack R. Sabo — Disability Studies / Public Policy

The number of documented emotional support animals in the United States surpassed a staggering 200,000 in 2019. This substantial increase—up from just 2,400 in 2011—is troubling, as a growing number of people with physical disabilities have reported frequent encounters with dangerous, untrained animals. I examine the conditions that have given rise to the burgeoning number of illegitimate emotional support animals, including America's dire mental health epidemic and the convoluted patchwork of laws that govern access rights for emotional support animals and service dogs. This analysis uncovers the disparity in animal access rights, which actively harms people with mental and physical disabilities, business owners, and the general public. I argue against the current disparity, envisioning, instead, a world in which emotional support animals are considered a reasonable accommodation under a revised version of the 1990 *Americans with Disabilities Act*. To implement such a revision, I discuss the unique benefits and harms of four possible models for access right expansion: (1) broadening the *Americans with Disabilities Act* with a concurrent regulatory framework, broadening the *Americans with Disabilities Act* without a concurrent regulatory framework, eliminating the distinction between service dogs and emotional support animals, and maintaining the status quo. Upon examination, I conclude that a world in which emotional support animals are given broader access rights alongside the concurrent adoption of federal regulations will ensure the proper training and legitimacy of emotional support animals. To meet these standards, I propose two major recommendations: (1) a baseline obedience benchmark for emotional support animals and (2) more stringent guidelines for clinicians when assessing a patient's demonstrated need for an assistance animal. Ultimately, the debate surrounding animal access rights provides a relevant case study of a much more systemic public policy failure; the legislative prioritization of physical disabilities results in laws that fail to include equitable provisions for mental illness. As my analysis of animal access rights suggests, it is time to give people with mental disabilities the same legislative protections and accommodations afforded to people with physical disabilities.

Reader: Amy Wienand, Counseling

## **A Phenomenological Study of Availability and Accessibility of Obesity and Mental Health Resources in Armstrong County, Pennsylvania**

Cole C. Nix — Family Medicine / Rural Health

2,330:1- the ratio of patients to primary care physicians in rural Armstrong County, Pennsylvania. This community of approximately 65,000 residents has been deemed by the National Health Service Corps as a healthcare professional shortage area (HPSA). Increasing concerns over availability and accessibility of obesity and mental health resources, more specifically, identification of root causes resulting in the overall poor health outcome of Armstrong County and the use of unhealthy behaviors to manage the mental health epidemic, are the driving factors of this thesis. Using a phenomenological approach, semi-structured interviews were administered to examine the lived experiences of a physician, nurse, social worker and dietitian in the Armstrong County Memorial Hospital network. In addition, interview results from the 2018 Armstrong County Memorial Hospital Community Needs Assessment Survey were analyzed and compared to the conclusions drawn from the study. Three reoccurring themes emerged from the interviews conducted with the Armstrong County healthcare professionals and from the conclusions analyzed from the community survey. These three themes include: limited public transportation to healthcare appointments, limited healthcare practitioner workforce, and low participation rates of programs being implemented by the ACMH network. All participants in the study stressed the direct correlation of these themes contributing heavily to the limited availability and accessibility of resources for obesity and mental health. Recommendations were offered for new programs to be implemented and existing programs to be amended. The recommendations addressed healthcare professionals, community members, and school districts in the county in an effort to alleviate the growing concerns of obesity and management of mental health.

