HONORS PROGRAM

SENIOR THESIS

DEFENSE DAY

Friday, April 22, 2022
CHECK OUT THE VU HONORS THESIS BLOG!
CLASS OF 2022

Amanda Allender
Madeline Bishop
Erin Burtzlaff
Caroline Canally
Gillen Curren
Lily Day
Marco Delsanto
Matthew DiCarali
Chris DiLullo
Nicole Garcia
Austin Glass
Emma Guilbault
Helena Gunther
Elise Hall
Alec Henderson
Becca Jacobson
Katie Kelly

Emily Mahoney
Erica Mallon
Audrey McCleary
Hannah Medsker
Grace Metzger
Kristella Muvunankiko
Julianna Nails
Morgan Palumbo
Olivia Pfeiffer
Kaitlyn Quijano
Erin Rodriguez
Christopher Saladino
Dylan Sawyer
Hannah Simon
Sydney Stewart
Bridget Sullivan
Julia Sullivan

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Anna Bonta Moreland, Ph.D
Associate Director:
Madeline Reynolds
Assistant Director:
Kimberly Hidore

Program Coordinator:
Jaime Haughton
Program Assistant:
Christine Ciocco
Graduate Assistants:
Franki Rudnesky
Lauren Alexander
Growing Your Own Pharmaceuticals: An Exploration of Plants as Medicine During Pre-Modern Times and the Influence of Medicinal Plants on the American Pharmaceutical Industry

**Amanda Allender**

**Major:** Biochemistry and Humanities  
**Tutor:** Dr. Mark Shiffman  
**Reader:** Dr. Aimee Eggler  
**Alumni Mentor:** David Mazzo, '79, Ph.D.

Amanda is a Biochemistry and Humanities double major from Springfield, Oregon. She is involved with biochemistry research in the Eggler lab, studying the effect of small molecules on the mitigation of oxidative stress in cellular systems. She has been an EMT for over two years and was the Captain of Villanova Emergency Medical Service this past year. After graduation, Amanda will continue her studies at Villanova for a fifth year, during which she will get her Master’s degree in Chemistry. Her research on small molecules in the Eggler lab, some of which are found naturally in plants, helped formulate the questions that she will be asking in her thesis. Amanda is researching the role that medicinal plants have held in premodern medicine and how the American pharmaceutical industry has approached the concept of medicinal plants in the context of pharmaceutical development.
Madeline Bishop is a senior double majoring in Economics and Gender and Women’s Studies and minoring in Irish Studies from New Rochelle, NY. In her thesis, she combines aspects from both Economics and Gender and Women’s Studies to research the different roles that gender and identity play within sex work and how their intersection affects workers’ experiences in the industry. She is particularly interested in which groups have been advantaged or disadvantaged with the introduction of new technologies, as well as the process and history of commodifying intimacy.
Why We Can't Think For Ourselves: The Rise of Technological Dependence and the Decline of Independent Thought

Erin Burtzlaff

Major: Philosophy
Tutor: Dr. Justin Humphreys
Reader: Dr. John Doody

Erin Burtzlaff is from Dallas, Texas. She is currently a caseworker for the Philadelphia Justice Project for Women and Girls, working on commutation and wrongful conviction cases. Besides her passion for social justice, she simply loves learning. Her Philosophy studies have allowed her to explore many different academic disciplines from countless perspectives and have entirely changed the way she thinks. Her thesis research stems from her fascination with the exponential increase in modern technological development. While she applauds the incredible developments and progress in technology in the last decade, she firmly believes that if we are not careful, technology will cause great rifts in society. Think Black Mirror meets class conflict meets political revolution. Outside of school, she’s very passionate about personal fitness and health, specifically pilates and crossfit. She also has a love of music - though she says she has no musical talent herself, she tries to listen and appreciate music of all different genres and decades. Her favorite genres are classic rock and hip hop and she spends a portion of every Sunday making a playlist based on a new artist or genre she’s never heard of before.
The effect of using a small molecule inhibitor of Brd2, a critical gene regulator, on the developing excretory system in zebrafish

Caroline Canally

Major: Biology
Tutor: Dr. Angela DiBenedetto

Caroline Canally is an Honors Biology major with a minor in Spanish from Concord, MA. On campus, she writes for the Villanovan and enjoys her role as an Honors Ambassador, as well as participating in volunteer clubs such as RUIBAL and Service and Justice Experiences to El Paso, Texas and Hickory, North Carolina. She spent the summer in Dr. DiBenedetto’s lab as a VURF grantee, researching the role of Brd2, a transcriptional co-regulator, on early zebrafish development. Specifically, she is looking at the pronephros, a blood filtration organ in embryonic zebrafish, akin to kidney nephrons in mammals. To track the ongoing role of Brd2 in the development of the pronephros, she will use a small molecule that inhibits Brd2, called BIC1. Through her research, she will investigate the late-stage window when Brd2 activity is needed in the development of the excretory system in embryonic zebrafish for it function normally. She hopes researching Brd2, which is highly conserved across many species, including humans, can inform future therapies for diseases such as chronic kidney disease, among others. After graduation, she looks to pursue a career in biotechnology or pharmaceuticals, and eventually go back to school to get her MS in the field.
Comparing the Heavy Metal Concentrations of Estuarine Organisms from Different Estuaries on the East Coast

Gillen Curren

Major: Environmental Science, Geography
Tutor: Dr. Nathaniel Weston

Gillen Curren is a senior Environmental Science and Geography major minoring in Spanish and Biology from Wilmington, Delaware. She has worked in Dr. Weston’s lab since the summer after her sophomore year, assisting in field and lab research in estuarine ecosystems like the Plum Island Estuary. Her project will assess heavy metal concentrations with estuarine organisms and how those concentrations differ between species and trophic levels. Since some of the organisms studied within the thesis are consumed by the public, part of her research will be to determine whether the heavy metal concentrations within these organisms are safe to consume according to FDA and EPA standards.
Vocal and non-vocal responses to song variation by hybrid-zone male chickadees in relation to their ancestry: an experimental approach

Lily Day

**Major:** Biology  
**Tutor:** Dr. Robert Curry  
**Reader:** Dr. Brittany Coppinger

Lily Day is a Biology major with a minor in Philosophy from Allentown, PA. She has been a member of Dr. Curry’s lab since her freshman year at Villanova, conducting field and lab research to study chickadees within a hybrid zone where two species, Black-capped and Carolina chickadees, interbreed. Her thesis project is an experimental investigation of male song responses in relation to ancestry genotype within this zone, which has implications for understanding hybridization dynamics. On campus, Lily is a clarinetist in the Villanova Band and a TA for general chemistry, and outside of school, she enjoys spending time outdoors and baking Celiac-friendly recipes. Lily plans to attend graduate school to pursue molecular ecology research. She is particularly interested in climate-driven evolution and genes relevant to climate change adaptations.
From Setbacks to Solutions: A Review of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in United States Schools

Marco Delsanto

Major: Psychology
Tutor: Dr. Christa Bialka
Reader: Dr. Kevin Hughes

Marco Delsanto is a Senior from Woodbridge, Connecticut. He is a Psychology Major with Honors Business and Italian Minors. Upon graduation from Villanova, he is planning on pursuing a graduate degree in School Psychology where he will be able to work with children in educational settings. His thesis looks at the experience of autistic students in United States schools and specifically examines the barriers that they face. He shows how society’s reliance on the medical model of disability directly impacts educational and social access for students with autism. He will also synthesize strategies and solutions related to breaking down these barriers into an actionable framework. These strategies are based on the social model of disability and aim to incorporate the approach of Universal Design for Learning into schools across the country.
Matt is a Biology and Humanities double major and Spanish minor from Long Island, New York. As a student soon about to begin medical school and enter the medical field, Matt is interested in the physician’s role as a member of a moral community. Considering Goodness, Truth, and Beauty in medicine and human flourishing, Matt is exploring the moral ends of medicine, arguing that preventive medicine and health promotion are critical means to the ultimate end of medicine, which is the health of the patient. He also hopes to discuss how a shift toward this type of medicine will address healthcare disparities and alleviate some of the healthcare burdens that exist within the United States. After graduating from Villanova, Matt is taking a gap year before medical school, during which he plans to gain clinical experience as a scribe and volunteer, both at home and abroad.
Chris is a Communication and Spanish major from Farmington, Connecticut. Chris has always been fascinated by the media industry, specifically in how the industry has changed over time. With the streaming revolution changing the way many consumers now watch media content, media is on the edge of a new revolution, and by interning at HBO Max in 2021, Chris developed an even greater understanding of where the industry is going in the future. In his thesis, Chris will investigate not only these changes in the industry over time but how the industry itself has reacted to these changes, using a content analysis of articles from media trade publications to examine industry trends.
Nicole Garcia is a senior Chemistry major minoring in Peace & Justice and Sustainability studies from Long Island, New York. She has conducted undergraduate research in Dr. Zubris’ inorganic chemistry lab since her freshman year, synthesizing and characterizing organic ligands and iron based catalysts for use in sustainable polymerization. Nicole is passionate about increasing sustainability efforts of chemical production, which she will do by beginning her career as a graduate rotational scientist for Johnson Matthey, a sustainable chemicals and technologies company. For her thesis, she will be analyzing NMR spectroscopy data to optimize coordination polymerization conditions for the production of polyisoprene, or synthetic rubber, using earth metal-based catalysts. This thesis is inspired by the international natural rubber shortage due to a destruction of rubber trees and supply chains in the wake of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore focusing on how to most efficiently synthesize specific isomers of polyisoprene for use in vital products such as surgical gloves. Beyond her thesis work, Nicole has been a captain of the Club Soccer team, chair of the RUIBAL service program, and a founder of the Academic Reform Committee Mentorship Program.
Value & Cents: Exploring the Relationship Between Social Trust and Income Inequality since 1980

Austin Glass

Major: Economics
Tutor: Dr. Maira Reimão

Austin Glass is a senior Economics (VSB) student with minors in Finance and Business Law. As part of the Honors Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE) cohort, Austin has grown to love the intersection of economics and law, and he intends to pursue law school down the road. Austin’s Thesis, entitled "Value & Cents: Exploring the Relationship Between Social Trust and Income Inequality since 1980" represents a culmination of how society and economics are intertwined. By studying this research topic, Austin hopes to gain a better understanding of how economics and policy can complement efforts to create a more trusting, connected, and equitable society. Austin appreciates all of the support from his tutor, Professor Maira Reimão, as well as the rest of the Villanova community on his thesis journey.
The development of epicormic shoots in Avicennia germinans encroaching poleward in northeastern Florida

Emma Guilbault

Major: Biology
Tutor: Dr. Samantha Chapman

Emma Guilbault is a senior Biology major from Norwalk, CT. She has worked in Dr. Samantha Chapman’s ecosystem ecology lab since her sophomore year, helping graduate students as a lab assistant and completing a Research Experience for Undergraduates over the course of her junior year, where she studied growth in mangrove canopies using image analysis software. Her thesis focuses on the development of fast-growing epicormic shoots ("water sprouts") in mangrove populations as they encroach up through the salt marshes of northeastern Florida, as a result of changing coastal climates. She is conducting a comparative analysis of epicormic shoots in comparison to regular mangrove branches, as well as an experimental study on the effects of encroachment and warming on epicormic shoot development.
Growing Up Too Fast: A Study of the Good Childhood, the Failure of Schools to Nurture the Childhood of Students of Historically Underserved Backgrounds, and How We Can Do Better

Helena Gunther

Major: Humanities
Tutor: Dr. Michael Tomko
Reader: Dr. Mark Shiffman
Alumni Mentor: Mary Grace Mangano '14, MeD

Helena is a Humanities major and Education minor from Long Island, NY. Her thesis focuses on an understanding of childhood and schooling that is based on the recognition and uplifting of the dignity and individuality of the human person. She will be exploring what elements help create a “good childhood” and how the school systems have contributed to the systemic robbing of these elements of childhood from students of color and of lower-socioeconomic backgrounds. The thesis will conclude with a study and celebration of individuals and schools that are doing the work to remedy these failures. Helena’s thesis is motivated by her passion for educational equity, which has been fostered both in her classes and in her experiences volunteering in Philadelphia schools through Campus Ministry. She is excited to continue this work as she enters the NYU Teacher Residency Program where she will be pursuing a Master’s of Inclusive Childhood Education while teaching at Our World Neighborhood Charter School. She hopes to work in school policy in the future.
The Ethanolamine Utilization Microcompartment: Attempting the Isolation of a Cloned BMC

Elise Hall

Major: Biology
Tutor: Dr. James Wilson
Reader: Dr. Angela DiBenedetto

Elise Hall is a Biology major with a minor in Global Health. Since her sophomore year, she has been helping Dr. Wilson in his research on Bacterial Microcompartments, powerful metabolic organelles within some strains of bacteria which have intriguing potential in biotechnology. In her thesis, she will develop a method for purifying a cloned Salmonella Typhimurium native Ethanolamine Utilization Microcompartment from an array of gram-negative bacteria. She hopes to contribute some foundational knowledge to the growing research on microcompartments. She would like to thank Dr. Wilson for his mentorship and support, Dr. DiBenedetto for being an amazing resource as a reader, and the honors program for stimulating the research that has defined her academic experience.
Historically, the American chestnut was an incredibly important species—ecologically, economically, and culturally—in Pennsylvanian forests. In the early 20th century, an invasive chestnut blight wiped out nearly all the mature American chestnuts throughout their native range. There are current efforts to create a blight-resistant chestnut but restoring the tree to its native range will require better understanding of chestnut habitat suitability. For Alec Henderson’s project, he will be using known chestnut locations in Pennsylvania to model habitat across the whole state to assist in reintroduction efforts. A habitat suitability model will help with both finding more surviving mature chestnuts and identifying areas to replant blight-resistant chestnuts.
Facilitators for Teachers Leading Disability-Related Discussions in 6-12 English Classrooms: A Qualitative Approach

Becca Jacobson

Major: English and Secondary Education
Tutor: Dr. Christa Bialka

Becca Jacobson is a Junior from Randolph, New Jersey. She is an English and Secondary Education double major with minors in Philosophy and Peace & Justice. After graduation, Becca will be a high school English teacher with plans to pursue a graduate degree in Educational Leadership. Her thesis examines the factors that affect teachers’ comfort in leading disability-related discussions with their students. She will investigate these factors through interviews with in-service teachers and offer insights concerning ways we can better support teachers in promoting inclusion in schools.
The (Exogenous) Responsibility Hypothesis: Economic Voting in a Post-Brexit Ireland

Katie Kelly

Major: Political Science and Economics
Tutor: Dr. Ryan Weldzius

Katie Kelly is a Political Science and Economics double major and French & Francophone Studies minor from Leesburg, Virginia. As a member of the Politics, Philosophy, and Economics cohort, she spent a semester abroad at the University of Cambridge, where she developed interests in both European politics and international economics. Katie’s thesis looks at the intersection of these interests, looking at how international economic change caused by the United Kingdom’s departure from the European Union has influenced domestic Irish politics between the 2016 and 2020 General Elections. Her thesis specifically works within the ideological framework of economic voting, measuring the degree to which certain economic conditions shape electorate attitudes towards incumbent governments and thus influence electoral outcomes.
Emily Mahoney is a senior Biochemistry and Cognitive & Behavioral Neuroscience double major with a minor in psychology from Scranton, Pennsylvania. She performs biochemistry research in the lab of Dr. Jennifer Palenchar, working on the characterization of essential enzymes in the trypanosome parasite. Emily has previously worked as a tutor for The Learners’ Studio and is currently a TA for General Chemistry I Lab. She is very involved in Phi Sigma Pi, the National Honors Fraternity on campus, and enjoys working out and playing sports. In her thesis, she is discussing the ethical arguments for and against reproductive genetic engineering for human enhancement. She will analyze genetic engineering techniques and then present the ethical implications of using this technology to select and design children. Ultimately, Emily intends to pursue her Ph.D. in Neuroscience or Clinical Psychology.
Erica Mallon is a Biochemistry major with Spanish and Medical Humanities minors from Madison, Connecticut. On campus, she is involved with the Service Learning Community, the Villanova Band, and the Villanova Jazz Band. She has been working in Dr. Kraut’s research lab since her junior year, where she studies shuttle proteins that interact with the proteasome to mediate protein degradation. In her thesis, Erica specifically examines how the shuttle protein Dsk2 affects the proteasome’s unfolding ability, or its efficiency at unfolding a substrate, and separately, how Dsk2 interacts with polyubiquitinated substrates to reciprocally induce sedimentation. After graduation, Erica will serve with AmeriCorps for a year and then hopes to attend dental school. In her free time, she enjoys reading and baking.
Official Development Assistance Effectiveness in Rwanda and Burundi, 1990-2020

Audrey McCleary

Major: Political Science
Tutor: Dr. Olukunle Owolabi
Reader: Prof. Shigehiro Suzuki
Alumni Mentor: Alyssa Suhm ’15, MSc

Audrey is a Political Science major with minors in Humanities, Public Administration, and Peace & Justice, from Virginia. She is also enrolled in the 5-year MA program for Political Science, and will be finishing this degree in December. At Villanova, she serves as the senior co-executive chair for Relay for Life, and works as an Office Assistant for the Honors Program. This thesis focuses on the effectiveness of foreign aid programs in Rwanda and Burundi throughout the period 1990-2020. Foreign aid, or Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been a part of the global landscape for decades. However, a common question involves how effective these programs are in achieving their goals, which often surround improving developmental goals and indicators such as women’s empowerment, democracy, life expectancy, and economic globalization. Audrey’s research looks to investigate specific foreign aid programs in Rwanda and Burundi to determine impacts on economic, political, and human development indicators to evaluate effectiveness. This topic is continually relevant as ODA remains a massive industry in the global arena and therefore programs should be evaluated and modified to be the most effective and impactful.
Art as Education: Promoting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

Hannah Medsker

**Major:** Neuroscience and Humanities
**Tutor:** Dr. Ruth McDermott-Levy
**Reader:** Dr. Michael Tomko

Hannah Medsker is a senior Neuroscience and Humanities double-major minoring in Global Health and Psychology. She grew up in Boston and now lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. For her thesis, Hannah is researching the effectiveness of public art as an educational tool, emphasizing the neuroscientific perspective. She is also collaborating with other student artists to create on-campus art installations that raise awareness for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Next year, Hannah will be obtaining a Master of Science in Global Health. She hopes to unite her passions for science and social justice by mitigating social determinants of health in developing countries.
Grace Metzger

**Major:** Humanities & Communication  
**Tutor:** Dr. Anna Moreland  
**Reader:** Dr. Helena Tomko  
**Alumni Mentor:** Megan Hopkins '15, MA

Grace is a proud Humanities and Communication double-major from Media, PA. At Villanova, Grace has spent most of her days sipping iced green tea in random corners of campus and most of her nights with Villanova Student Theatre. Above all else, her thesis serves as a love letter to the Humanities department, the place where she realized that the good life is one full of vulnerability. In her thesis, Grace will explore virtue ethics in order to argue that we as human persons should reclaim dependence as a key part of our individual and collective flourishing.
Kristella Muvunankiko

Major: Philosophy
Tutor: Dr. John Carvalho
Reader: Dr. Allyson Levin

Kristella is a Philosophy major and Business minor from Bentonville, Arkansas. With the rise of social media and how that influences pop culture, she has always been interested in the evolution of how television shows, music, and movies have changed over time and wanted to find a way to tie it to her love for philosophy. Television shows have been a major part of American culture and the introduction of teen shows has allowed for young stars to have career-defining roles that remain forever. Her thesis was inspired by the relevance teen shows have on our adolescence and wanted to examine the teen shows that have shaped those growing up in the 21st century. Through the focus on 21st-century teen television shows, it centers on two teen shows that defined the 2000s & 2010s, The OC & Pretty Little Liars, and hopes to examine the possible differences between the two decades and how they portray teenagers. These two shows tie into Aristotle's Poetics & Nicomachean Ethics with the definition of a tragedy that teen shows use today and the emphasis on friendship. Both shows defined their decade in different ways, primarily with how they handle grief in the show & the different friendship dynamics in regards to gender.
Julianna Nails is a senior Psychology major with minors in Counseling and Philosophy from Yardley, Pennsylvania. She has pursued her interest in the mental health field through work with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Pyramid Healthcare, Inc. as well as research with the University of Michigan on the origins of mindfulness. At Villanova, Julianna has been a member of Dr. Kurtz’ Psychological Assessment research lab for two years. This past March, she traveled with the lab to Chicago, where she gave a poster presentation on her thesis at the 2022 Society for Personality Assessment Convention. In her thesis, Julianna investigates the claim that college students are experiencing more mental health problems today than they were 30 years ago. By painting an accurate picture of the mental health condition of college students today, she hopes her thesis will highlight the importance for college campuses to implement ample resources for their students. Outside of her field of study, Julianna has enjoyed being a RUIBAL group leader and volunteer as well as a member of Alpha Gamma Delta.
Examining the impact of the COG complex on innate immunity in C. elegans

Morgan Palumbo

**Major:** Biology  
**Tutor:** Dr. Matthew Youngman

Morgan Palumbo is from Roseland, New Jersey. She is pursuing majors in Biology and Honors along with a minor in Spanish. She joined Dr. Youngman’s research lab during her junior year due to her interest in Cell Biology, specifically the topic of aging. The work of Dr. Youngman’s research lab focuses primarily on identifying specific genes that hold a significant role throughout the aging process and those that help organisms combat stress as they age. Over the past year, they have focused primarily on the Golgi apparatus and how its respective genes impact aging. Morgan's project for her Senior Thesis will particularly investigate the role of the COG complex in the Golgi apparatus, which is responsible for retrograde transport and protein glycosylation, and how its genes impact survival in C. elegans. Outside of the classroom or lab, Morgan enjoys reading, traveling and cooking. She also enjoys indoor cycling classes and spending time with family and friends. Ultimately, she plans on attending medical school to explore her passion for medicine to the fullest potential. She is interested in public and global health and hopes to explore those areas in the future in her medical education and career.
Olivia is an economics and humanities double major and sustainability minor from Boulder, Colorado. On campus, Olivia is a member of Phi Sigma Pi, serves as an ambassador for the McNulty Institute for Women’s Leadership, and is heavily involved in the Honors Program. While previous econometric research experience explores the quantitative relationship between gender and leadership, her honors thesis is a humanities-based exploration of the relationship between women and work. In her thesis, Olivia is exploring the shifting relationship between economic and domestic work in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as women have left the workforce in higher rates than men and faced higher burdens of invisible labor. Through surveys and interviews, she seeks to explore how cultural identity impacts these burdens, and whether the importance of work and family time has shifted as a result, for better or for worse. After graduation, Olivia will be working in Philadelphia in sustainable business.
Kaitlyn Quijano

Major: Cognitive & Behavioral Neuroscience
Tutor: Dr. Rory Kramer
Reader: Dr. Carol Anthony

Kaitlyn is a senior CBN major with minors in Psychology and Peace & Justice from New York. As a Filipina-American, Kaitlyn’s thesis focuses on the Filipino-American experience and explores Filipino ethnic and racial identity. She was inspired by her own upbringing in a Filipino family and her struggle with her own identity. She hopes that her thesis can bring to light the unique experiences of Filipino Americans and other Asian groups that may be invisible within the larger Asian American panethnic coalition. After graduation, Kaitlyn plans to take a gap year doing clinical research and hopes to attend medical school to become a pediatrician.
Protecting the Hands that Feed Us: The Environmental Justice of Pesticide Regulation

Erin Rodriguez

**Major:** Political Science  
**Tutor:** Prof. Marsha Tonkovich  
**Reader:** Prof. John Armstead

Erin Rodriguez is a senior majoring in Political Science and History and minoring in Sustainability Studies from Miami, Florida. Throughout her four years at Villanova, she has worked at the Villanova Theatre Costume Shop, now holding the position of Head Wardrobe Manager. Erin’s research interests lie in the intersection between environmental policy and community needs. In her thesis, Erin will be delving the contemporary dynamics between policy and the needs of farmworkers. Building off the scholarship of environmental justice, her research explores how environmental and agricultural policy disproportionately burden farmworkers and how pesticide regulation can better address environmental inequality.
Christopher Saladino is pursuing a bachelor's of science in honors. He is a double major in Biology and Humanities, has minors in Spanish and Medical Humanities, and a concentration in ethics and healthcare. He grew up in Tenafly, NJ. He has been a member of Dr. Matthew Youngman's lab since junior year. The objectives of this lab are to discover pathways to healthier aging using the model organism C. Elegans. Aging is characterized by a progressive dysfunction and decline brought about by a collapse of proteostasis and a decline in proteome integrity. Rme-8 is a gene involved in regulating life span and Chris’ thesis will focus on understanding the role of this particular gene in the innate immunity of C. Elegans during the aging process. In addition to performing research, Chris volunteers as an EMT and with Community Outreach of Villanova. After graduation, he plans on pursuing medical school in order to become a physician.
Therapy in Session and Beyond: A Review of Multicultural Counseling and Social Justice Literature

