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The Brother David S. Baginski FSC  
Scholars Program

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# 2025

## SENIOR THESIS SYMPOSIA

CENTRAL  
CATHOLIC  
HIGH  
SCHOOL





# THE BROTHER DAVID S. BAGINSKI, FSC SCHOLARS PROGRAM

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### Senior Thesis Defense

#### Abstract

Bridging the Division  
From Division to Dialogue: Reconciling  
Choice Views in the American

Develop

Pro-Life and Pro-  
Catholic Church

- Stances
- Ideology
- Views

3rd element

Reconciling the Polarization

The abstract within the Roman Catholic Church, remains high. The pro-life teachings of the Magisterium prohibit abortion, but pro-choice advocates argue that the Church move forward as a more inclusive community. The pro-life papal encyclicals of John Paul II along with doctrinal statements of choice thinker Charles Donnelly investigate how God's love for all people in the New Testament informs the abortion debate, ultimately leading to a conclusion on the Magisterium's stance that, for the

Applies to other problems?  
→ Women Priests  
→ Actor or Actress?

Separate?  
Misunderstand / Misconceptions  
What type of division?  
(Intelligent) (hostile)?

What type of dialogue?  
→ Constructive between...

## SYMPOSIA OVERVIEW

April 22, 6:30 pm

***Welcome and Prayer***

*Jack Wallace*

***Opening Remarks***

*Patrizia Costa*

***Student Presentations***

April 23, 6:30 pm

***Reassembly***

***Distinguished Mentor Award***

***Student Presentations***

April 24, 6:30 pm

***Reassembly***

***Closing Remarks***

*John J. Allen*

***Thesis Awards***









## **WELCOME**

### **TWENTIETH ANNUAL SENIOR SYMPOSIA**

### **CLASS OF 2025**

Welcome to the twenty-first 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. In 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: the corruptive aspects of social media, navigating changes in the Name, Image and Likeness deals in college football, implementing a high-speed rail system in the USA, the rise and consequences of Megachurches in the American Christianity, and the true cost of teacher disrespect in schools.

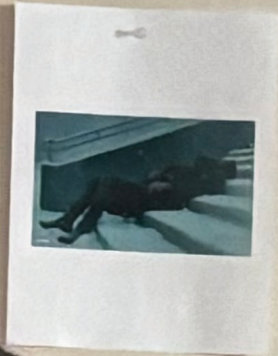
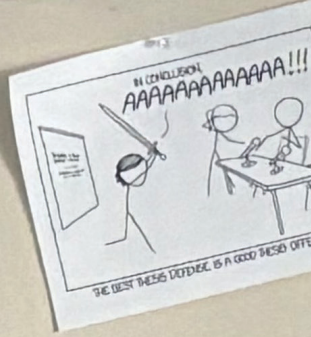
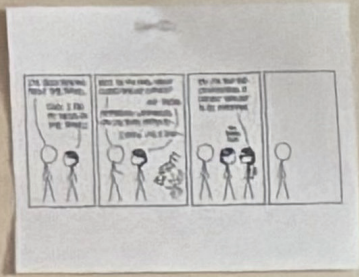
We extend our sincerest thanks to all of the Second Readers for their generosity of time and expertise in guiding the students' work. Their names are included under each of the abstracts. We are most grateful for their efforts.

Enjoy the symposia!

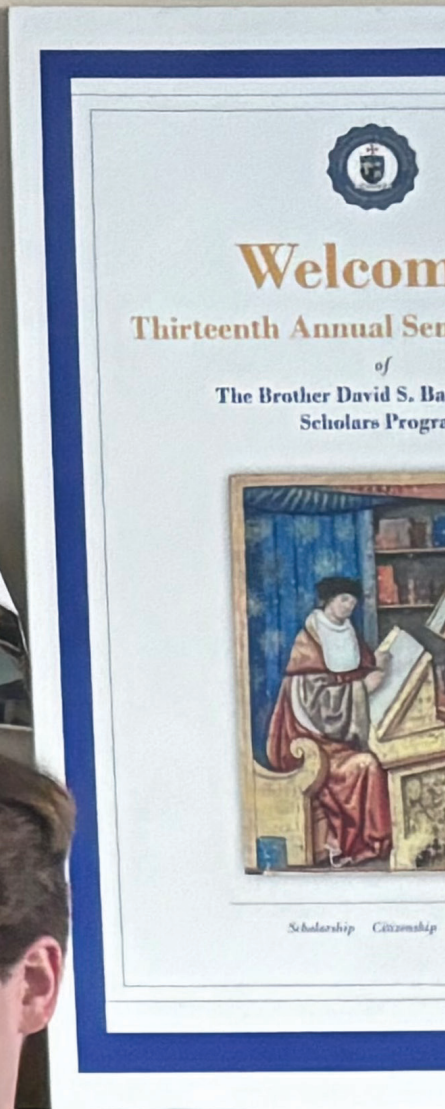
#### **DIRECTORS**

Patrizia Costa  
John J. Allen















# CONTENTS

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## CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

Justin Belardi, Sara Budacki, Kurt Retenauer, Todd Rooney 1

## INTRODUCTION

Mr. Jack Wallace, Principal 2

## SENIOR THESES

Ben Balla, *Disconnect to Reconnect: Banning Corruptive Aspects of Social Media* 6

Santino Balistrieri, *Something Comforting: Empowering the Chronically Ill Toward the Re-Embodiment of the Self and Community* 7

Michael Blount, *Man's Best Friend or Moral Dilemma?: Reconciling Pet Ownership with the Catholic Hierarchy of Life Through Religious Doctrine and Scientific Perspectives* 8

Matthew Evans, *Rebuilding Respect: The U.S. Teacher Disrespect Crisis and its Relationship to Student Engagement and Performance* 9

Victor Ezaru, *With Thunderous Applause: The Death of Democracies and the Rise of Dictatorships as Modeled by Star Wars* 12

Billy Gallina, *The Human Cost of a Fragmented Healthcare System: A Holistic Analysis of American Ethical, Economic, and System Failures, with a Comparative Examination of Global Models and a Proposal for a Unified Healthcare System* 13

Jacob Harvey, *Breaking the Barrier: American Attitudes Toward Foreign Languages and the Benefits of Adopting a Multilingual Identity/Életmód/Moda de Vida/Životný Štýl* 16

Ryan Jameson, *Navigating Changes to College Football in Light of Issues with Name, Image and Likeness Deals* 18

Lukas Jesso, *Overcoming Divisions: Fostering Constructive Dialogue Between the Pro-Life and Pro-Choice Ideologies in the American Roman Catholic Church* 20

Andrew Koes, *Bridging the Chasm: Reconnecting Genre Fiction with the Literary Landscape Through New Sincerity* 21

Liam McAndrews, *Pun-ish Schadenfreude: What Crosses the Line in Ethical Comedy?* 22

Daniel Patton, *All the World's a Stage: The Catharsis of Theater in Video Games* 23

Everett Sargent, *Powering the Future: A Case for Greater Investment into Nuclear Power* 25

Joshua Wincko, *The Price of Life in America: Revisioning American Healthcare into an Accessible System for All* 26

Matthew Weber, *Back on Track: Revolutionizing Passenger Transportation in the American Northeast Corridor Through High-Speed Rail* 27

Thomas Wingerter, *Red Card for Racism: How FIFA and UEFA Should Tackle Bigotry in European Soccer* 28

Gregory Zagrocki, *Evangelical Empires: The Rise and Consequences of Megachurches in Contemporary American Christianity* 29

## A LEGACY OF IDEAS

2025 Senior Class 31



## 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



*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."*

— Nelson Mandela

These words from Nelson Mandela, spoken by a man who understood both the pain of injustice and the promise of transformation, remind us that education is not an end but a beginning. It is not only a tool for personal advancement but a call to responsibility. Education opens minds, stirs hearts, and compels action. It empowers individuals to ask better questions, to imagine new possibilities, and to work with courage and conviction toward a more just and compassionate world. These are the truths that lie at the heart of the Brother David S. Baginski Scholars Program at Central Catholic High School.

As Principal of Central Catholic High School, I am honored to welcome you to the Twenty-first Annual Scholars Program Symposium, one of the culminating celebrations of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual journey of our senior Scholars. These young men have spent the past year immersed in research and reflection, critically engaging with complex issues while remaining grounded in the Lasallian principles of faith, scholarship, community, and service.

Under the guidance of Dr. John Allen and Dr. Patrizia Costa, our Scholars have been challenged to go beyond academic excellence. Throughout the last two years, they embarked on a journey beyond a set curriculum, but rather one of discovery, purpose, and formation. Through rigorous study, thoughtful dialogue, meaningful service, and transformative experiences both inside and outside the classroom, our Scholars have learned that the truest measure of knowledge is how it is applied in service of the common good.

Whether exploring questions of ethics, justice, history, science, or culture, they have been asked to consider not only what they know but also what they believe, what they value, and how they will use their education to make a difference. In the spirit of Mandela's words, they have sought to wield their education as a tool, not for status or acclaim but for meaningful impact all while remaining grounded in the mission of Central Catholic.


To the families of our Scholars, thank you. You have nurtured these young men into who they are today. Your love, sacrifices, and belief in the power of a Central education have made this journey possible. We are grateful for your partnership and proud to stand alongside you in celebrating their many accomplishments.

To our faculty, mentors, and the members of the Scholars Advisory Council, your example, encouragement, and commitment to Lasallian values have shaped and supported these students through their time in the program and at 4720 as a whole. Thank you for walking with them every step of the way.

*Jack Wallace*


Jack Wallace

Principal



# Games and Complexity

## Geography game



Game two players:  
Player I and Player II

Player 456

Defn:  $GG = \{(G, \alpha)\}$  - Player I has a forced win in Generalized Geography on graph  $G$  starting at node  $\alpha$ .

"forced win" also called a "winning strategy" means that the player will win if both players play optimally.

Theorem:  $GG$  is PSPACE-complete

Check in 29.1



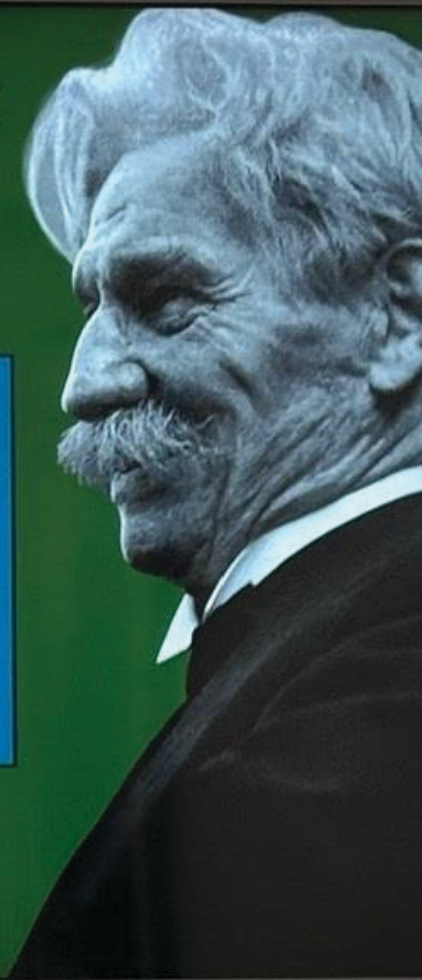






# The Fellowship of Those Who Bear the Mark of Pain

The fellowship of those who bear the mark of pain: who are the members of this Fellowship? Those who have learnt by experience what physical pain and bodily anguish mean, belong together all the world over; they are united by a secret bond.





### **Disconnect to Reconnect: Banning Corruptive Aspects of Social Media**

Ben Balla — Communication and Media Studies / Social Psychology

In an era dominated by digital connectivity, social media platforms have reshaped how we communicate, consume information, and form relationships. While these platforms promise global connection, they often cultivate isolation, mental health challenges, and societal fragmentation. By evaluating our relationships with TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, this thesis explores the paradoxical role of social media in modern society. Its addictive algorithms and shallow interactions contribute to loneliness, anxiety, and polarization, despite its potential for activism and self-expression. Drawing on the COVID-19 pandemic as a case study, it has been proven that prolonged isolation created mental health crises, revealing the limitations of digital connections in replacing meaningful human interaction. Through exposing the negative psychological mechanisms behind social media addiction, it shows that platforms are designed to exploit vulnerabilities, prioritizing superficial interaction over genuine connection. This thesis also addresses the legal and societal implications of regulating or banning social media, particularly in balancing First Amendment rights with the need to mitigate harm caused by social media. It calls for interventions that prioritize broader public health, arguing for a regulation on social media platforms. Regulations on corruptive aspects of social media must be implemented to remind policymakers to take a health-based approach to reimagine it as a tool for genuine connection rather than a source of division and harm.

Reader: Amy Wienand, Director of Family Support Services



## HUMANITIES / SCIENCES

### **Something Comforting: Empowering the Chronically Ill Toward the Re-embodiment of the Self and Community**

Santino Balistrieri — Philosophy / Narrative Medicine

Chronic illness is more than a set of long-term symptoms to be mitigated by doctors. It is a life-changing event that alters and often destroys the previous narrative life path someone finds themselves a part of. This thesis argues that where medicine cannot reach into the social and psychological healing of chronic illness, dialogue can assist people to cope with their illness. The thesis identifies that the history of modern medicine is characterized by a rejection of patient experience. Then discussing recent efforts to reinsert patient experience into the medical system, the thesis conducts an analysis of the work of the phenomenologists of illness. Supplementing current research with the work of Alasdair MacIntyre and Arthur W. Frank, the thesis argues that the lived experience of chronic illness must be studied as a series of social interactions that bring the chronically ill closer or away from achieving comfort in their own bodies. Such a paradigm shift requires us to analyze patient narrative and testimony with a special lens on interpersonal relationships. After examining patient testimonies, I posit four different persons based in illness narratives: Ill Subject, Ill Mediator, Healthy Other, and Illness Personified. Functioning as non-actor specific, contingent ethical ideals, each person is a key role in influencing illness narratives. To attain these ethical ideals, the chronically ill and support persons can dialogue with one another, collectivizing their suffering and building the empathy to comfort others. This thesis ends with a reflection on the ethical obligations given unto the sick after attaining re-embodiment by dispelling their unhomeliness with illness. Through this model, the sick can enter into the practice of healing and finding comfort in their suffering.

Reader: Matthew Kizior, History



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## HUMANITIES / SCIENCES

### Man's Best Friend or Moral Dilemma?: Reconciling Pet Ownership with the Catholic Hierarchy of Life through Religious Doctrine and Scientific Perspectives

Michael Blount — Theology / Cognitive Science

The rapid rise of pet ownership has caused many Americans to elevate the status of their pets from animals to family members. The Catholic faith has responded to this social phenomenon but in a conflicting manner. Inspired by the actions of St. Francis of Assisi, many Catholics have emphasized a universal Covenant that welcomes animals into the Catholic community. In contrast, a more traditional particularist Covenant based on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas is anthropocentric, dismissing all moral worth of animals. Both ideologies, grounded in theological and biographical truth, exist in their own echo chambers, failing to bridge the divide. Sifting through cultural and theological factors, this thesis aims to resolve the rift by employing a dogmatic, narrative-driven Catholic lens while incorporating secular scientific research to suggest an approach that reconciles pet ownership with the call to “love thy neighbor.” First, it analyzes St. Francis of Assisi’s work, urging Catholics to acknowledge his care for humans and animals. Next, Pope Benedict XVI’s *In the Beginning* and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reinforce the call to human-centered communities and charity. The short-term neuroscientific benefits and long-term risks of pet ownership, such as isolation, attachment, and lack of community, highlight the complex interplay between emotional fulfillment and social consequences. Merging these influences, this thesis recommends a new approach – *hierarchical stewardship*. Combining faith and pragmatism, this theory emphasizes animals’ worth as members of God’s creation but also prods Catholics to love their human neighbor more, providing concrete guidance on mitigating pet-centered luxury. This thesis establishes common ground in the niche and polarized field of Catholic pet ethics, its findings carrying theological and scientific implications that suggest pet ownership must be reconsidered to more closely align with the Catholic faith and human welfare.

Second Reader: Br. Mark Engelmeier, FSC, Religion

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## SOCIAL SCIENCES

### **Rebuilding Respect: The U.S. Teacher Disrespect Crisis and its Relationship to Student Engagement and Performance**

Matthew Evans — Education

Teaching is in crisis. Retention rates are low and there is an overwhelming number of teacher vacancies across the country. Although there are many ways to approach this issue, I approach it through the current teacher disrespect issue. This problem has been negatively affecting the success of students in the classroom and has been contributing to the de-professionalization of teaching. This thesis examines the affect that student respect for teachers has in the success and engagement of the students. The goals of this study are to establish where teacher disrespect comes from, analyze how this affects learning, and examine how to increase the success of students during this period of low teacher retention. I explore why teachers are experiencing such disrespect, finding that most commonly public school teachers face disrespect due to society viewing public schools as less academic than private schools. Next, I concluded that strong teacher-student relationships are a key factor in whether or not students respect their educators. The solution for this teacher respect issue inside the classroom requires two parts: teachers need to be proactive in forming relationships with their students and the basic needs of students must be met. Although the state of education might be struggling, there is a way for both students and teachers can succeed.

Reader: Amy Wienand, Director Family Support Services



# Hierarchical Stewardship: Interdisciplinary Guidance for Catholic Pet Ownership

By Mi









### **With Thunderous Applause: The Death of Democracies and the Rise of Dictatorships as Modeled by *Star Wars***

Victor Ezaru — History / Political Science

Today, there are more countries tending toward autocracy than there are countries tending toward democracy. Although the democratization of many countries can be observed circa 1990 with the fall of the totalitarian Soviet Union, since about 2010, a distressing new trend has emerged. Many democracies have been gradually veering further into authoritarianism, a phenomenon known as democratic backsliding. A model for understanding why countries are autocratizing is needed, one that is easily accessible, approachable, and can educate the public. This thesis argues that the *Star Wars* films provide a useful framework for understanding how and why democracies become autocracies. *Star Wars* proposes that democracies die slowly and from the inside, not from sheer militaristic might or external influence. Democracies are not taken away from the people by force; rather, the people give them away. I begin by dissecting the motivations behind the creation of the *Star Wars* films to better understand the commentary they make. Then, I analyze the state of corruption in *Star Wars* that creates a breeding ground for autocratization and allows a dictator to gain popular support. I also examine the falls of the Roman Republic and the Weimar Republic, two notable historical examples of republics falling from the inside. This aims to demonstrate that the model of democratic decay *Star Wars* provides is based in historical precedent. Finally, I offer an analysis of this model. I connect the fictional events in *Star Wars* to events in the real world, both historical and contemporary. Democracy is inherently fragile because it vests its power in the people. The public needs to understand how democracy dies to be able to protect it.