Reader: Cassie Sirockman, Science



### **Factory Farms and the Negative Health Implications Associated with Inorganic Farming**

Dominic A. Servello — Food Science / Nutrition Science

In recent years, there has been a surge in diets recommending stopping eating meat due to its association with heart disease and cancers. However, meats are a very nutritionally dense food group, providing vitamins and minerals such as B, B12, zinc, and iron. Furthermore, the association with heart disease and cancers often comes from its processing and is not inherent. This thesis advocates for a healthier production of meat. This is done with suggestions for regulations placed on the use of antibiotics to control the amount of antibiotic resistant bacteria mutations. In addition, it provides methods for better sourcing of meat and lessening the consumption of preservatives. I also discuss better forms of preservatives when the use is necessary. I raise awareness on the increased rate of cancer as a result of eating preservatives through scientific studies and quantitative data. Furthermore, I use studies on antibiotic resistant bacteria, linking factory farming to an increasing rate of antibiotics resistant bacteria due to the conditions animals are kept. Lastly, I give examples of good and misleading seals on meat packaging to help the consumer determine the organic origins of the product. Factory farming has led to a model of production focused on quantity and profitability, rather than the quality of meats. In turn, meat has been associated with many a negative health implication. It is an injustice to the consumer to expose them to these dangers unknowingly. To address the health concerns, I conclude that there needs to be a change in the way animals are treated, namely unnatural living conditions and feed. Furthermore, and antibiotics and preservatives need to be used in lesser quantity.

Reader: Mark Krotec, Science







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## A LEGACY OF IDEAS

Narratives shape our perception and our reality, and as such we must carefully consider the narratives we read and how we read them.

—Donovan B. Allen

Creatively-unfettered films engage and elevate empathy. —Luca Assandri

An effective organ donation system is impossible when people do not and cannot care about those they could help.—Nolan W. Cynkar

Creative and mutually-invested partnerships are needed to solve the persistent problem of food insecurity. —Peter W. Elder

Your masculinity is arbitrary—and possibly harmful. —Julian P. Hebert

The government's failure to respond to the expansion of Facial Recognition Technology has encouraged its misuse and has harmed citizens' civil liberties. —Noah D. Hudson

The human mind is like a puzzle, beautiful when put together but challenging to put together when broken apart. —Clayton P. Kepperling

The procedures and effects of the dog breeding industry are not only unethical but reflective of society's misplaced values in wealth and status. —Max. H. McCord

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## A LEGACY OF IDEAS

Sex education must be culturally responsive and teach adolescents about the fulfillment of healthy relationships. —Ramón A. Miland

Through lived experiences of healthcare professionals in Armstrong County, Pennsylvania, root causes of increasing hardships over obesity and mental health were able to be identified and acted upon with feasible recommendations. —Robert C. Nix

Artificial Intelligence's future can only be assured through humane and human ideals. —Xavier T. Ramirez

The current legislative disparity between emotional support animals and service dogs is another example of society's problematic prioritization of physical over mental disabilities. —Jack R. Sabo

A consumer-focused design of antibiotics, GMO feed, and preservatives will lead to healthier meat production. —Dominic A. Servello

Realistic and holistic depictions of depression can serve as Visual Medicine for the greater good. —Amari R. Smith

Conversations have the ability to change one's thinking for a lifetime, we simply must be bold enough to change the dialogue. —Jacob D. Wincko







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## NOTES

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of The Brother David S. Baginski, FSC Scholars Program is to foster intellectual, cultural and ethical growth essential to leadership in the service of humanity.

Participation in this program provides Scholars with foundations and opportunities in: intellectual curiosity, civic engagement, balance, diversity of perspectives, leadership, creativity, innovation, experiential learning, applied learning, integrity, effective communication, building community.

A deeper goal of the Baginski Program is to motivate Scholars to reach beyond their individual niches and to understand that they can affect justice in society and, in fact, have a responsibility to do so.

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## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Brother David S. Baginski, FSC Scholars Program was created in 2002 by Brother Richard Grzeskiewicz in honor of the beloved teacher and Vice Principal for whom the program is named. Embodied by three related concepts — scholarship, citizenship and discipleship, it offers an engaging intellectual forum to highly motivated students. These students become part of a community of peers and faculty advisors and meet regularly through seminars, mentoring, programmatic retreats/trips, and symposia.

Students in the program prepare for advanced studies at the university level through a liberal arts curriculum that is interdisciplinary and multi-faceted. In Junior Humanities Seminar, students will engage in critical inquiry, social justice perspectives and community-focused service projects rooted in the Lasallian tradition. In their Senior year, students will use the skills they have acquired to develop, defend and present an original research thesis.

At its core, the program is designed to encourage students to understand the intrinsic connections between their intellectual development and their responsibilities as global citizens. Many of the enrichment activities offered by the program are fueled by this intent.



# **19TH ANNUAL SENIOR SYMPOSIA**



**CENTRAL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL**