



*Honors Senior Capstone
Fall Symposium*

Thursday, December 5, 2024

Lee 412

2:15 – 6:00 p.m.

Please join us for the Annual Honors Program Fall Symposium. Senior Honors Scholars will present their Capstone Project work. Each talk will begin at the scheduled time. A list of speakers and abstracts can be found in this program.

Schedule

- 2:15 p.m. Emily Roets, "A Comparison of Education Models in Croatia, Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, and the United States," HONR 491, Advisor: Jennifer Walker
- 2:30 p.m. Maria Werner, "Beyond the Pages: Bridging Gaps in Mental Health Representation Through Children's Literature," HONR 491, Advisor: Melissa Wells
- 2:45 p.m. Brianna Kenealy, "Pretty in Pink Can Be a Dirty Business," BUAD 491, Advisor: Alexandra Dunn
- 3:00 p.m. Bird Hanning, "Eat Your Heart Out: An Adventure in Fiction Book Publishing," ENGL 491, Advisor: Colin Rafferty
- 3:15 p.m. Ryan Meyer, "The Impact of Education and Socioeconomic Factors on Median Household Income in Virginia," ECON 491, Advisor: Don Lee
- 3:30 p.m. Break
- 3:45 p.m. Ariana Adamek, "Personal and Professional Discovery Through Exploration," THEA 482, Advisor: Gregg Stull
- 4:00 p.m. Paula Perez, "Intersectionality: The Lost and Gain of Self," HONR 491, Advisors: Marion Sanford and Derrick Jones
- 4:15 p.m. Isabella Justiniano, "Exploring Identity in the U.S. Latino Literary Canon," ENGL 491, Advisor: Antonio Barrenechea
- 4:30 p.m. Katie Reif, "The Plastic Purge," DGST 491, Advisor: J. D. Swerzenski
- 4:45 p.m. Break
- 5:00 p.m. Hayley Madden, "The Relationship between Beauty and Morality in Britain's Aesthetic Movement," ARTH 491, Advisor: Joseph Dreiss
- 5:15 p.m. Bella Molseed, "Nonconformity and Romance: An Analysis of Pride and Prejudice on Film," ENGL 491, Advisor: Eric Lorentzen
- 5:30 p.m. Rylie Vann, "Executing a Show as a Production Electrician: An Exploration in Student-to-Student Learning," HONR 491, Advisor: Bridgette Dennett
- 5:45 p.m. Burke Steifman, "A Dual Approach to Retirement Planning: Quantitative Strategies & Behavioral Insights," FINC 491, Advisor: John Marsh

Abstracts

Emily Roets, "A Comparison of Education Models in Croatia, Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, and the United States," HONR 491, Advisor: Jennifer Walker

This project is the culmination of research and interviews on the learning models, or education systems, in five different countries: the United States, Finland, Denmark, Croatia, and New Zealand. The goal of this capstone was to compare education systems in these countries and determine what commonalities and differences exist. Specifically, strong and safe learning environments that support higher levels of achievement in all areas of learning were targeted as an area of research. The United States' learning model is diverse and differentiated because of the two-fold government system (federal and state) as well as individual school districts making the majority of decisions related to schooling. Some Americans talk about "better education systems" found around the world, such as the one in Finland. While this paper aimed to find ways that the American education system could improve its learning model to better support students and to create a strong learning environment, as the project progressed, it has also delved into the idea that all learning models across the globe could improve. Education is a complex field with no one correct answer to solve a myriad of dilemmas. This capstone will introduce each country's learning model in depth to provide background knowledge for comparison. Then, the commonalities and differences between the countries will be identified and succinctly summarized before discussing the implications of integrating ideas from all studied countries into the United States education system. Finally, key takeaways regarding ways all education systems could make improvements will be discussed.

Maria Werner, "Beyond the Pages: Bridging Gaps in Mental Health Representation Through Children's Literature," HONR 491, Advisor: Melissa Wells

Literature is a powerful tool for understanding ourselves and building empathy for others, but everyone's experiences must be represented to achieve this goal. For example, I did not feel fully represented in a book until the seventh grade. Then, in the pages of Sophie Kinsella's *Finding Audrey*, I finally saw myself: a young girl struggling with an anxiety disorder, going to therapy, and even taking medication. That single instance of representation made me feel like I was not alone and gave me the words to start talking about my struggles. As the prevalence of childhood mental health conditions has continued to rise, there has been an increase in representation in children's literature, but there are still significant gaps. In an effort to begin closing these gaps, this project utilized research into common childhood mental health conditions and current representations of mental health in children's literature to inform the creation of a picture book.

Brianna Kenealy, "Pretty in Pink Can Be a Dirty Business," BUAD 491, Advisor: Alexandra Dunn

There is a harsh reality to financing life as a woman. In fact, it was only in 2023 that Virginia decided to abolish sales tax on menstrual products. Additionally, less than half of the 50 states have abolished the tax on menstrual products and only two have completely abolished gender-based pricing, otherwise known as pink tax. Pink tax is the

practice of gender-based pricing on most goods typically resulting in more expensive prices for women. While taking a class called Poverty, Affluence, and Equality and engaging in discussions about inequality of wages, the gender wage gap came up. On the topic of women making less than men, we learned that women not only earn less than their male counterparts, but that most goods women buy are more expensive.

I got the idea for my Capstone project after learning that women are charged more for many of the same products that everyone uses on a daily basis. As a way for me to give back to the local Fredericksburg community, I educated the UMW community on pink tax and organized the first annual Pink Tax Drive. The goal of the drive was to collect items that women typically pay more for than men (e.g., razors, deodorant, shampoo, conditioner) and donate these items to local homeless and domestic violence shelters in Fredericksburg. I am proud to share I collected over 3,000 individual items that were joyously donated to three local shelters right before Thanksgiving.

Bird Hanning, "Eat Your Heart Out: An Adventure in Fiction Book Publishing," ENGL 491, Advisor: Colin Rafferty

This semester I have dived headfirst into the wonderful world of publishing! From agents to publishers to author websites to final edits, I have been trying my hardest to publish my novel, *Eat Your Heart Out*. Last fall semester, I wrote a book in the fiction seminar class about a trans man who makes a drag club in his dorm room and all the magic that happens along with it. Over the spring and summer, I revised and edited it and got it as ready as I possibly could for publishing. This presentation follows the process of taking the Google document on my computer and getting it out there—eventually to real ink and paper in front of me. I am going to talk about not only the resources I found, the actual process of querying agents but also the practice of optimism and the separation of the author identity from the publishing one. I will be revealing the ups and downs, the harsh realities, the celebratory moments, and how I stayed sane through this next step of the writing process.

Ryan Meyer, "The Impact of Education and Socioeconomic Factors on Median Household Income in Virginia," ECON 491, Advisor: Don Lee

This paper examines the socioeconomic factors influencing median household income at the county level in Virginia, with a focus on average years of education as the primary variable of interest. Using fixed effects panel data analysis from 2015 to 2019, I find that median household income has a statistically significant correlation with average years of schooling, employment rate, Gini index, percentage of cost-burdened households, food insecurity, and uninsured residents. These findings highlight the critical role of education and related socioeconomic variables in shaping income disparities.

Ariana Adamek, "Personal and Professional Discovery Through Exploration," THEA 482, Advisor: Gregg Stull

This project follows my journey of preparing and performing the role of Juror Eight in UMW Theatre's production of *Twelve Angry Jurors*. This project documents my personal preparation, including research and acting methods, as well as my thoughts, feelings, and findings during the rehearsal process. By the end of this project I made discoveries

regarding my identity and its influence on this specific role and experience, as well as how my identity will continue to shape my work as an actor moving forward.

Paula Perez, "Intersectionality: The Lost and Gain of Self," HONR 491, Advisors: Marion Sanford and Derrick Jones

This literature review examines the intersectionality of identity development among emerging adults, with a primary focus on college students navigating multiple, intersecting identities. Drawing on Erik Erikson's framework of identity development and societal influences, this review explores how factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status intersect to shape an individual's experiences. Current research highlights that these overlapping identities create systems of both privilege and discrimination that can significantly impact a student's sense of belonging, self-concept, and mental health.

Emerging adulthood is a critical developmental stage, particularly for college students, as they confront and reform complex aspects of their identities throughout their years in college. This review seeks to address gaps in the literature by investigating the reasons individuals may accept or reject certain components of their identities and examines the positive and negative effects of compartmentalizing these aspects. By analyzing these dynamics, the review aims to provide insights into how students navigate social structures and develop multifaceted identities during this formative period.

Understanding these processes is essential for creating an inclusive educational environment that allows current and future students to embrace their intersecting identities. By fostering the notion of acceptance and belonging within higher education settings, institutions can better support students' identity development and overall well-being through their remaining years at university.

Isabella Justiniano, "Exploring Identity in the U.S. Latino Literary Canon," ENGL 491, Advisor: Antonio Barrenechea

Latinos have had a literary presence in the United States for centuries, though many of us have had little to no opportunity to read U.S. Latino literature in academic settings. As a Latina, I struggled with the lack of representation I had in my literature classes growing up and yearned to read history and narratives about people with similar heritage to my own. This semester I dedicated my individual study to reading U.S. Latino authors and scholars to understand the nuanced identities that manifest within their works, to assert the importance of including Latino stories in the academic literary canon, and to explore how my personal and educational experiences have shaped my Latinidad.

