



# THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES @ VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY

## 2021 SENIOR ESSAYS

- Robert Bulka **The Thrasymachus Effect: Personal and Political Effects of Philosophical Relativism**  
What are the root causes, personal and political effects, and solutions to our twenty-first century epistemological crisis?
- Gabriel Calvo **Divine Erotics: Whether God Loves Us Erotically**  
Can we imagine eros without lack?
- Declan Carolan **The Limits of Human Design: Robert Moses, the Levitt brothers, and the New Cities**  
What do Levittown and New York City tell us about the limits of human design?
- Andrew D'Onofrio **Neat Little Boxes: The Dangers and Shortcomings of Categorization**  
Have statistics gone too far?
- Erin Fabian **Ordinary World: How Can Heaven Be Made Out of the Hell of Other People?**  
What is the point of the despair and anxiety we suffer by nature of being human? How do we go about healing? Can we?
- John Greene **Recovering Charity: Contemplation in Caritas**  
What is service (caritas) and what role does contemplation (leisure) play in it?
- Logan Khelil **The Other Side of Despair**  
What exactly is the other side of despair? How do we navigate and overcome despair in our lives to find the 'beginning' of life?
- Corey Kuipers **In View of Shalom: Analyzing Political Forgiveness through a Religious Lens**  
Is political forgiveness possible, or even desirable?
- Casey O'Donnell **The Song of Creation: A Divine Love Song Transposed**  
How would you characterize 'the song' that all of creation is singing? What is the purpose of created beauty and what is the nature of the relationship between the material and the immaterial?
- Jessica Sardina **Beyond Allyship: The Radical Transformation of Friendship**  
What does it take for us to go beyond ourselves and to realize our liberation is profoundly interconnected?
- Dominic Sceski **Mysterium Orationis: The Christian's Approach to Understanding Petitionary Prayer**  
How does intercessory prayer actually "work"?
- Bruno Shiffman **From Naïve Faith to Mature Hope: Rejecting Flawed Rationalizations of Evil**  
What is the proper response to an existence in which evil, both natural and moral, occurs often and in ways that seem senseless to us?
- Bernard Zitzewitz **Preserving the White Light: A Catholic Understanding of Knowledge and the Technocratic Paradigm Through the Lens of J.R.R. Tolkien**  
Does Tolkien serve as a good case study for the political, economic, and ecological critiques presented by *Laudato Si'* and Wendell Berry?



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## 2020 SENIOR ESSAYS

- Caroline Arnold ***Insignes Pietate Viri: Virgil, Augustine, and Dante on the Virtue of Piety***  
What is piety? How does Christian revelation change our understanding of true piety, and why?
- Gina Arnold **Love and Dating on the College Campus**  
To what extent has dating on the college campus become dysfunctional and how might it be transformed for a better future?
- Molly Bonini **Exploring Restlessness through *Dancing After Hours***  
How do we seek to still our restless hearts if not through spirituality?
- Abigail Carr **Finding Fullness in the True Self: When the Seeds of Christ Strip the False Self Away**  
What are the limitations of only living in the false self?
- Quinn Dang **On Humility and Beauty: Servitude in Excellence**  
Where is the proper place of human being in this reality?
- Marikate Des Rosiers **On Despair and Relationality**  
How do we navigate the ceaseless flow of our temporal life?
- Christina Dietzler **Tilling Soil in the Human Heart and Mind: Recovering the Ultimate Questions that Dispose Us Toward Seeking to Know and Love God**  
If "the desire for God is written in the human heart," what causes us to forget, overlook or reject this reality?
- Ashley Hock **Controlling Consumerism: Labor as a Mean to a Useless End**  
How has modernity shaped our conception of work? How should we think about work in order to create a better society?
- Connor Kovacs **A Search for a Happiness**  
What is our final end?
- Timothy Long **Even the Mercy of the Lord Burns: Violence, Distortion, and Grace in Flannery O'Connor, Jacques Maritain, and Karl Barth**  
What is the strange relationship between violence and grace in Flannery O'Connor's fiction?
- Chaisen Petrino **Know Thyself: It's Complicated**  
Can we fully know ourselves?
- Felicity Petruzzi **And Other Stars**  
What is it like to be on the cusp of independent life?
- Hannah Rao **The Call to Holiness: Lessons from Irish Saints**  
What do early Irish saints have to teach us about the call to holiness?
- Aidan Riess **The Philosophical Roots of our Ecological Crisis**  
How has the impoverished view of reality present in modern philosophical thought led to what Pope Francis describes as the "Technocratic Paradigm?"
- Kendall Smith **The Quest for Joy Through Aspirations and Vocations**  
What are the true values of work and vocation as they relate to human happiness?
- Timothy Warren **Unplugged: An Examination of Digital and Physical Escapism**  
What are the different ways we escape from reality? Is one better or worse for our flourishing?
- Rebecca Zalar **Love is All: The Different Dimensions and Intricacies of Humanity's Most Intense Emotion**  
What kinds of love create a life well lived?



# 2019 SENIOR ESSAYS

- Jessica Alhanouch **Justice, Sin, and Forgiveness in *The Brothers Karamazov* and the American Justice System**  
What is justice really? Why is justice so hard to figure out?
- Dartanyan Edmonds **The Gift of the Beatific Vision: A Thomist View of Nature and Grace**  
What is the relationship between nature and grace like? How should we understand this relationship with respect to man's last end, which is the vision of God?
- Matthew Faller **A String of Minor Graces**  
What was my path of intellectual transformation through college—in poemetic memory?
- Katherine Hayes **Learning to Help: Theological Perspectives of Suffering and Humanitarian Aid**  
How should theological perspectives of suffering inform our humanitarian responses to suffering?
- Katherine Hodskins **The Human Person and the *Metaxu*: On the Meaning of “Home” in the Mobile, Modern World**  
In an age of mobility, how does the proposed nature of man as a being “in the between” interact with the meaning of “home”?
- Ted Holleran **The Decline, Death, and Dragging Behind the Chariot of the University**  
What is the University and what ought it be? What would it mean for the University to achieve its ultimate goal most effectively?
- Evan Jenkins **The Heart and the Head: The Quintessential Nature of the Emergency Medical and Critical Care Provider**  
What does it mean to be human and practice emergency medicine/critical care? How does one best protect one's humanity when confronted with the challenges of emergency medicine?
- Emily LaPorte **Experience and Experiential Knowledge for Understanding a Theological World**  
How does our knowledge of the world shape our perceptions of and experiences in our world? How can these two kinds of knowledge together help us to understand hard life realities?
- Jonathan Lindley **Grace in Death**  
Is there such a thing as a 'good death'? What role does grace play in death and can it enhance the goodness of dying?
- Abigail Morehouse **Catholic Femininity and the Beloved: Why We Deserve More than Feminism**  
Why is the Catholic church's understanding of femininity still relevant (and now more vital than ever) in understanding who we are as women? Why does feminism fall short?
- Colleen O'Brien **Bringing Mindfulness to Work to Create an Enjoyable Experience Similar to That Found in Leisure**  
What qualities are found in the type of work that is most conducive to a good human life? Can we alter our attitude toward work so as to make any type of work enjoyable and similar to leisure activities?
- Emma Poley **Fantasy and Performance: A Study of Otherworldly Literature and the Sub-Creative Art**  
What is the human good of otherworldly literature? If you could get the same effect out of “realistic” literature, why write fantasy? Who, or what, on earth is a sub-creator?
- Jeremy Puntel **The Restless Heart of Hip Hop**  
How can Kendrick Lamar's contribution to the musical and literary form of hip hop be characterized? How does that contribution match up with Augustinian insights into confession, psychology, and politics?
- Sean Rodgers **Abusive Ideology and Faith: Walking the Ruins of Close-mindedness and Looking Beyond**  
When it comes down to it, is there a difference between ideology and faith? If so, how does that difference pan out at the level of the personal encounter?
- Keri Salanik **A Finite Encounter with the Infinite: The Story of Conversion**  
How does God, who is beyond all comprehension, communicate to humans as finite beings in a finite world and how should one respond to the call?
- Lila Samuelson **The Shaping of You: An Introspective Look at Grief and the Good Life**  
How is grief integral to the human experience?
- Margaret Shield **Living Liturgically: A Look at Living In-Between the Mundane and the Extraordinary**  
What is the relationship between the ordinary tedium of daily life and the extraordinary?
- Matthew Southerton **The Unholy Trinity: On the Dangerous Presence of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism in Christian Culture**  
What is moralistic therapeutic deism, why is it insufficient as form of Christianity, and how can we overcome it?
- Nicole Stefan **Relationships: The Power of Human Connection to Overcome Personal Struggle**  
What role do relationships play in our life path?
- MaryKate Winter **“God Meets Us Where We Are”: Understanding Home as Sacred Space**  
How can Belden Lane's axioms of sacred space inform an account of home that maintains the significance of place while allowing for multiple experiences of home?
- James Wroblewski **“Why do that to yourself?” My Experience of (Happily) Living My Life as a Young, Gay, Catholic**  
Why is it so remarkable to so many in today's society for a young gay man to willingly embrace his Catholic faith?



# 2018 SENIOR ESSAYS

- Antoinette Arndt **The Art of Suffering**  
Can we make sense of the plight of human suffering? How do we teach ourselves to see the good, even in the most desperate of times?
- Blaire Bernstein **The Nature of Cruelty: Spectators, Participants, and Casualties**  
What is the role of observing cruelty in the human experience? How does our participation in institutions that perpetuate cruelty affect our ability to be virtuous?
- Eliza Clark **The Experience of Homelessness in Philadelphia**  
What is human dignity in relation to the experience of homelessness? Is human dignity upheld on the streets or within the social good services available in Philadelphia?
- Briana Connolly **Ambition in Political Life**  
What kind of ambition is proper in politics? How can great historical figures serve as a model for virtuous ambition?
- Nazalie Doghramadjian **Is Knowledge for You? Epistemic Injustice and Worldbuilding**  
How does epistemic injustice and intellectual segregation shape the type of knowledge some do or do not cultivate?
- Morgan Hazel **...But Why?: The Necessity of a Humanities Based Education in an Increasingly Competitive Society**  
How can an education centered around the values of the Humanities positively influence our society?
- Patrick Hudak **Acedia, Psychopathology, and the Human Person: Exploring Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer* and the Necessity of Meaning**  
How can psychological ailment be understood within the realm of spirituality? More specifically, in what ways is the sin of acedia, "a sadness about the spiritual good," relevant to understanding mental illness as a human phenomenon?
- Simran Kripalani **Death and Dying: The Literature, Philosophy, & Practices of Adult & Pediatric End-of-life Care**  
Can you ever die a "good death," and, if so, what factors contribute to dying a "good death"? Does this change in the pediatric setting? How can healthcare professionals aid in end-of-life care?
- Jordan McDonald **The Tension of Technology: How Technological Progress Has Altered the Course of the Environment and Humanity**  
With society's continued push towards technological progress, has the depletion and neglect of the natural world hindered the human person's ability to live the good life?
- David Miranda **Beauty and Restlessness: The Human Struggle Against, and Reconciliation With, Epiphany and Divine Ascent**  
What is the role of beauty in the human engagement of restlessness for God? Why is it that humans struggle to properly orient themselves to earthly and divine beauty?
- Laura Spence **The Still Point of the Turning World: T. S. Eliot, Wendell Berry, and Memory**  
What is the role of memory in a human life? Does Hannah Coulter's intensely nostalgic vision of the world hold her hostage or deepen her understanding of her relationship with family and place?
- Ethan Swain **God With Us: The Eucharist and Human Deification**  
Can the theological concept of deification provide us with a deeper understanding, reverence, and awe, for the gift of the Eucharist and its effects?
- Vaishnavi Warriar **The (Sacred) Sound of Music: Music as a Catalyst for Spiritual Transcendence**  
Can music initiate or intensify spiritual experiences, helping us understand the divine in a more wholesome way within boundaries of religion?
- Rebecca Walters **From Genesis to the Gospel of John: Biblical Themes and their Key Passages**  
How can one use certain passages to highlight central themes of the Bible?
- Elizabeth Williams **Universal Particularities: Exploring Cultural-Linguistic Understandings of Human Rights in the United States and Italy**  
International human rights law attempts to create "universal" legislation. Can philology help us understand cultures and languages in an attempt to pursue the universal human good?



