



UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME

ARTS & LETTERS



# 2024

## SENIOR THESIS PROJECTS

Study everything. Do anything.<sup>SM</sup>



*Dear colleagues, students, and friends,*

I am delighted to present this College of Arts & Letters book that highlights 193 original works of research and creativity by 190 seniors. These yearlong projects showcase the Class of 2024's academic prowess and innovative skills, as well as its fascinating array of scholarly interests.

The wide-ranging scope of research includes projects that examine presidential populist rhetoric, the relationship between wilderness and accessibility, analytic class number formula, the impact of Taylor Swift's tour on the hotel industry, implementation of a campus carbon food-labeling pilot program, and dark matter.

Seniors also demonstrated their talents and imagination through the development of a comedy television show, design of dinnerware, transformation of language in environmental lawsuits into poetry, and a performance of classical and musical theatre works by Laitman, Mahler, and Bernstein.

Many of these seniors — who started their college careers when COVID-19 restrictions were in place — traveled throughout the nation and around the world to inform their research and enrich their experiences.

I'm heartened when students say their thesis/creative project is a defining part of their undergraduate careers. For some, it even shapes their future in surprising ways — like Anna Bachiochi, a philosophy major and A&L pre-health supplementary major, it also led to an exciting academic opportunity prior to medical school.

"I have grown as a researcher, writer, and philosophical thinker. I loved the project so much that I applied to a few philosophy master's programs for my gap year before medical school," she wrote in her reflection on her thesis. "I got full funding to one and will be doing that next year! I don't know if I would have made that decision if it were not for my thesis."

As is the case each year, I applaud the many faculty members who generously shared their expertise and goodwill to help make the enriching experiences described in this book possible.

To the Class of 2024, I am so proud of all you have accomplished and am grateful for your many contributions to the College and our University. I wish each of you blessings as you continue to learn, grow, create, and make the world a better place.

*Sarah A. Mustillo*

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



### **Analina Barnes**

Hometown: New Orleans, Louisiana

- Major: Anthropology
- Supplementary Major: Peace Studies
- Notre Dame Scholars Program and Notre Dame Posse Scholars Program
- Advisor: Alex E. Chávez

## **When I Open Up My Suit: New Orleans Black Masking Traditions and the Creation of Identity**

Rooted in issues of race, indigeneity, spirituality, and space, this thesis explores the role of masking traditions in the development of identity for Black communities in New Orleans.

Ultimately, masking is a culture of survival and celebration, centered on a confrontation between African (-American) identity and legacies of enslavement and segregation. This ethnographic project draws on interviews with masking practitioners, as well as the author's own lived experience in the context of New Orleans masking.

As a born-and-raised New Orleanian, I have grown up entrenched in my city's masking culture. Although the culture is aesthetically striking, it harbors complexities that are not always apparent to outside observers. I want to give voice to those who practice Black masking as a way of life.

I traveled to New Orleans during fall break to conduct interviews, and again during Mardi Gras to engage in participant observation.

Although the final product of this thesis will be in the form of a written paper, the culture discussed throughout is heavily rooted in aesthetic and musical traditions. I have had the privilege of witnessing this culture at work in person, and I would encourage anyone interested in the topic to explore video and audio or, if they get the chance, to see it in person. My words can only do so much to capture the life embodied in New Orleans Black masking culture.

*Received funding from the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts and twice traveled to New Orleans.*

**Sophie Chorek**

Hometown: Fairfield, Connecticut

- Major: Anthropology
- Advisor: Susan Guise Sheridan

## Health and Violence: A Bioarchaeological Analysis of Stress Indicators and Antemortem Cranial Trauma at Early Bronze Age Bab edh-Dhra

This research focuses on the bioarchaeological analysis of 65 crania for trauma, specifically cranial depression fractures and general stress indicators to see if there is a correlation between stress and violence at Bab edh-Dhra.

The general stress indicators in this study — porotic hyperostosis and cribra orbitalia — were analyzed with a more standardized scoring method, the Bone Porous Lesion Evaluation (BoPLE) form from Rinaldo et al. (2019).

