



UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME

ARTS AND LETTERS



# 2019

## SENIOR THESIS PROJECTS

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

**Caroline Christmann**

- Major: Political Science
- Supplementary Major: Arts and Letters Pre-Health
- Adviser: Claudia Anewalt Francis

***Just What the Doctors Ordered: Improving Public Health Through Public Policy***

My thesis explores the conditions under which public health recommendations become public policy at the state level. I examine the path to legislation for protections for breastfeeding mothers and for smoking bans and argue that expert communities must have strong, creative, and cohesive recommendations in order to convince the general public, and thus influence legislators to create stronger laws. Breastfeeding rates in the United States are low, and there are significant structural barriers in the forms of social stigma and hostile work environments. But legislatures have largely failed to enact the policies that would change these conditions. I want to understand how these conditions can be improved so that new mothers have more freedom and support in making their own decisions.

**Jane Driano**

- Major: Italian
- Supplementary Major: Arts and Letters Pre-Health
- Adviser: Christian Moevs

***Fabrizio de Andre: Music for the Marginalized***

My thesis analyzes the work of cantautore Fabrizio de Andre. He weaves religious, political, and social justice themes into his music to address various inequalities in 20th-century Italian society. Additionally, his lyrics are rife with literary references and devices to communicate a deeper message. The different layers combine to offer a complex, multifaceted voice on behalf of those marginalized in Italian society. After learning about Italian music in the course Exploring Italian Culture, I knew I wanted to continue my study of it. I decided to narrow my research to one cantautore.

**Alec Helmke**

- Major: History
- Supplementary Major: Arts and Letters Pre-Health
- Minor: Latino Studies
- Adviser: Christopher Hamlin

***Pharmacy on the Front: Examining Allied Antimalarial Research During World War II***

My thesis discusses the malaria crisis that struck U.S. forces in the South Pacific during the early years of World War II and examines the work done by American researchers to develop atabrine dosage schedules to make the drug an effective prophylactic for U.S. forces. I wanted to choose a topic that combined my passions for history and science. By discussing wartime history and military medicine, I was able to incorporate my academic pursuits into my thesis, making the research far more exciting and worthwhile.

***Traveled to Washington, D.C., with funding from the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program.***

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**Elizabeth Jakubowski**

- Major: Sociology
- Supplementary Major: Arts and Letters Pre-Health
- Adviser: David Hachen

***Seeking Support from Social Media: YouTube as a Forum for Mental Illness***

My thesis focuses on videos uploaded to YouTube on mental health topics. I coded three categories of videos about mental health as well as their comments to see what types of discussions are occurring in response. My goal was to determine the reasons for uploading these videos and whether the posters met their original goals. This project has given me insight into the ways individuals share stories and information on stigmatizing topics that they may not want to discuss with those close to them. As I plan to attend medical school next year, this project has demonstrated ways my future patients might seek guidance outside of the confines of the medical system and how I can better support them.

**Megan Kollitz**

- Major: English
- Supplementary Major: Arts and Letters Pre-Health
- Adviser: Matt Wilkens

***An Exploration of the Evolution and Manifestation of the Cybernetic Literary Aesthetic***

My thesis explores how authors such as Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, Kurt Vonnegut, and David Powers take up the cybernetic literary aesthetic. I examined the field of cybernetics from its core foundations in statistical mechanics and information and systems theories to its evolution over the years, to show the ways in which it manifests as a literary aesthetic. This topic unites my academic passions and areas of study. As an English and pre-health major, I am interested in the conflation of the sciences and humanities, and cybernetics is a lens which lends itself perfectly to this kind of exploration.

**Jean Llenos**

- Major: Philosophy
- Supplementary Major: Arts and Letters Pre-Health
- Adviser: James Sterba

***On Individual and Organizational Ethical Decision-Making and Its Impact on Health in America***

As science has rapidly progressed, society has encountered a number of controversial experiments and events that many deem ethically abhorrent, condemning the decisions of those responsible. But what really constitutes an ethical decision? Are there non-ethical decisions? Can we reliably tell the difference? My thesis formulates a definition of ethical decision-making in order to examine the decisions that have led to some of the most infamous American health controversies. The complex, diverse, and ever-shifting field of ethics makes this a rich topic of study. Without some degree of objectivity, ethics can be used to justify some truly horrific acts or, perhaps worse, not used at all. I aim to create a definition of ethical decision-making that can be applied universally to call attention to the moments where ethics were misused or overlooked.



### **Peter Spalitto**

- Major: Music (Piano Performance)
- Supplementary Majors: Arts and Letters Pre-Health and Spanish
- Adviser: John Blacklow

### ***A Journey from Bach to Prokofiev***

My piano recital features works by Bach, Prokofiev, and Scriabin. The program is ordered chronologically by composer, which allows the listener to trace, albeit partially, the development of western tonal music across a 300-year period. Beginning with Bach's sublime Prelude and Fugue no. 22, the recital sets a solemn tone. This world is both continued and destabilized by selections from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet." Ultimately, the preludes of Scriabin provide a strong, virtuosic finale. I selected this repertoire in conjunction with my instructor, John Blacklow. We felt this program represented a unique variety of solo piano works that are contrasting, yet complementary. Each piece highlights certain musical skills while also evoking differing moods. In doing so, the recital tells a dynamic and poignant story without words.



**Claire Turgeon**

- Major: English (Honors; Concentration in Creative Writing)
- Supplementary Major: Arts and Letters Pre-Health
- Adviser: Steve Tomasula

**Sole Lace — *An Exploration in Disability Literature***

My thesis is a prose selection from a novel that investigates disabled and abled perspectives through dual narrative, multiple perspective, and non-linear chronology. This piece considers the motif of shoes and funerals in the theme of journeys and finding home, as well as location and perspective in consideration of the non-fantastical elements of fairytales. The disabled narrative is still evolving and finding its voice. Stutterers in particular have been silenced for too long, both literarily and literally. Famous works such as *The Wizard of Oz* have been immortalized and heralded as great American fairy tales many years ago, but the modern American fairy tale would look more updated. How do existing works that use similar narrative characteristics converse with mine to retell this fairy tale and update our national vision?