Reader: Matthew Kizior, History



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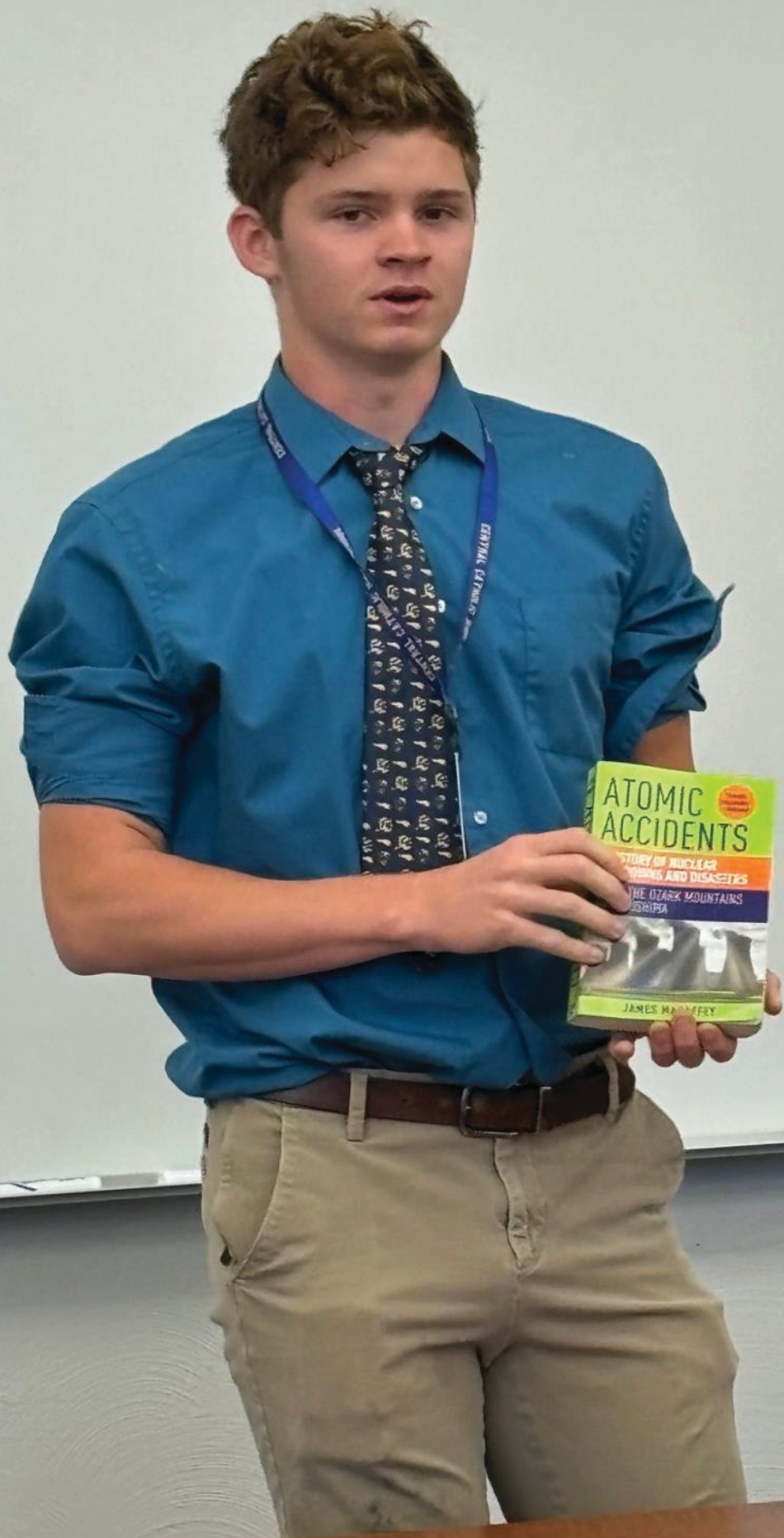
## SOCIAL SCIENCES

### **The Human Cost of a Fragmented Healthcare System: A Holistic Analysis of American Ethical, Economic, and System Failures, with a Comparative Examination of Global Models and a Proposal for a Unified Healthcare System**

Billy Gallina— Health Policy and Administration

The U.S. healthcare system is one of the most advanced in the world, yet it remains deeply fragmented, inefficient, and inequitable. Despite spending more per capita on healthcare than any other nation, the United States lags significantly behind in key health outcomes, leaving millions of Americans uninsured or underinsured. This thesis discusses the economic and ethical ramifications of such a failure. The philosophical standpoints of John Rawls, John Stuart Mill, and Leonard Peikoff, each offer competing views on whether healthcare should be considered a fundamental right or a market-driven privilege. After a comparative analysis of international healthcare models, this thesis identifies the Dutch system as a viable blueprint for U.S. reform. The Dutch model preserves private competition in insurance alongside universal coverage through mandatory participation, government price control, and income-based subsidies. An American system based on such a model would reduce administrative inefficiency, improve access, and be fiscally sustainable without compromising choice or market efficiency. Ultimately, this thesis argues that the American healthcare crisis is not merely a policy failure, but a failure of morality, driven by indecision and ideological conflict. Addressing this crisis requires a commitment to structuring a healthcare system that reflects both justice and practicality. A single, unified system can bridge the gap between ethical imperatives and economic realities, ensuring that no American will be denied basic care.

Reader: Justin Belardi, Chemistry







### **Breaking the Barrier: American Attitudes Toward Foreign Languages and the Benefits of Adopting a Multilingual Identity/Életmód/Moda de Vida/Životný Štýl**

Jacob Harvey — Sociolinguistics

The United States' predominantly “English-Only” response towards foreign languages stems from deep historical, social, and cultural biases, obstructing language learning and global understanding. This paper investigates the impact that these attitudes have on learning a foreign language. I examine the deeply ingrained pervasive cultural narratives which devalue multilingualism, especially in an age of modern translation technology. Negative perceptions hinder a nation's global competitiveness and limit the cognitive, social, and economic benefits of language acquisition. Through statistical analyses and comparisons across cultures, I highlight the consequences of poor language attitudes. These consequences include a major reduction in global competitiveness, a large decline in cultural awareness, and the strengthening of several insular perspectives. My paper examines the importance of promoting positive attitudes as a means of fostering interest in the transformative power of multilingualism. My research proves that by enhancing communication, encouraging personal and cultural growth, and creating new opportunities for individuals and communities, multilingualism serves as a bridge across cultural divides.

Reader: Theodore Rectenwald, World Languages





### **Navigating Changes to College Football in Light of Issues with Name, Image and Likeness Deals**

Ryan Jameson — Sports Business / Education

In June of 2021, the National College Athletics Association (NCAA), the governing body for essentially all college athletics, formally permitted its athletes to make money off Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) Deals, a type of sponsorship deal. In college football, both fans and players had a positive reaction to the NCAA changing their strict policy of amateurism in favor of compensation for student athletes. However, NIL's legalization has led to a number of issues in the landscape of college football. These issues include competitive imbalance, where football programs with more booster club funding have an unfair advantage over schools without the same funding, and the unfair treatment of student-athletes with regard to their NIL money. Along with this, the current system of NIL directly interferes with the education of student-athletes. This Thesis aims to design a system that fixes issues of competitive balance along with creating a more ethical environment for student-athletes to develop. The system provides college athletes with more academic resources guaranteed by the NCAA hoping to bolster the “student” aspect of “student-athlete”. Along with this, it provides a model for how a salary system akin to that of the NFL could be implemented to College Football, as well as an explanation of how the transfer portal and NIL collective will interact with this new salary system. With strong leadership by the NCAA, this new system can be introduced to college football, to defend the development of its student-athletes as well as college football's name, image and legacy.