Katie Reif, "The Plastic Purge," DGST 491, Advisor: J. D. Swerzenski

For all of human history, we lived without plastic. Now that we have incorporated it into every aspect of our lives, is it possible to live that way again? My documentary, "The Plastic Purge," embarks on a month-long journey of attempting to eliminate plastic use from daily life. Through this experiment, I document the challenges and realities of avoiding plastic in a modern society where it is ubiquitous. From food packaging to

personal care products and everyday household items, my journey highlights the pervasive nature of plastic and the difficulties in finding sustainable alternatives. This documentary not only sheds light on the environmental impacts of plastic consumption but also offers a candid look at the practical obstacles individuals face when striving to live more sustainably. By sharing my personal experiences and the lessons learned, "the Plastic Purge" aims to inspire and inform viewers about the complexities of reducing plastic dependence in contemporary life.

Hayley Madden, "The Relationship between Beauty and Morality in Britain's Aesthetic Movement," ARTH 491, Advisor: Joseph Dreiss

During the late nineteenth century, British artists and writers sought to create a new kind of beauty to combat the growing tedium and materiality of industrialization. This movement became known as Aestheticism, and those who practiced its tradition believed art should be created with the sole intention of eliciting aesthetic pleasure. According to the Aesthetes, art is amoral by nature and any attempt to infuse social commentary into an artwork is fundamentally wrong, adhering to the concept of "Art for Art's Sake." This paper argues that despite the artists and writers of the Aesthetic Movement claiming that their works exist devoid of any moral value, there is still a morally edifying quality to the aesthetic experience which can be seen through the development of Modernism. The Aesthetic Movement procured many of the stylistic practices prominent in modern aesthetics, namely the focus on color relationships over subject matter and early development of abstraction, which became highly moralized by artists in the early twentieth century. The Aesthetes also saw high importance in cultivating the aesthetic environment, which became a major feature within schools of modern architecture, including the Bauhaus and De Stijl, both of which centered morality in their practice. Through an investigation of different philosophical approaches to morality in art and survey of moral depictions in British art history, this paper will contextualize Aestheticism within the realm of moral education.

Bella Molseed, "Nonconformity and Romance: An Analysis of *Pride and Prejudice* on Film," ENGL 491, Advisor: Eric Lorentzen

This paper analyzes how a variety of adaptations, including a selection of traditional and offbeat interpretations, transform the story of *Pride and Prejudice* through the medium of film and makes a case for how successful each film is as an adaptation based on how the romantic relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy is portrayed. The essay makes the case that Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship is formed on a sense of mutual trust between two individuals who reject some aspect of what is expected of them from their society and culture, and any film adaptation must show how Elizabeth and Darcy go against the social norms of the world of their film in their interactions with each other. In order to analyze the films, this paper explores the directorial choices made for the specific audience of each film, the films as a whole, and a close analysis of how a pivotal scene in the characters' relationship—the first proposal—is portrayed across every adaptation. The adaptations discussed in the paper include *Pride and Prejudice* (1940), *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), *Pride & Prejudice: A Latter-Day Comedy* (2003), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), *Pride & Prejudice* (2005), *Pride & Prejudice: Atlanta* (2019), and *Fire Island* (2022).

Rylie Vann, "Executing a Show as a Production Electrician: An Exploration in Student-to-Student Learning," HONR 491, Advisor: Bridgette Dennett

Through the development of a "production electrician guidebook" to solidify the expectations of students who wish to serve in this position for UMW Theatre, I explored the benefits and deficits of student-to-student learning. This guidebook also serves as a culmination of my time and the knowledge that I have gained throughout my time in the Theatre Department and will serve as a resource to future students. This project is both personal and professional, and will be discussed as it relates to my time in the Theatre Department and also how it may exist on its own past my graduation.

Burke Steifman, "A Dual Approach to Retirement Planning: Quantitative Strategies & Behavioral Insights," FINC 491, Advisor: John Marsh

One of the most important aspects of an individual's life, throughout its different stages, is their financial situation. However, a large portion of the population does not have clear plans for retirement, and many people have no plans at all. This project addresses this issue, explaining what considerations should go into retirement planning and emphasizing a holistic approach to the process from a financial advisor's point of view. Within this approach, there are both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Of course, it is important to consider the numbers: financial models are a key contributor to a strong plan. This project both explains and executes common retirement saving models like the "4% Rule" and "Monte Carlo" simulations. However, modeling is not the only important factor: it is also important to consider the behavioral aspects of finance. Individuals' personal biases have a real effect on the entire process and they must be considered by any advisor. In addition, the project takes into consideration the different life stages, addressing common biases and explaining the recommended financial goals for each one. In doing so, it provides a framework for individuals and their advisors to adapt to changing variables. Overall, the project demonstrates that a holistic approach to retirement planning is a beneficial strategy to fill the needs of clients and improve both wealth preservation and growth outcomes.