I chose this topic to combine my academic interests in trauma and stress that an individual in the past may have experienced. Studying these topics in bioarchaeology can provide insight into lived experience in the past.

*Received funding from the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts' Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP).*

**Chris Hernández Rosales**

Hometown: Shelbyville, Tennessee

- Major: Anthropology
- Minors: Latino Studies and Linguistics
- Advisors: Christopher Ball and Aidan Seale-Feldman

## Constructing Self/Other and Nominalizing Verbs: Linguistic Ideologies in Maya Chuj

My thesis delves into the linguistic ideology regarding linguistic differentiation of Chuj, a Mayan language. I aim to understand how linguistic ideologies of two variants of Chuj — Chuj of San Sebastián Coatán and Chuj of San Mateo Ixtatán Guatemala — index identity.

I focus on various social actors and institutions to investigate how ideologies are produced and reproduced in cultural practices and linguistic structure.

I traveled to Chuj territory nestled in the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes in the department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, and conducted ethnographic fieldwork for two months.

I chose this topic to carry out fieldwork with my own community and to produce more knowledge on our understudied language.

*Received funding from the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts' Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP), and traveled to Huehuetenango, Guatemala.*



### Greta Hillesheim

Hometown: Faribault, Minnesota

- Majors: Anthropology, English, and Gender Studies
- Iota Iota Iota International Gender/Women/Sexuality Studies Honor Society and Lambda Alpha National Collegiate Honors Society for Anthropology
- Advisors: Susan Blum and Meredith Chesson

## 'Gentle' Judgment and Monitored Mothers: The Distortion of Gentle Parenting through Parenting Pressure on Social Media

Social media has proven to be both an educational and ethically policed space in which Western conceptions of parenting styles are taught and assessed by mothers of any background. From informative posts to judgmental comments, parenting online creates a distinctive community forum for examining how mothers criticize and are criticized on their approaches to mothering, especially those who advocate for "gentle parenting."

As social media becomes more pervasive in public and private spheres, public discourse and media perception concerning parenting styles, philosophies, and approaches increasingly influence ways in which people adapt their parenting methods and choose to identify as parents within a certain style. Because this dialogue exists in the digital sphere, notions of authority, authenticity, and representation are called into question; misconceptions around Western parenting philosophies, especially "gentle parenting" within the authoritative parenting style, have proliferated and restructured the public's view of the practice as a result of social media conversations between a range of novices and experts.

This digital ethnographic analysis focuses on the very gendered lenses of various mediums, including parenting blogs/vlogs, often simplified as "mommy blogs," as well as TikTok accounts, YouTube seminars, and anthropological theory to assess the moral subjectivity of internet surveillance as parenting becomes a public spectacle and a site for judgment, especially for mothers, through social media posts.

The majority of my undergraduate research has focused on women, with a particular gaze upon motherhood. In a field where motherhood is typically reduced to its positionality in sexual divisions of labor and childhood development rather than the identity of mothers, knowledge-acquisition, and agency of motherhood, I wanted to conduct research that focused more on mothers and resources that contribute to their choices rather than actual outcomes of their choices. This piece prioritizes the process of decision-making in light of the extreme scrutiny that comes through the lens of social pressure, expectations, assumptions, and judgment, all of which are easily fostered on social media.

Emphasis on internet communities is still sparse in academia, so my work reveals the ways in which mothers self-identify as "gentle parents" as they defend, contend with, or dispose of the label as well as how they develop sub-communities as the public's grasp on what it means to be a "gentle parent" is constantly reshaped and caricatured due to a multitude of representations on social media.

**Amber Jun**

Hometown: Beaverton, Oregon

- Major: Biological Sciences
- Minors: Compassionate Care in Medicine and Anthropology
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Advisors: Eric Haanstad, Holly Goodson, and Dominic Vachon

## Uncovering the Overlooked Role of Compassion in Patient-Physician Relationships at the Individual, Interpersonal, and Systemic Level

I am passionate about health care and the scientific use of compassion in delivering good, personal care. The patient-physician relationship is a fundamental cornerstone of health care delivery. The quality of this relationship dictates patient satisfaction, adherence to treatment, and overall health outcomes.