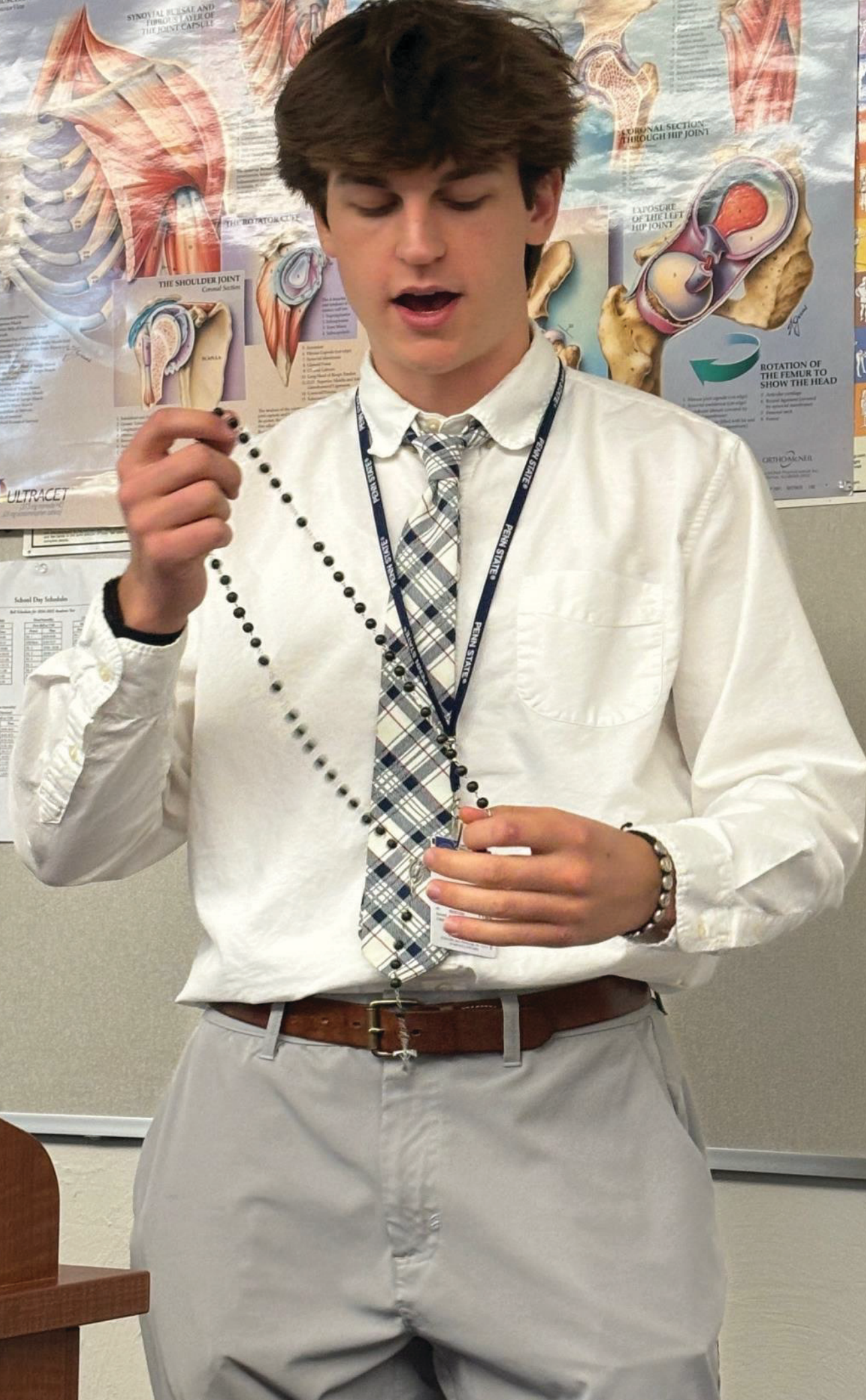
Reader: Andrew Adomitis, Esq., Business





School Day Schedule

Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1st	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
2nd	Science	Science	Science	Science	Science
3rd	History	History	History	History	History
4th	Art	Art	Art	Art	Art
5th	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education
6th	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music
7th	Language Arts	Language Arts	Language Arts	Language Arts	Language Arts
8th	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
9th	Science	Science	Science	Science	Science
10th	History	History	History	History	History
11th	Art	Art	Art	Art	Art
12th	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education	Physical Education





### Overcoming Divisions: Fostering Constructive Dialogue Between the Pro-Life and Pro-Choice Ideologies in the American Roman Catholic Church

Lukas Jesso — Historical and Contextual Theology

The abortion debate in America, especially within the Roman Catholic Church, remains highly polarized between pro-life and pro-choice ideologies. Pro-life teachings, mainly from the Magisterium—the official teaching office of the Church—prohibit abortion and advocate bringing women a greater voice in abortion dialogue. Pro-choice Catholics advocate for decreasing the number of unwanted pregnancies and giving women more freedom in dealing with childbirth. This thesis answers two research questions: (1) Why is the debate so polarized? (2) How can the Church move forward as a unified whole in the debate? The thesis begins with a critical summary of the pro-life papal encyclicals *Humanae Vitae* by Pope Paul VI and *Evangelium Vitae* by Pope John Paul II, along with documents from the pro-choice group Catholics for Choice and pro-choice thinker Charles Curran. After an analysis of both sides, the paper investigates how God deals with conflict in the Bible. He issues a series of prohibitory Laws to His people in the Old Testament, and Jesus, His son, fulfills these Laws through professing love in the New Testament. The paper explains how the Church models this system in the abortion debate, claiming pro-choice Catholics place a disproportionate emphasis on the pro-life prohibitions without looking to the call for love. Pro-life Catholics similarly overemphasize the pro-choice case for abortion, failing to acknowledge their call to help women in difficult situations with pregnancy. It concludes that reuniting the Church requires both sides to come together in respectful dialogue and learn from the similar aspects of each other's teaching, like increasing women's representation in the Church and strengthening family support. This will ultimately result in unity and justice, as all Catholics can safely share their ideas in the Church and work toward serving women and families.

