VILLANOVA HONORS PROGRAM

SENIOR THESIS RESEARCH CONFERENCE

DECEMBER 2, 2022
GAREY HALL
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Maddie Cerulli  
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Tommy DeStefanis  
Dayna Deakin  
Nick Downing  
Alexander Fezza  
Fiona Gavin  
Olivia Gordon  
Mia Hamel  
Becca Jacobson  
Colin Lilly  
Grace Lundell  
Katherine Mayer  
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Amanda Mulligan  
Eleanor Noone  
Hillary O’Neill  
Elise Pelletier  
Juliana Perri  
Avelina Petri  
Patrick Riss  
Katie Reed  
Alla Spano  
Noah Swan  
Stephen Terry  
Morgan Torre  
Lexi Tramontano  
Nina Williams  
Liam Woods
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If you are interested in attending a student's presentation over Zoom, please contact them individually by email to receive that link.
Immigration Restriction and Reform: The Rise of Manhattan's Chinatown

JULIA BOETTIGHEIMER

Majors: History, Political Science
Tutor: Dr. Eugene McCarraher
Reader: Dr. Ken Sun

Julia Boettigheimer is a History and Political Science double major with a minor in Peace & Justice from Westchester, NY. From a young age, Julia was fascinated by U.S. History, the American political system, and the inextricable tie between the two. Growing up just outside of NYC as a Chinese-American adoptee, Manhattan’s Chinatown has always been somewhere that felt like a connection to her heritage. For her thesis, Julia is exploring the rise of the Manhattan Chinatown, home to the highest concentration of people in the Western Hemisphere and one of the oldest Chinese ethnic enclaves. Specifically, she’s interested to see how changing immigration laws, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Immigration Act of 1924, and the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, have all contributed to the changing landscape of the neighborhood. After graduation, Julia hopes to work in the social justice realm for a few years before going back to school, either to pursue a graduate degree in one of her majors, or attend law school.
An Examination of the Effectiveness of the Plug-In Electric Drive Vehicle Credit

DOTTIE CALLARD

Major: Political Science
Tutor: Dr. John Armstead
Reader: Dr. Marsha Tonkovich
Alumni Mentor: Jennifer Silvi, MIA ('04)

Dottie Callard is a senior Political Science major with a minor in Economics from Cincinnati, Ohio. Between her classes at Villanova and internship on Capitol Hill this past summer, she has developed a strong interest in domestic environmental and energy policy, inspiring her senior thesis. In her thesis, she looks at the effectiveness of the Plug-In Electric Vehicle Credit, a tax credit given to qualified purchasers of electric and hybrid vehicles. Her evaluation involves consideration of both the economic and environmental impacts of the Plug-In Vehicle Credit in determining whether this credit is an effective tool for encouraging the transition to more renewable energy sources. After graduation, Dottie hopes to pursue a career related to public policy in Washington D.C.
Majors: Biochemistry, Spanish
Tutor: Dr. Benjamin Sachs

Jordan Case is a Biochemistry and Spanish double major from Minnesota. She conducts neuroscience research in the Sachs lab, studying the neurobiological mechanisms of mental illness using mouse models. Jordan additionally works with Nemours Children’s Health, studying neonatal brain injury that confers neurodevelopmental disability. Her interest in early-life adversity and its relationship to neurological development has inspired her thesis. After graduating from Villanova, Jordan plans to attend medical school and explore the intersection of disability ethics and medicine, within the subspecialities of pediatric neurology and neurodevelopmental disability.
MADELINE CERULLI

Majors: Political Science, Peace & Justice
Tutor: Professor Lance Kenney
Readers: Dr. Cera Murtagh, Dr. Christa Bialka

Maddie Cerulli is a senior from Holliston, Massachusetts. She is a double major in Political Science and Peace & Justice with a Spanish minor. On campus, she is involved in a number of organizations that reflect her passion for relationship-building and social change, including Best Buddies, Special Olympics, and the McNulty Institute for Women’s Leadership. Maddie is excited to be crafting a thesis that combines many of her academic, extracurricular, and personal interests by exploring how Disability Studies can expand upon and challenge traditional notions in international relations (IR). In particular, she will build upon existing feminist, queer and postcolonialist frameworks in an effort to diminish the gap in IR literature related to disability.
Majors: English, Humanities
Tutor: Dr. Michael Tomko

Cynthia Choo is a senior English and Humanities double major with a minor in Education from Fort Lee, New Jersey. During her time at Villanova, she has participated in the Korean Students Association as treasurer, vice president, and president, in the Intercultural Ambassador Program and Intergroup Relations (IGR) Program as an ambassador, and in the Writing Center as a tutor! She is also a student-affiliate research fellow for the ‘Steenth Street Project under the Anne Welsh McNulty Institute for Women’s Leadership. Upon graduating, she hopes to continue her studies in literature, and obtain her master’s degree and teaching certification for secondary education! As for her thesis, Cynthia is interested in the various contentions of the Canon Wars, and how this not only shaped our current perspective on the Western Canon, but also produced new, potential criteria for the “classic.” She will analyze different literature that meet these criteria and expand the notion of the Western Canon, then reflect on the teaching of canonical literature in high school English classes.
Tess Cogan is a Communication major with minors in Peace & Justice, Sociology, and Political Science from Fairfield, Connecticut. On campus, she is involved in multiple organizations, including serving as Director of Recruitment for NOVAdance, Mentor Coordinator for VUnited, mentor for the VUnited Scholars Program, and Recruitment Director for Alpha Phi Omega. Throughout her coursework, Tess has taken a variety of classes that have allowed her to research the experiences of women in various contexts, and her love for sports piqued her interest in researching more about the USA gymnastics sexual assault scandal. Her thesis has given her the chance to research more about sexual assault within large organizations, and to understand it within the context of a rhetorical analysis. She will study the ways in which the Rhetoric of Survivance can be applied within the context of the USA gymnastics scandal in order to better understand the way victims regained their strength and voice throughout the trial of Larry Nassar.
Michele Danigelis is a senior Political Science major with minors in Business and Criminology from San Mateo, California. She is involved in many community-oriented organizations on campus including Villanova Special Olympics. In her thesis, Michele is excited to explore the impact of social media on political mobilization through the lens of social movements. She is fascinated by the effect of the internet on political psychology and seeks to measure the extent to which online activism can produce meaningful social change. More specifically, she plans to examine how platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok influence action surrounding social protests through analysis of user engagement and voter behavior.
Inclusive Education in the Classroom: How Administrators and Teachers Can Lead

DAYNA DEAKIN

Majors: Communication, Spanish
Tutor: Dr. Evan Schares
Alumni Mentor: Oriana Sengos ('15)

Dayna Deakin is a Senior Communications and Spanish double major from Farmington, CT. She is the founder of The Bandana Project at Villanova as well as a teacher for Villanova's inclusive higher education program. Her interest in disability education research stems from her passion for advocacy in all spaces and the hope for more inclusive classrooms. After graduation, she plans to continue work in an educational space.
THOMAS DE STEFANIS

Majors: Biochemistry, Art History
Tutor: Dr. Peter Palenchar

Thomas DeStefanis is a senior at Villanova University majoring in Biochemistry and Art History, with a minor in Spanish Studies. He has been researching in the Palenchar lab since the beginning of his sophomore year, focusing on better understanding intrinsic and extrinsic variation in gene expression. He plans to pursue a PhD in Biochemistry after graduation, with particular interest in using gene therapy to treat human disease. His broader goal is to create affordable disease treatments and advocate for increased patient diversity in clinical research studies.
The End of Liberalism?

NICHOLAS DOWNING

Majors: Political Science, Humanities
Tutor: Dr. Michael Tomko
Reader: Dr. Daniel Mark

Nick Downing is a senior Political Science and Humanities double major with minors in Business and Spanish from Malvern, PA. He sees this Senior Thesis as the culmination of many of the economic, political, and cultural questions that he has been reflecting upon throughout his time here at Villanova. His political theory-oriented thesis covers humanity’s arrival at our current liberal system, which along with its successes has brought with it many challenges that need addressing. After graduation, he hopes to live and work abroad before potentially attending law school back here in the States.
Should We “Let People Enjoy Things”?: An Examination of Pleasure and Popular Appeal as Bases for Value Judgments

ALEXANDER FEZZA

Major: Humanities
Tutor: Dr. Paul Camacho
Reader: Dr. Eugene McCarraher

Alexander, or A.J., Fezza is a Humanities and Communication double major and Political Science minor from Manalapan, New Jersey. At Villanova, A.J. is Editor of the Opinion Section of The Villanovan and spends much of the rest of his time making films with friends in Villanova Television and practicing martial arts in Club Taekwondo. He has a wide variety of academic and extracurricular interests, but all are undergirded by the conviction that goodness, beauty and truth really do exist and can be sought for on Earth through human endeavor, a view that he developed while taking transformative Honors and Humanities courses. In his thesis, A.J. will draw upon great works of philosophy, theology, literature, and artistic criticism to distinguish between righteous and unrighteous judgment and evaluate the extent to which the value of things goes beyond merely our enjoyment of them.
Beyond the Barriers: Memoirs of Migration

FIONA GAVIN

Majors: English, Spanish
Tutor: Dr. Michael Dowdy
Reader: Prof. Lance Kenney

Fiona Gavin is a senior double majoring in English and Spanish with minors in Latin American Studies and Business from Mahwah, New Jersey. On campus, Fiona is very passionate about the Special Olympics and the mission of inclusion. She has greatly enjoyed her time in the Villanova Honors Program and was a member of the Good, True, Beautiful cohort, in addition to being a peer mentor. For her thesis, Fiona is using memoirs written by migrants to explore the experiences and barriers faced by individuals who migrate to the United States. She appreciates the human perspective and the emotions that are conveyed by memoirs, which she believes is an important addition to the modern understanding of the immigration experience. Her interest in language politics was enhanced during her semester abroad in Sevilla, Spain, where she was completely immersed in the Spanish language. Fiona plans to unite her interests in advocacy, language, and literature as she completes her thesis.
Women in Sports Media: Improving Equity Through Audience Engagement

OLIVIA GORDON

Majors: Communication, History
Tutor: Dr. Thomas Ksiazek
Reader: Dr. Allyson Levin
Alumni Mentor: Chris DiLullo ('22)

Olivia Gordon is a senior Communication and History double major with a specialization in media production from Pleasantville, NY. Throughout her time at Villanova, Olivia has been heavily involved with Special Olympics, serving on the Media and Publicity committee as well as being a mentor in VUnited. She also is a member of the Women’s Club Ice Hockey team. Her interest in sports media has inspired her to explore this in her thesis, and after graduation Olivia hopes to work in the sports media industry.
American Health Inequity and its Pandemic Era Implications

MIA HAMEL

Major: Psychology
Tutor: Dr. Ruth McDermott-Levy

Mia Hamel is a senior Psychology major with Global Health and Honors Medical Humanities minors from Ridgewood, New Jersey. She has always been passionate about healthcare, but during her time at Villanova her interests shifted from direct patient care to public health. Frustrated with the American healthcare system and disparities in healthcare access and outcomes, her thesis combines her studies in the Medical Humanities cohort and the Global Health minor and was inspired by her passion for equitable healthcare. She seeks to analyze the historical factors that contributed to the current health landscape, where American health disparities stand today, and the need to address this issue in the context of social justice. The exacerbation of health disparities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic will serve as the focal point of her thesis.
Becca Jacobson is a Senior 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 Special Education. She is a part of Dr. Christa Bialka’s research team that conducts research on various topics concerning education and disability. Her thesis uses original research to examine the factors that affect teachers' decision to lead disability-related discussions with their students in 6-12 English classrooms. She investigated these factors using qualitative methodology in the form of interviews with thirteen in-service 6-12 English teachers in the summer of 2022 with funds provided by the Villanova Undergraduate Research Fellowship (VURF) Program. The purpose of this research is to determine how to better support teachers in leading disability-related discussions with their students by identifying the factors that make teachers more comfortable talking about disability as a social identity.
One Good Teacher Can Change Your Life: Examining the Distributional Effects of Teacher Quality on Student Achievement

COLIN LILLY

Major: Economics  
Tutor: Dr. Laura Meinzen-Dick  
Reader: Dr. Cheryl Carleton

Colin Lilly is an Economics major with minors in Business and Political Science from Oxford, Pennsylvania. Coming from a family of educators, he has long-since believed in the transformative power of great teachers. Through his participation in the Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE) cohort within Honors and semester abroad in Cambridge, U.K., Colin has developed a deep interest in how our institutions influence economic outcomes and, ultimately, human flourishing. Blending his interests in economics and education, Colin’s thesis examines how teacher quality, as measured by the value-added approach, impacts student achievement and life outcomes. Outside of the classroom, Colin enjoys travelling with friends, listening to music, and personal fitness. After graduation, he plans on moving to New York to begin work as a management consultant.
Grace Lundell is a Political Science and French/Francophone Studies double major from Washington, DC. Her thesis delves into variation in Member State trust in the European Union, with a specific focus on if armed conflict in Europe or by European states impacts trust. She was inspired to study this topic following the significant increase in trust in, and support for, the EU following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. On campus, Grace is Co-President of the Honors Events Board and Co-President of French Club. She is also an executive board member for the Honors Peer Mentor Program and an Honors Office Assistant. Grace plans to go to graduate school next year to get her master’s in international relations.
KATHERINE MAYER

Majors: Political Science, Economics
Tutor: Dr. Michael Moreland
Alumni Mentor: Marguerite Walsh, JD ('76)

Katherine Mayer is a political science and economics double major from Middletown, Maryland. During her time in the Honors Program, she has studied in the Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE) cohort and served as a peer mentor. After graduation, she plans to attend law school. Katherine’s thesis is inspired by this goal, and examines the historical evolution of substantive due process in American jurisprudence.
Body, Soul, and Medicine

BRONWYN MOGCK

Major: Biology, Humanities
Tutor: Dr. Helena Tomko
Reader: Dr. Angela DiBenedetto
Alumni Mentor: Katya Sajovec ('21)

Bronwyn Mogck is a Biology and Humanities double major from Simsbury, Connecticut. She served as a volunteer, leader, and eventually chair of the RUIBAL program, and now continues to tutor at North Light Community Center as a COV leader. Bronwyn also conducts research on campus, tutors in genetics, and leads trips with the Outdoors Club. She is excited to be using her senior thesis as a way to explore how her two majors inform one another as she thinks through her future goals.

AMANDA MULLIGAN

Major: Political Science
Tutor: Prof. Frank Pryor
Alumni Mentor: Josh Procario-Foley, MeD ('18)

Amanda Mulligan is a senior Political Science Major from Park Ridge, New Jersey. She is passionate about criminal justice and the process of policy making, and she plans to go to law school after graduation. In her thesis, Amanda analyzes the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (1994 Crime Bill) and examines the social, political, and economic environment that influenced its creation. Her research focuses on political rhetoric, the public perception of crime, and how the criminal justice policy-making process can be improved today.
The Relationship Between Democracy and Free Speech: An Examination of the Media in France

ELEANOR NOONE

Majors: Communication, French
Tutor: Dr. Etienne Achille
Reader: Dr. Allyson Levin

Eleanor Noone is a senior double majoring in Communication and French. She is originally from Bridgeport, West Virginia. On campus, she is the Vice President: Panhellenic of Delta Gamma, a former representative on the Panhellenic Judicial Board, and a member of Pi Delta Phi among other organizations. In Honors, she was a member of the Interdisciplinary cohort and served as a peer mentor. The inspiration for her thesis came from her interests in politics and media, as well as wanting to incorporate both of her majors.
Healing the Healers: The Mental Health Impacts on First Responders and Developing Effective Treatment Programs

HILLARY O'NEILL

Major: Psychology  
Tutor: Dr. Mark Wilson  
Alumni Mentor: Kyle Haney, PhD ('11)

Hillary O’Neill is a senior Psychology major with minors in Sustainability and Peace and Justice from Norwalk, CT. She was a member of the Interdisciplinary Scholars cohort in the Honors Program which has remained a defining feature of her Villanova experience. Her interest in first responders for this thesis stems from her involvement with emergency medical services, beginning when she was 14 years old. At Villanova, she serves as the Training Lieutenant for Villanova Emergency Medical Service (VEMS). Through her involvement with EMS, she has noticed the lack of mental health research and resources available to first responders, as well as the stigma surrounding these issues. In her thesis, she will explore the mental health impacts of high acuity and critical incidents on first responders, as well as the effectiveness of programs used to treat these impacts. Through this research, she hopes to learn how EMS organizations can best support their personnel following these incidents.
"Don't Let My Kid Be Gay": A Preliminary Analysis of Counseling Methodologies on the Identity Development of Young Queer Individuals

ELISE PELLETIER

Majors: Psychology, Spanish
Tutor: Dr. Krista Malott
Reader: Dr. Evan Schares

Elise Pelletier is a Psychology and Spanish double major with minors in Cognitive Science and Counseling from Waterbury, Connecticut. Outside the classroom, Elise can be found playing Badminton in Alumni gym, singing and playing guitar with the Pastoral Musicians, and working at the Davis Center or the Dobbin mailroom. Elise is using this opportunity to explore their interest in counseling while also bringing light to a topic that they have had personal experience with. Their thesis looks at the effect of counseling on identity formation in queer adolescents. It explores the impact of the therapeutic relationship and counseling methodologies and analyzes their impact on identity development of young queer individuals. They are interested in researching this topic as they want to go into the counseling field post-graduation and are enjoying the opportunity to do more in depth research on counseling after scratching the surface with introductory courses. They hope their thesis can raise awareness and be an educational resource for those in the counseling field.
It’s the End of the World As We Know It: Gender-based Violence and Oppression In Contemporary Apocalyptic Literature

JULIANA PERRI

Major: English
Tutor: Dr. Heather Hicks
Reader: Dr. Melissa Hodges
Alumni Mentor: Steve Purcell ('17)

Juliana Perri is a senior English major with a Spanish minor from Rye, New York. While at Villanova, she has been a member of the English Student Advisory Council, a Teaching Assistant for American Sign Language, and a member of Alpha Phi Omega, the Villanova service fraternity. Juliana has always believed that language is a powerful tool used to form perspectives and create cultures. As such, her thesis will grapple with the gender roles established and conformed to within contemporary end-of-the-world narratives. The subsequent violence against and commodification of women exposes the underlying patriarchal values of society and the ultimate devolution of the human race in the face of chaos, crisis, and lawlessness. Juliana’s research may also uncover parallels between apocalyptic narratives and our own society in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.
Avelina Petri is a Cognitive and Behavioral Neuroscience major with a concentration in Medical Humanities and minors in Spanish, Psychology, and Peace & Justice. In addition to research, she maintains leadership positions within service organizations including Villanova’s Alpha Phi Omega, the Sophomore Service Learning Community, and Norristown’s Centro de Cultura, Arte, Trabajo y Educación where she teaches adult English classes. Avelina conducts research in the Sachs lab, studying the impact of stress on anxiety and depression in mouse models. Stress is generally accepted as a contributing factor to mental illness, and genetic perturbations to neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine are thought to influence the risk of psychopathology in part through the regulation of stress susceptibility. Through this project Avelina will analyze whether the genetic loss of the dopamine transporter will confer resilience to stress. Avelina seeks to explore behavioral research that will inform her future as a medical professional.
Never Let This [Be] Where It Ends: An Analysis of Institutional Violence in Fiction

KATIE REED

Majors: English, Communication
Tutor: Dr. Mary Mullen
Reader: Dr. Adrienne Perry

Katie Reed is a senior from Bellingham, MA majoring in English and Communication. She has always found that literature has a great power to shape the way we see the world, so her thesis seeks to analyze what contemporary fiction can tell us about the violence that permeates our everyday lives. In particular, she will be looking at institutional (structural) violence, with her institutions of interest being academic spaces. She will be utilizing two novels as case studies: Kazuo Ishiguro’s Never Let Me Go, which explores the more subtle, invisible forms of violence, and Marieke Nijkamp’s This Is Where It Ends, which explores more overt forms of violence, such as gun violence. Outside of the classroom, Katie is the news columnist for The Villanovan, a Lorenzini Leadership Ambassador for the Anne Welsh McNulty Institute for Women’s Leadership, and an Office Assistant in the Honors Program.
Patrick Riss is a Philosophy major with minors in both Physics and Chinese from Chester, NJ. Through all his time at Villanova, Patrick has wanted to maintain a focus on both the sciences and the humanities—hence his choice to study both Philosophy and Physics. His thesis topic is the culmination of that choice as he combines his understanding of the two fields into a paper on the Philosophy of Quantum Physics. In particular, Patrick is exploring some of the more radical and revolutionary portions of the science alongside the metaphysical interpretations that come with it. Outside of the classroom he is the president of our Mock Trial Club, as well as the captain for the Ethics Debate Team. Post-grad he plans on attending law school, perhaps with a focus towards international law.
Alexandra Spano is a Psychology major and Cognitive Science minor from Yonkers, NY. During her college career, she has been a member of the Villanova Cheerleading team and the treasurer of Alpha Phi Omega. She participates in Dr. Markey’s research lab, coding 911 calls to determine if it is possible to detect cues of deception shown by individuals making missing persons reports. She worked as a judicial intern for Judge Murphy at the Westchester County Courthouse which sparked her interest in the controversy of gun reform and confirmed her plans to pursue a legal career. Alexandra’s thesis will discuss the prevalence of misleading information and the need to preserve context within the gun reform debate to finally make progress after a period of stagnation.
A Methodological Study of Economic Uncertainty

NOAH SWAN

Major: Mathematics
Tutor: Dr. Eugene McCarraher
Reader: Dr. John McCombie
Alumni Mentor: Matthew Fagerstrom, MA, MsC ('19)

Noah Swan is a senior Mathematics major with minors in Statistics, French, and Economics. Noah is from Nashville, TN. He is on the executive board of the Sports Analytics Club and formerly the Business in Entertainment Society. He became interested in pursuing an economic thesis while studying abroad at the University of Cambridge last fall. He hopes to eventually pursue a graduate degree in economics.
A History of History Textbooks: How Native Americans have been portrayed in the 20th Century

STEPHEN TERRY

Majors: History, Humanities
Tutor: Dr. Gina Talley

Stephen Terry is a history and humanities major from Indianapolis, Indiana. On campus, Stephen is involved with Special Olympics, VUnited, and loves to play intramural sports. While many categorize history textbooks as boring, Stephen enjoys history textbooks, occasionally reading them in his spare time. In his thesis, Stephen hopes to explore how the history of marginalized groups, specifically Native Americans, are either omitted or underrepresented in these textbooks. Through analyzing primary sources of textbooks in different time periods, Stephen will analyze the progress, or lack of progress, made in creating a more accurate and nondiscriminatory approach to American history. Given Stephen’s interest in teaching history post graduation, this thesis will help ground him with the knowledge to be better aware of systemic issues within the education system.
Empowerment through Embodiment: Sexual Violence and Trauma-Informed Yoga

MORGAN TORRE

Majors: Peace & Justice, Gender & Women's Studies
Tutor: Dr. Martina Ferrari
Readers: Kimberly Hidore, M.S., Dr. Amy Way

Morgan Torre is a Peace & Justice and Gender & Women's Studies double major with minors in Philosophy, Communication, and Political Science from Long Island, New York. She has a strong passion for social justice as evidenced by her work with Special Olympics, Inclusion Week, the McNulty Institute for Women's Leadership, Last Letter Films, and as a Sr. Thea Bowman Student Fellow in Ethics. In her spare time, you can find her reading, enjoying music, or doing yoga. Morgan is excited to bridge her passion for social justice with the peace of her hobbies as she explores the philosophical connections between trauma-informed yoga and survivors of sexual violence.
How to Improve Racial Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System

LEXI TRAMONTANO

Major: Communication
Tutor: Dr. Evan Schares
Reader: Dr. Allison Payne

Lexi Tramontano grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut. At Villanova, she is majoring in communication and minoring in music and criminology. Most of her time on campus outside of academics, is spent with her friends or working on the executive board of her sorority. Lexi has been interested in criminal justice work since she visited the Equal Justice Initiative in high school and learned about the work they were doing relating to wrongful convictions and children in adult prisons and on death row. That visit is what motivated her to pursue more research on the juvenile justice system for this project.
Nina Williams is a Political Science & Humanities double major and Spanish minor from Park City, Utah. During her time at Villanova, she has pursued interdisciplinary coursework that places policy in conversation with human flourishing. In her thesis, she continues to explore the normative dimensions of policy by examining what raw political calculations leave out in the context of immigration admissions decisions in rich, liberal democracies. Drawing from philosophical and theological frameworks, Nina hopes to present a compelling account of the obligations both states and individuals owe to asylum seekers, and the ways in which this recognition can influence immigration reform. This scrutiny is rooted in her previous work with the undocumented population in Utah, Hispanic heritage, and ultimate career path in immigration law. On campus, Nina has served as the President of the Villanova College Democrats and completed internships with the ACLU and other nonprofits. After graduation, she aims to teach English abroad before ultimately attending law school.
A native of Milford, Connecticut, Liam Woods started at Villanova in the Fall of 2019. He’s been interested in politics and political thinking for a long time, much to the chagrin of friends, classmates, and Thanksgiving dinner tables for years. Originally planning on being a double major in Political Science and Economics, he instead discovered that Economics was not quite what he expected, falling in love with Philosophy instead, selecting this as his second major. He is also an avid fan of Curling, serving as the Club Treasurer for the Villanova University Curling Club, placing in 4th with his teammates at College Curling Nationals 2022 in the sunny city of Fargo, North Dakota. After graduation, he plans to pursue a PhD in Philosophy, with a specialization in Continental Philosophy, Critical Theory, or Political Philosophy. He has a twin sister named Rory, currently attending Hamilton College, 2 parents (Melanie and Robert) who love him, even when he refuses to get a haircut, and a dog named Holly whom he misses most of all.