While medical science has made leaps and bounds in the past century, the nature of the patient-physician relationship and the science of compassion have been relatively untouched and marginally improved.

This thesis delves into the interdependent web of factors that impact the essential patient-physician relationship and provides a comprehensive analysis at the individual, interpersonal, and systemic level through a meta-analysis of published works regarding patient satisfaction and health care relationships. The consequences of these influencing factors on health care outcomes will investigate how a strong and appropriate patient-physician relationship can enhance patient satisfaction.

Conversely, this thesis also explores the detrimental effects of a strained or dysfunctional relationship. The findings and conclusions of this investigation emphasize the importance of a patient-centered approach in modern medicine, and highlight the need for ongoing research, policy reform, and better refined medical education to support and nurture this essential alliance.

*Received funding from the Glynn Family Honors Program.*

**Claire Novak**

Hometown: Dundee, Oregon

- Major: Program of Liberal Studies
- Minor: Anthropology
- Advisor: Julia Marvin

## Of Perspective: Exploring Montaigne's 'Of Cannibals' as a Cultural Mirror and Philosophical Guide

My thesis is an exploration of Montaigne's famous essay "Of Cannibals," contemplating his source material and socio-political circumstances as they influenced his writing.

Montaigne was one of my favorite authors from the Program of Liberal Studies, and this thesis allowed me to engage with both PLS and anthropology.



**Payton Oliver**

Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio

- Majors: Design (Concentration in Industrial Design) and Anthropology
- Balfour-Hesburgh Scholars Program
- Advisor: Ann-Marie Conrado

**Brick & Mortar Revival**

Prompted by in-store optimization following the rise of online shopping, my research seeks to understand the “retail apocalypse” facing brick-and-mortar retail stores closing across the United States.

I inquired into what motivates users to shop online versus in-person, performing a total of 17 expert and user interviews synthesized into actionable insights. Through ideation and visualization strategies, I created human-centered recommendations with the intention to bring value back to the brick-and-mortar shopping experience.

Given that shopping is an everyday part of the human experience, I hope to revive an otherwise monotonous task into one in which users can optimize and find a sense of joy. As we move toward a more digital world, I hope to amplify the value of analog experiences.



**Mackenzie (Mack)  
Pittman**

Hometown: Bellbrook, Ohio

- Major: Anthropology
- Minor: Sustainability
- Advisor: Donna Glowacki

## Growing Food to Grow Community: Unity Gardens Inc.

Lack of access to healthy and affordable food is a pervasive issue that is inadequately addressed by most food security organizations.

This study uses ethnographic observations and interviews at Unity Gardens in South Bend, Indiana, to understand the impact the organization has on the ways people create community and understand food systems. Unity Gardens was chosen as the research site because it employs a unique community garden model: All of the food grown there is free-to-pick for all community members. The qualitative data reveal a unique connection between food access and placemaking.

It is important to understand how organizations like Unity Gardens address food access in a dignified manner while also facilitating community growth through a sustainable food model.

This project could not have been completed without the insights of Sara Stewart, the executive director of Unity Gardens, who sparked my love for gardening and has been a wonderful mentor.

*Received funding from the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts' Summer Comprehensive Grant.*

**Isabela Rascon**

Hometown: Chihuahua, Mexico

- Major: Economics
- Minors: Sustainability and Anthropology
- Advisor: Sisi Meng

## The Sea is Rising, Are We Moving?

The long-term viability of coastal communities is threatened by sea-level rise caused by climate change. However, how these communities will respond and what will prompt them to take adaptive measures is not well understood.

My thesis analyzed the factors that impact the likelihood of relocating as an adaptation strategy in response to sea-level rise. Ultimately, I found that concern for sea level rise, previous experience with natural hazards, place attachment, and certain sociodemographic factors shaped these decisions.

I am interested in topics related to immigration and the environment. My thesis allowed me to quench my curiosity about the intersection of the two and think about the global implications of climate displacement.