Reader: Fr. Michael Darcy, C.O., Religion / Assistant School Chaplain



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# HUMANITIES

## **Bridging the Chasm: Reconnecting Genre Fiction with the Literary Landscape through New Sincerity**

Andrew Koes — Literature

The Genre Turn, a new literary movement in which literary authors adopt popular genre conventions into their novels, has heralded a reevaluation of what literary fiction can be. Many previous studies have evaluated the stylistic, economic, and academic implications of the Genre Turn for literary fiction. This thesis evaluates the implications of the Genre Turn for genre fiction and reconsiders the literary merit of genre fiction by searching for New Sincerity. I begin by explaining the current relationship between literary and genre fiction, the differences in style and purpose, and the hierarchy between them. I move on to contextualizing literary fiction in the history of literary movements leading up to the Genre Turn, including modernism, postmodernism and New Sincerity, where I identify pseudomodernism as the off-shooting branch of media centered around dissociating from reality. The dangers of pseudomodern dissociation heighten the importance of New Sincerity's focus on connection and genuine communication. Hence, I scrutinize five different novels from across the literary/genre spectrum as case studies to determine if New Sincerity can be found in genre fiction as well as literary fiction. After finding New Sincerity in all five, I move into deconstructing the counterarguments against the Genre Turn. Finally, I re-examine the purpose of genres and conclude that the Genre Turn ought to continue until the hierarchy placing literary fiction above genre fiction is destroyed, but the distinction between the two remains intact to guide readers to a novel best suited to their preferences. However, deconstructing the notion of literary superiority remains crucial, as by depreciating and ignoring the value of genre fiction the literary world has left a vast reservoir of New Sincerity and other literary merits untapped. I conclude that the Genre Turn serves as a call to the literary world to reconsider and reaffirm genre fiction, to end the artificial hierarchy dividing fiction, and to renew the quest for sincerity and fostering genuine communication and relationships in a flawed and isolating world.

**Second Reader:** Todd Rooney, English

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## SOCIAL SCIENCES

### **Pun-ish *Schadenfreude*: What Crosses the Line in Ethical Comedy?**

Liam McAndrews — Linguistic Anthropology and Ethics

This thesis was inspired when the Cancel Culture movement raised awareness around the divisive nature of humor and criticized comedians for mocking sensitive issues in society. Comedians, in response, defended humor's entertainment capabilities, and deemed it as an essential positive in society. Both ideas clashed, but the resulting environment caused jokes to be appreciated or ignored, and discourse to diminish. Historically, humor has been used as a tool to provoke discussion on societal issues that people may not otherwise want to discuss. Although it can be contentious and subjective, there is a way to utilize and maximize humor's potential within an ethically good framework. This is initially accomplished by philosophically defining three categories of humor: light humor based upon incongruity; Schadenfreude relates to divisive and cruel superiority humor; and tinted humor that includes tension-filled messages on a topic or issue. These categories are then scientifically studied by assessing how the human brain reacts to these categories of humor. Lastly, an historical perspective from Aristophanes, Shakespeare, and George Carlin is included that highlights the underlying messages included in humor. With these categories of humor defined and based upon their beneficial or detrimental effects on society and communication, framework for humor is outlined. Steps are specified for applying this framework and the framework is also applied to real-life modern comic examples. The framework principles highlight that comedic expressions and discourse should not be restricted, but rather, encouraged through channeling the beneficial elements of humor while diluting its less desirable and unnecessary aspects.

Reader: Andrew Sweeney, Mathematics



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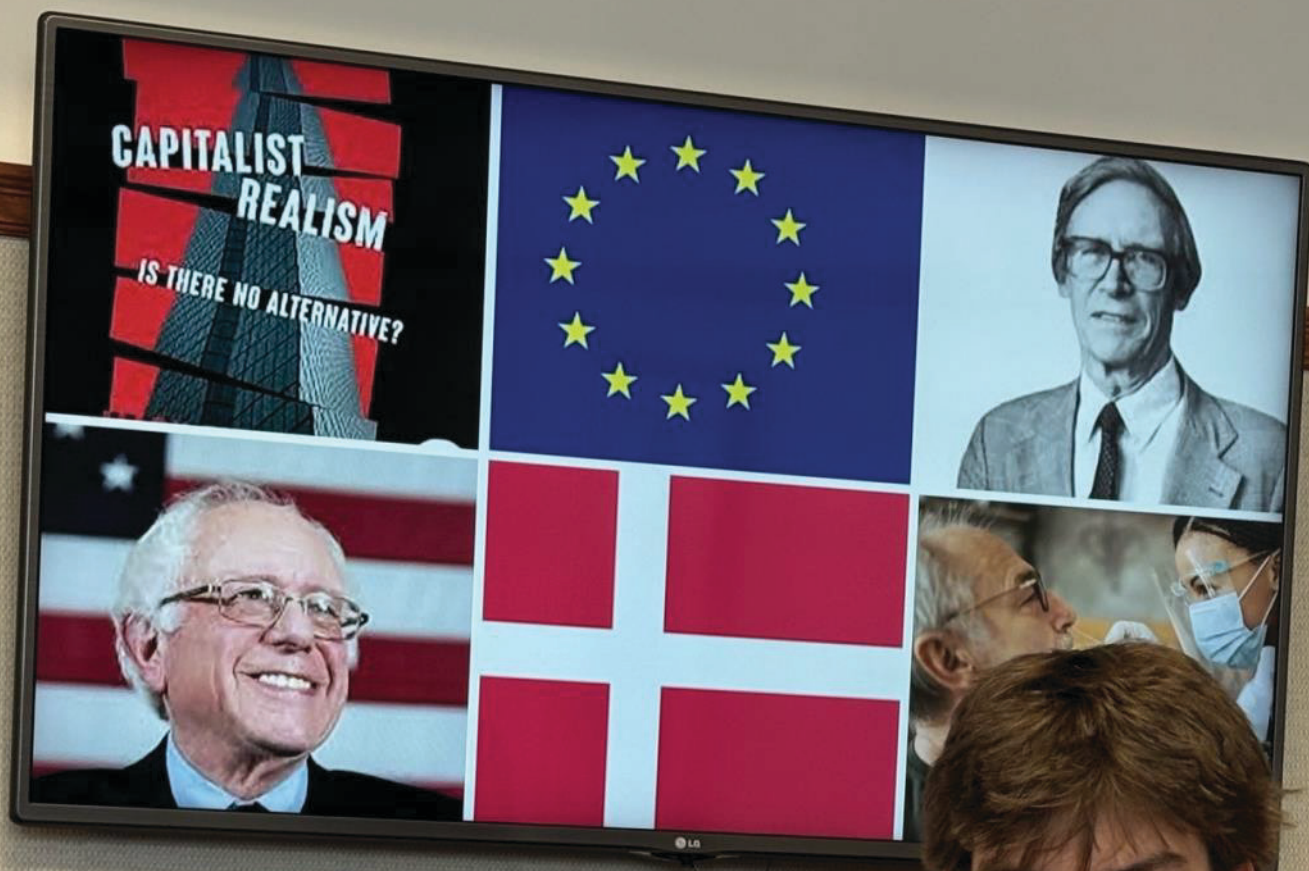
# HUMANITIES