Dylan Sawyer

Major: Psychology
Tutor: Dr. Terence Yee
Reader: Dr. Krista Malott

Dylan Sawyer is a Senior pursuing a B.A. in Psychology with minors in Counseling and Communication from Schenectady, New York. His thesis reviews literature surrounding topics of multicultural counseling as well as the role social justice plays in the counseling profession. This research helps to synthesize much of the existing discussions on how counselors can better serve clients with identities and backgrounds different from their own, with a special focus on marginalized identities. He hopes to use this knowledge to guide him during his year of volunteer work in Ashland, Montana which he will embark on before he pursues a Master’s in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.
“Not for the world would I advise you”: Examining confidante relationships and power dynamics in Jane Austen’s novels using the lens of Carl Rogers’ person-centered approach

Hannah Simon

**Major:** Psychology  
**Tutor:** Dr. Elizabeth Pantesco  
**Reader:** Kimberly Hidore, MS

Hannah Simon is a senior Psychology major and Counseling and Italian double minor from Downers Grove, Illinois. Hannah spends much of her free time reading, and especially loves classic literature. She decided to use the thesis as an opportunity to explore both her passion for literature and her academic interest in clinical mental health counseling. Her thesis is an interdisciplinary project discussing the connections between the “confidante” relationships that appear in Jane Austen’s novels and the therapeutic relationship between counselor and client. Hannah will use the lens of Carl Rogers’ person-centered approach to psychotherapy to examine various examples of confidante relationships in Austen’s works, and investigate how a comparison between these two historical entities can give us insights into the role of advice-giving in modern mental health disciplines.
Disappearing Borders: Protecting Global Climate Refugees on a Regional Scale

Sydney Stewart

Major: Political Science; Spanish
Tutor: Dr. Ryan Weldzius
Reader: Prof. Shigehiro Suzuki

Sydney Stewart is a Senior Political Science and Spanish double major from Evergreen, Colorado. Sydney is so grateful for her incredible time in the Honors Program and the positive impact it has had on her Villanova story, from the first days in Interdisc to the thesis process this year. Sydney is exploring the lack of international protections for individuals displaced by climate-induced disasters and the ways in which specific global powers are responding with their own forms of protection. This thesis has given her the chance to combine two of her passions—migration and environmental politics—into a unique exploration. Sydney hopes that by highlighting recent progress and setbacks in climate refugee protections, we may begin to envision a cooperative and positive path forward. Sydney would like to thank everyone who has helped her throughout this process, especially her tutor, reader, and the Honors staff!
Bridget Sullivan, from Villanova’s class of 2022, is studying Humanities and Psychology. As a young aspiring artist and lover of Villanova’s Humanities department, she knew she wanted to mesh the wisdom she gained over the years from her humanities classes and from her own creative experiences. Growing up, she was surrounded by creatives. Bridget inherited their passions and started to nurture her own love of art at an early age. One of the greatest questions that arose from her own experiences, as well as from her artistic family and friends, was whether the artist must be tortured. In Bridget’s thesis she dissects this question by searching within the burdens and gifts of the artist that both imprison and set them free.
Julia’s thesis explores how post 9/11 terrorism has impacted how U.S. Presidents use their war powers, as established in the Constitution. The thesis contextualizes the Framers’ intent in regards to dividing war powers and responsibilities between the executive and legislative branches. Comparing the actions of President George W. Bush and President Barak Obama during the War on Terror to those of President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War and President Franklin D. Roosevelt during World War II, the thesis aims to evaluate how the executive’s power has evolved during wartime.
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NOTE: MANY OF OUR AMAZING SCIENCE STUDENTS ARE PRESENTING AT THE BIOLOGY SENIOR THESIS COLLOQUIUM ON APRIL 29, 2022
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