# 2017 SENIOR ESSAYS

- Eric Aldieri **“Where Time and Eternity Spatter Each Other with Foam”**: Signs of the Sacred and the Beautiful Impossibility of Home  
How can music and narrative cultivate an *apprenticeship* to signs of the divine which lie within otherwise profane, material objects?
- Gabriella Berman **The Family in Crisis: John Locke, the Contraceptive Mentality, and a Christological Response**  
How does our understanding of marriage reflect our understanding of the human person?
- Luke Bozich **Transposition through Travel: Understanding Middle Earth through the Experience of Architecture and the Other**  
How do the observations on travel to foreign lands and architectural forms and spaces help to heighten one's understanding of the world?
- Trevor Davis **On Virtuous Memory: Properly Aligning Present with Past**  
How can we realize a life guided by virtuous memory in a culturally broken age?
- Stephanie Edwards **Is Contemplation Enough?**  
If the *telos* of human life is to exist in a multi-faceted *Eudaimonia*, what different goods or values constitute this and how are they ordered?
- Paul Elhallal **“Righteousness and bliss shall kiss one another”**: The Reconciliation of Justice and Mercy through the Paschal Mystery  
How is the apparent contradiction between justice and mercy reconciled within the sacramental life of the Church?
- Luke Hensley **“A Priceless Treasure”**: Death, Justice, and the Revitalization of Ethics in *The Brothers Karamazov*  
How can a person be both guiltless and guilty at the same time? What determines “guilt”?
- Nicole Kim **Proper *Eudaimonia*: The Struggle between Art, Beauty, and Humanity**  
If beauty exists in the world through art, how is it possible to see well in such a world where art is used as a mechanism of oppression in society?
- Lauren Kloss **Literary Synesthesia and the Creation of Wonder**  
With reference to the phenomenon of synesthesia, how does literature helps us break conventional notions and create wonder/radical amazement?
- Madeleine Messinger **Till We Have Love: An Exploration of Love and Deification in C.S. Lewis’s *Till We Have Faces***  
Can both beauty and dread be ascribed to the divine? Furthermore, how can this help us understand the relationship of the human and the divine?
- Isabel Nelson **Manners and Morals in *Mansfield Park*: Religion and Transcendence in Jane Austen**  
What is the role of religion according to the characters of *Mansfield Park*, and is their account satisfying? What should be the relationship between religion and literature?
- Regina Paparo **Altruism vs. Love: The Case for a Christian Understanding of Service**  
What is the relationship between selflessness and altruism?
- Bella Perrino **Conscious Capitalism: Locating Ourselves within a Material World**  
Can we reconcile community as “the vital activity of communizing” with modern capitalism?
- Connor Ritchie **Developing a Porosity for *Caritas*: An Exploration into Theology, Literature, and Philosophy to Witness Its Supreme Value**  
Giving due to tradition, literature, and philosophy, what is *caritas*, how does one personify it, and what is its metaphysical value?
- Katie Stepanek **“The Inconsolable Secret”**: Uncovering Joy as Hidden in C.S. Lewis’ *Till We Have Faces*  
Should we expect Joy to be the primary interpretive key for C.S. Lewis’s writing, especially for his self-proclaimed masterpiece *Till We Have Faces*?
- Tony Triggiano **Tasting Italy: Pursuing the Good of Italian Cuisine**  
Looking at the case of Italy and Italian culture, under what cultural and societal conditions does cuisine ennoble man’s state, bringing him to this level of spiritual appetite and satiety?
- Emily Wilson **“The Spirit of Celebration”**: Reclaiming Leisure and Liturgy amid Postmodern Busyness  
How can the human person reclaim space for leisure and celebration?
- Matthew Zarenkewicz **What Is to Be Done?: Religion and Politics in the U.S.**  
How should religious speech be used in political conversations in the United States?



# 2016 SENIOR PROJECTS

- Amanda Cialino **Markets Over Relationship? Human Dignity and the Economic Way of Thinking**  
What role does economic thinking play in human relationships, and more specifically, those formed in the context of service?
- Cecilia Franko **How Technology Has Replaced Our Lost Community**  
With the rise of capitalism, how have society and community been negatively impacted? Does this effect modern architecture?
- Olivia Hamilton **Communitas: How Spaces Shape Community at Villanova**  
How do architecture and feelings of community intersect? How does community manifest itself through the buildings and spaces at Villanova?
- Bernard Jacobson **Poor Gods: The Artist as Divine Imitator**  
How does man's desire to create art reflect his relationship with God?
- Ali Laird **Sticky Little Leaves: Non-Locality, Non-Euclidian Geometry, and Positive Knowing in *The Brothers Karamazov***  
If chaos theory suggests that stability arises in a world ruled by entropy, can we affirm a kind of order in tragedy, without negating the reality of suffering?
- John Liberatore **"Taking me seriously": The Unheard Mind of the Emerging Adult**  
What is the significance of the journey that is the Emerging Adulthood? How is mentorship of significant positive impact on the journeying emerging adult?
- Katrina Marks **The Meaning of Memory: A Philosophy of Autobiography**  
How does the human person make meaning through the narratives of memories? How do memories challenge what the human person understands as reality?
- Caitlin Mitchell **Difficult Conversations: Doctor Patient Conversations about Death and the Dying Process**  
How do the difficult conversations we have with loved ones shape the conversations we have with doctors, and how should doctors have these difficult conversations?
- Ann Pollack **Human Free Will and the Nature of God**  
Does the omniscient and omnipotent nature of God limit the human captivity for free will? How is human free will compatible with the Christian conception of God?
- Mary Frances Roth **What Does It Mean To Do Fulfilling Work?**  
What is meaningful work?
- Adam Vincent **The Baptism of *Homo Economicus***  
If humanity is doomed to its worst expectations for itself, how can theological visions of human nature support alternative economic systems?
- Kate Walsh **Instead of Tears, Give Deeds: Anger as a Positive Political Emotion**  
Do modern people simply not believe in justice? Why are so many not moved to do what they can?
- Emily Walthouse **Sometimes the Answers are Simple**  
What role can the concept of simplicity play in combating the diagnosis of modernity as "everybody's disease" in Wendell Berry's *Hannah Coulter*?
- Jennifer White **Beauty in the Face of Tragedy**  
Is it possible to possess a vocation to pursue beauty in a tragic world or is to do so a dereliction of sacred duty to mankind?
- Hindley Williams **Awe in the Stars: "There Will Be Time"**  
What is the role of awe in the human life? What is the effect of living without awe?