## All the World's a Stage: The Catharsis of Theater in Video Games

Daniel Patton — Media Studies

With more people playing video games every year, it is crucial to understand how we engage with them as an art form. This thesis offers a new language and toolset for analyzing video games as art. With the premise that video games have the same artistic roots as theater, this thesis applies essential theatrical language to video games. The phenomenon of catharsis and tragedy are the essential devices which affect theater audiences. This thesis identifies four components of catharsis and uses them as a lens for interpreting video games: literary, philosophical, psychological, and communal. The thesis then applies the language of these components to tangible examples such as *Hamlet* and *Theater of War*. This thesis then proves the continuation of video games as theater with their similarities and differences. The paper also offers an in-depth analysis of the 2019 video game *Disco Elysium* to demonstrate what viewing video games with theatrical language would look like. The thesis concludes that the language of theater should be used to elevate video games as an art form. The thesis also concludes that video games function as a continuation of cathartic art and provide unique healing to the world. This healing allows people and communities to grow closer together and closer to virtue. With video games being treated as an art, a new level of themes and messages are opened to the world.

Reader: Todd Rooney, English







# ENGINEERING

## Powering the Future: A Case for Greater Investment into Nuclear Power

Everett Sargent — Nuclear Engineering

The current global energy landscape is undergoing a significant transformation, with sustainability and economic feasibility emerging as critical concerns supported by economic, environmental, and technological evidence. While many traditional alternative energy sources such as solar or wind have seen rising levels of support, nuclear power remains underutilized and under-appreciated as a viable energy solution. This is largely due to high initial capital costs, environmental concerns, and public apprehension regarding safety and potential failures. This thesis argues in favor of increased investment in nuclear industries because of economic, environmental, and technological benefits. By analyzing the feasibility of nuclear power, addressing common misconceptions, and comparing its potential with other renewable energy sources, my thesis provides a comprehensive evaluation of nuclear energy's role in the global energy mix. My assessment of existing investment methods addresses the lack of funding for nuclear projects, and from these propose more financially viable and attractive strategies. By presenting a balanced perspective, this thesis seeks to contribute to a more informed discourse on nuclear energy, emphasizing its potential to positively impact the global economy, the environment, and society.

Reader: Andrew Adomitis, Esq., Business

### **The Price of Life in America: Revisioning American Healthcare into an Accessible System for All**

Joshua Wincko — Healthcare Management

Healthcare in the United States is centered around profit-driven ideals that are fundamentally designed to support corporate America and its capitalist agenda. This thesis examines the problem found in the “for profit” healthcare system in the United States, and it explores the extent of which the American healthcare system provides inequitable care. The major question of this thesis is whether there exists a functional healthcare system that is capable of providing equitable and affordable or free healthcare that does not discriminate based on a patient’s ability to pay for health services. My research suggests that it is that the capitalist-centered culture of America is what hinders it from progressing toward a more public healthcare system, especially in the regard of the profit-driven relationship that is forcefully enacted between provider and patient. The goal of this thesis is to develop and advocate for a series of principles that must be present in an equitable healthcare system accessible to American citizens of all financial backgrounds. By examining systems of different countries, especially those in the European Union, and by employing the principles of Karl Marx’s theory of class struggle, this thesis shows that a population is able to achieve a greater quality of life physically, mentally, and socially when all citizens are given the ability to pursue health to the fullest possible extent. Using these findings, it was concluded that a more public healthcare system would serve to benefit general American well-being. This requires the overall participation of large corporations, the federal government, and the overall population of the United States.

Reader: Daniel Perett, World Languages





# ENGINEERING

## **Back on Track: Revolutionizing Passenger Transportation in the American Northeast Corridor through High-Speed Rail**

Matthew Weber — Transportation Engineering

The United States's transportation infrastructure faces significant challenges in efficiency, sustainability, and connectivity. Contemporary forms of transportation are not time and energy efficient enough, weakening the connectivity among cities while simultaneously degrading the environment through its vast consumption of fossil fuels. This thesis examines the integration of high-speed rail (HSR) into the American Northeast Corridor, emphasizing HSR's ability to address these challenges while simultaneously stimulating economic growth. It provides a critical analysis of the history of successful HSR networks in Japan, China, and Europe, emphasizing the development of the proven technology of high-speed rail and the benefits of out-of-country contracting. Upon analyzing the Northeast Corridor, it is considered the ideal region in the United States for introducing a HSR network. Then, upon evaluating the limitations of current American transportation modes, HSR is argued to provide notable benefits in economic and environmental impact, energy and time conservation, punctuality, safety, and passenger comfort, exceeding that of current transportation forms. In addressing the feasibility of implementing new, dedicated high-speed railways among conventional, existing rail lines, HSR will integrate seamlessly among the existing infrastructure. By adopting existing and proven HSR technology the US can revitalize its transportation networks, enhancing the travel experience for American passengers while simultaneously promoting a more environmentally friendly form of transportation. By elevating regional travel, first through HSR integration in the Northeast Corridor, the United States can transform its infrastructure towards a more efficient, sustainable, and connected future.

Reader: Mark Salamacha, Mathematics / Engineering

### **Red Card for Racism: How FIFA and UEFA Should Tackle Bigotry in European Soccer**

Thomas Wingerter — Sports Anthropology

Soccer is a sport that has united many people under a team identity, but racism tries to block this unification. In this thesis, I explore the issue of racism in European soccer using comparative case analyses. The thesis investigates the historical roots of European soccer fanbases and how xenophobia and violence has entered soccer through them. I also explore how other countries demonstrate progress in combating racism and directly comparing it to United States sports culture. My research shows that Europeans' view of racism is hyper-focused on a set group of people (hooligans) which blinds them from the rest of society's racism. Lastly, I recommend new methods for the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) to help end racism in soccer. This includes stricter punishments for both clubs and fans, modification of UEFA documents, and implementation of security and marketing from U.S. sports culture. By prompting a re-thinking of racism in European soccer and implementing long-term strategies on how racism can be eliminated soccer can truly become a beautiful game of unity.

Reader: Kurt Retenauer, English



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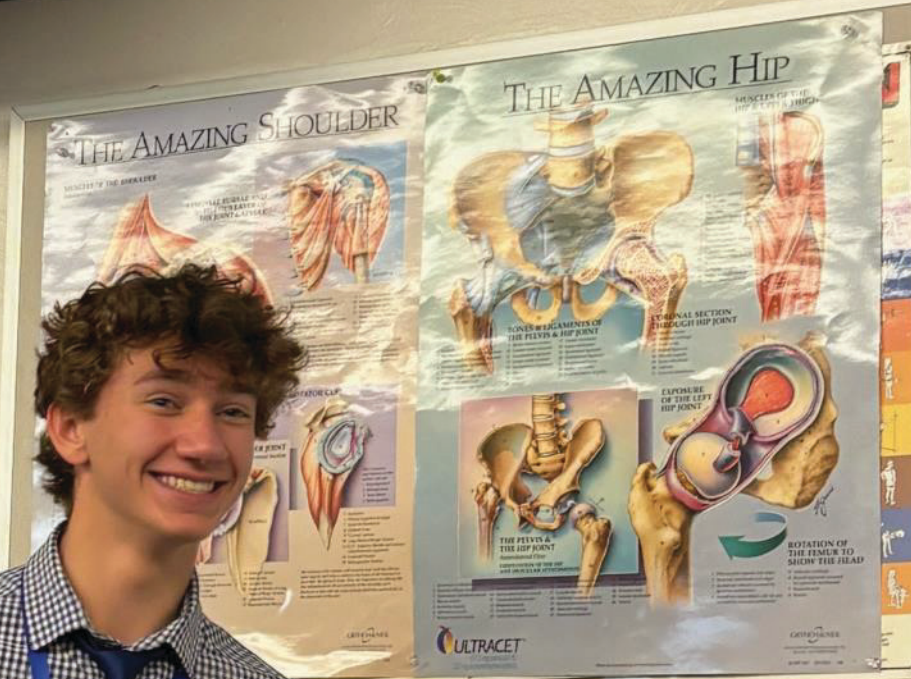
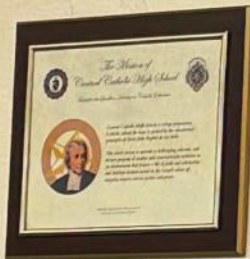
## HUMANITIES

### **Evangelical Empires: The Rise and Consequences of Megachurches in Contemporary American Christianity**

Gregory Zagrocki — History of Religion Worship / Theology

Megachurches in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have grown to dominate the American religious landscape, drawing in nearly seven million Christians weekly. This thesis investigates the historical development of the megachurch phenomenon and its impact in American society and religion, contributing to the broader discourse of the benefits and consequences of the intersection of faith and consumerism in modern religious institutions. Employing a sociological and theological framework, the thesis attempts to answer two questions: (1) *How have megachurches emerged and developed due to suburbanization and consumer culture?* (2) *What are the social, theological, and spiritual consequences of megachurches?* Part One of the thesis explores the historical factors of megachurches, addressing gaps in existing research by contextualizing the rise of their recent popularity with post-WWII suburbanization and a growing American consumer culture. Part Two shifts to an analysis of the consequences of megachurches through the structure of Prosperity, Percentage, and Perversion. In particular, the commodification of Christianity, the depersonalization of congregants, and theological and spiritual implications are examined. The findings from the research show megachurches have had a massive impact on the American religious landscape, shaping contemporary Christianity through their consumer-driven models while raising critical questions about theological integrity and the future of faith in an increasingly commercialized society.

Reader: Kurt Retenauer, English





## A LEGACY OF IDEAS

Given its detriments to mental and societal health, social media's algorithmic manipulation and misinformation warrant governmental intervention to prioritize public well-being over corporate greed. **Ben Balla**

Chronic illness begins as a hostile invader, but through a lifelong siege accompanied by the Four Persons it becomes a volatile yet valuable ally. **Santino Balistrieri**

Pets are religiously paradoxical and demand an identity that reconciles their existence with the Catholic hierarchy of life through both inclusivity and restraint. **Michael Blount**

The lack of respect for educators has caused harm not only to teachers, but also to students and their success. **Matthew Evans**

A sustainable future demands nuclear power—an energy source as reliable as the problem it seeks to solve, securing economic growth, environmental stability, and long-term resilience over fear and misinformation. **Everett Sargeant**

*Star Wars* reveals to us that we are destined to lose our democracies if we do not strive to protect them. **Victor Ezaru**

The ethical and economic complexities of the U.S. healthcare system highlight the urgent need for a unified model that balances universal access with individual autonomy, ensuring both moral responsibility and practical sustainability. **Billy Gallina**

Culture is nothing without language—its memory, its voice—powering global unity, driving connection, and expanding the horizons of human thought. **Jacob Harvey**

The intersection of education and professionalization in college sports raises ethical questions about the student experience and the impact of NIL deals on college football. **Ryan Jameson**

Cherishing the books overlooked by the literary world will foster human relationships and connection as a counterweight against the dissociative brain rot scourging society. **Andrew Koes**

Ethical humor is the laughing matter that enhances your communication and encourages discourse. **Liam McAndrews**

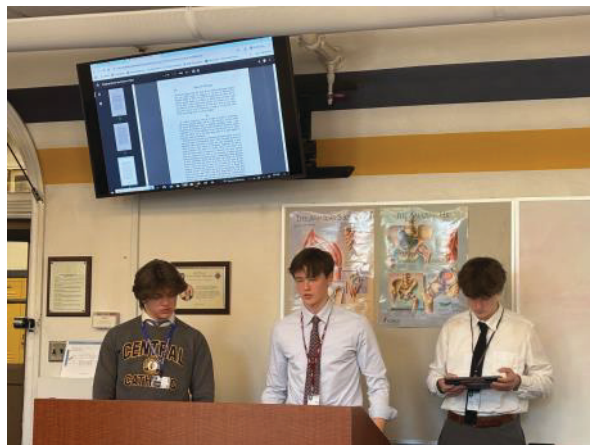
Spiritually enriching art is not confined to ancient plays or classic literature — it is also found in the very digital games we play every day. **Daniel Patton**

Because human life is priceless, we must reconstruct American healthcare to be universally and equally beneficial for all. **Joshua Wincko**

Investing in high-speed rail is not just about fast trains— it is about redefining regional transportation to an elevated standard of sustainability, connectivity, and efficiency. **Matthew Weber**

The most effective way to combat the rampant tribalism that threatens to tear us apart at the stadium and beyond begins with understanding the history and culture of the “other.” **Thomas Wingerter**

Megachurches stand at the intersection of faith and consumerism, transforming worship into spectacle, congregants into consumers, and salvation into a product—challenging the heart of Christianity. **Gregory Zagrocki**





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## 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.





# SENIOR THESIS SYMPOSIA

2025

WELCOME

Jack R. Wallace  
*Principal*

PRAYER

Student Led  
*The Junior Scholar Class*

OPENING REMARKS

Patrizia Costa, PhD  
*Director*

PRESENTATIONS

Class of 2025

CLOSING REMARKS

John J. Allen, PhD  
*Director*

THESIS AWARDS

*Outstanding Theses*  
*Best Presentation*  
*Best Thesis*  
*Distinguished Mentor Award*

CENTRAL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL