SCHOLARS’ DAY
A CELEBRATION OF STUDENT CREATIVITY AND SCHOLARSHIP

Wednesday, April 26, 2017
3 – 5:45 p.m. in Friends Hall (SC-219)

Ramapo College’s fifth annual “Scholars’ Day: A Celebration of Student Creativity and Scholarship” is an opportunity for the entire community to celebrate the creative and scholarly achievements of our students. Sponsored by the Office of the Provost, Scholars’ Day showcases some of the finest faculty mentored student creativity and scholarly activities undertaken in 2016-2017. The event includes both poster and oral presentations.

There are 37 posters, with presentations being made by students from all five of the College’s schools. Twenty-two majors are represented, with project topics ranging from “Environmental Assessment of the Cumulative Effects of Development within the Ramapo River Watershed” and “Buzzfeed's Tasty: The Best Virtual Cookbook” to “The Palestinian Question: Paving the Road to Sovereignty” and “Sustainable Waste Management in Bangalore, India: A Case Study of Environmental Support Group’s Interventions.” This is a juried event and each poster was recommended by the convening group of the major or minor associated with the project. In addition, the Dean of each school selected one poster to be given as both a poster and an oral presentation.

Scholars’ Day is an annual event held near the end of each spring semester. More information can be found at:

www.ramapo.edu/scholarsday/

Scholars’ Day Committee
Carter Jones Meyer, Chair (SSHGS)
Sarah Stackhouse (CA)
Seonmi Kim (SSHS)
Yongbum Kim (ASB)
Joost Monen (TAS)

Provost
Beth Barnett
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ORAL PRESENTATIONS | 4 - 5:15 P.M.

ANISFIELD SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
Do Robert Horry and His Seven Rings have a Shot at the Hall of Fame? A Predictive Model of Entry into the Basketball Hall of Fame
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SALAMENO SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND GLOBAL STUDIES
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SCHOOL OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS
“My, What A Guy!” An Analysis of Evolving Gender Representations of Male Disney Villains
*Jenny Hubert (David Oh)*

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMAN SERVICES
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SCHOOL OF THEORETICAL AND APPLIED SCIENCE
Utilizing the Nematode, C. elegans, to Study Basic Mechanisms Underlying Cell Division
*Brianna Romer (Joost Monen)*

² Faculty supervisors are in parentheses.
ABSTRACT
By the 1960s and 1970s, the Democratic Party could not successfully appease its countless voting blocs; as a result, the New Deal coalition established in the 1930s began to fracture. White southern segregationists left the party, for example, after Democrats embraced civil rights legislation. Meanwhile, the emergence of the New Left and various protest movements increased concerns among white working-class Americans about their economic and social status in a diversifying society. This paper will demonstrate how the Republican Party embraced conservatism as a means to quell and legitimize these concerns, and how this embrace contributed to secular party realignment.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Robert W. Piper  
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Susan Hangen  
MAJOR: International Studies  
SCHOOL: Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies

PROJECT TITLE  
Exploring the Influential Power of Global Organizations over Governments through the Case Study of BRT in Dakar, Senegal

ABSTRACT  
This paper discusses the global and local factors involved in implementing changes in the transit sector in Dakar, Senegal. In an increasingly globalized world, more and more international organizations are seeking to exert pressure on national, state, and municipal governments in order to achieve policy goals that satisfy the organization. These groups exert power through economic pressure, social pressure, and lobbying. In the metropolitan city of Dakar, Senegal, the current system of public and private transportation, including popular but dangerous cars rapides, is at a breaking point. It is dirty, chaotic, and crumbling. The city and national governments are seeking a way to radically transform the transit sector. Due to the (extraordinary) measures taken by outside collectives like the World Bank and the Union Internationale des Transports Publics, the governments landed on a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system plan that would concurrently scrap all cars rapides. These measures included a hefty loan from various global financial institutions, shaming the country into meeting its goals set forth in the Paris Climate Agreement, and publishing research that shows the potential for increased economic growth as a result of adopting the BRT. The city is now actively pursuing this transit option, despite some obvious negative consequences for the poor and public opinion that indicates that most do not want to get rid of cars rapides. The willingness of the Dakar government to proceed with this new plan over the objections of the public demonstrates the power of global organizations to influence sovereign governments.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Stephanie A. Trefcer
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Ruma Sen
MAJOR: Communication Arts
SCHOOL: School of Contemporary Arts

PROJECT TITLE
From the Roots Up: A Look into Media’s Global Representation of Environmental Sustainability

ABSTRACT
Sustainable development is an overused phrase when it comes to acknowledging the different types of global issues (poverty, environmental degradation, etc.). According to the United Nations Development Program, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity” (UNDP, 2016). Another phrase we hear quite frequently is “global warming,” whether it is from politicians during presidential debates, or from the news corporations and other forms of media.

Through field research and analysis of content from major mainstream media versus alternative media sources, this paper documents some of the ways in which media corporations socially construct the language and use of urgency in regard to covering the issue of global sustainability, and how this language influences their overall coverage. At the same time, this paper presents global/local perspectives on related issues, and first-hand knowledge of the complex relations between the global and the local as experienced through fieldwork in sustainable development.
ABSTRACT
The goal of my paper is to analyze how visual gender representations of the male Disney villain have changed from the 1990s to the 2010s. This research has found that the identification of the villain is less often determined by his appearance in modern films; yet, transgressive gender performance has remained the same from the 1990s to the 2010s. Furthermore, I argue that male Disney villains’ divergence from gender norms in action reward the idealized masculinity of the male hero.

This topic is of social importance because Americans are approaching an age where living outside the gender norms is becoming more commonly accepted. It is especially important for the future generation of children to grow up accepting all gender representations of men and women and recognizing that appearance and non-conforming performance do not determine one’s goodness.

A rhetorical textual analysis was used to study the representations of villainy in Pocahontas, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Frozen, and Big Hero 6. These four films were intentionally selected because they meet the criteria of including both gender performance and hegemonic masculinity. Two main themes were found. First, hegemonic masculinity thrives through gender performance, which includes the portrayal of strength and subordination of men and women. Over time, gender performance has remained the same in its depiction. A second theme found in my research was that gender transgressive appearance of the male villain reinforces gender norms portrayed by the male hero. From the 1990s to the 2010s, however, the identification of the villain is less often determined by his appearance. In conclusion, analysis of these Disney films from the past to the present has shown that the world has not become as accepting of those that do not follow gender binaries in performance as originally thought.
PROJECT TITLE
The Growing Net Pension Liability: The Cases of New Jersey, Illinois, and Rhode Island

ABSTRACT
This paper examines the net unfunded pension liability that is threatening the fiscal stability of state and federal government budgets. The paper begins by providing a framework of pension plans across the United States. Three states are then used to dissect the factors that resulted in underfunded pension plans and examine how each state is attempting to mitigate the fiscal stress of the pension plans on the state budget. Converging themes in the proposals to mitigate the growth of the unfunded pension liability include the elimination of cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs), switching of employees to a hybrid pension plan resembling a mix of both the defined benefit and defined contribution plan, and increasing the age of retirement.
PROJECT TITLE
Determining the Effects of Salt Stress on Switchgrass (Panicum virgatum) Growth in Tissue Culture Media

ABSTRACT
Switchgrass (Panicum virgatum) is a fast growing, relatively tolerant grass, best known for its use as a biofuel. There is a concern that growing biofuel species will take up land space that could be used to grow food crops. The goal of this experiment is to explore the limits of switchgrass growth and induce salt-tolerant lines so that it may be grown in non-agricultural land space.

The experiment tested the effects of various levels of sodium chloride on the germination rate of switchgrass in tissue culture media. The seeds were placed in a control medium with no NaCl, or media containing 68.4, 136.9, or 205.3 mM NaCl. 45 percent of seeds in the control media germinated, 17.5 percent of seeds in the 68.4 mM NaCl media germinated, 2.5 percent of seeds in the 136.9 mM NaCl media germinated, and 0 percent of seeds in the 205.3 mM NaCl media germinated after 20 d. Germination is now being tested in a control media with no NaCl, 34 mM NaCl, 51 mM NaCl, and 68.4 mM NaCl.

Those that did germinate are being sub-cultured and kept growing until shoot and root samples can be taken for RNA extraction and analysis, which will show expression of genes related to salt tolerance. After gene analysis, the process of gene transformation can be done to create more tolerant switchgrass. Over time, some strains may be produced that will grow in land with high sodium chloride and/or in land that is drought prone.
ABSTRACT
Over the past decades, the indigenous population in Latin America has struggled to gain recognition and autonomy from states. As a result, states have continued to commit human rights violations against the indigenous community across Latin America. In the early 1980s, Latin American countries started to implement democratic institutions (Van Cott Lee, 2). This ultimately redefined the role of the government and has impacted the indigenous population in these countries. This paper focuses on the Ecuadorian indigenous population and their experiences with globalization. Through studying the Sarayaku, Shaur, and networks in the country I found the domestic movements have been strategically efficient in using the “boomerang effect” in holding the Ecuadorian government accountable to international and Ecuadorian law. The Ecuadorian Indigenous population was able to take their domestic campaign globally by creating ties to international organizations that support indigenous peoples’ rights. In addition to making international ties, different communities within the Ecuadorian indigenous population collaborated and became successful in gaining political representation. In conclusion, I show that the domestic indigenous people’s movement must continue to place pressure on both its government and its partners globally in order to achieve their agenda nationally.
STUDENT PRESENTERS: Patrick A Suddeth, Kelsey Sirica, Andrew McConnell, Melanie Schuck, Benjamin Young, Cassandra Spano, Kevin Branagh, Pamela Gilligan, Sara Carson, Rebecca Sendewicz, Timothy Munzer, Julianne Bernstein, Peter Cerny, Dominick Zajac, Aleksie Mosca, Veronica LaBrie, Stephen Freund, Jaren Harrison, and Zachary O’Connor

FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Michael Edelstein

MAJOR: Environmental Studies

SCHOOL: School of Social Science and Human Services

PROJECT TITLE
Environmental Assessment of the Cumulative Effects of Development Within the Ramapo River Watershed

ABSTRACT
Ramapo Watershed Environmental Assessment (RWEA) is a student firm comprised of senior Environmental Studies majors taking the capstone environmental Assessment course sequence. RWEA is tasked with preparing a cumulative environmental assessment detailing the effects of development within the Ramapo River Watershed. Under the guidance of Professor Michael Edelstein Ph.D., RWEA has structured itself into three research teams, one dedicated to studying Social, Economic and Policy Impacts (specifically Visual, Cultural, Psych-Social, Socio-Economic, Environmental Justice and Policy impacts), a second team is responsible for studying ecological impacts (specifically Flora, Fauna, Health and Safety, and Surface Water), the third team will research physical impacts (specifically Ground water and Geology, Soil, Noise and Noxious impacts, Energy and Infrastructure, Air Quality and Climate, Traffic, and Toxics and Radioactivity). RWEA has been asked to prepare its assessment on behalf of the Ramapo River Committee, the Ramapough Conservancy, Orange Environment, Inc. and the Town of Ramapo. The baseline impacts on the watershed were first assessed in order to provide a point of comparison for projected significant adverse changes. These adverse changes are due to anticipated future development within the watershed, and are including but not limited to Tuxedo Farms and the proposed expansion of Kiryas Joel, Mahwah Mall, Gardens at Harriman project, Pilgrim Pipeline, and expanded Harriman Sewer Treatment Plant. With this project RWEA hopes to provide a non-biased, cumulative, impact statement that will be a springboard for further study of cumulative effects in the context of decisions made by permitting authorities in the Ramapo watershed.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Sean G. Dabney
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Lisa Cassidy
MAJOR: Liberal Studies/Philosophy
SCHOOL: Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies

PROJECT TITLE
Tolstoy's Philosophy of Free Will

ABSTRACT
In this paper I elucidate Leo Tolstoy’s philosophy of free will through his novel War and Peace. I primarily focus on the second part of the novel’s epilogue, a thirty-five page philosophical essay about power, free will, human nature, and historiography. Besides the text itself, I also draw upon contemporary scholarly articles and the writings of David Hume, Arthur Schopenhauer, W. T. Stace, A. J. Ayer, and Susan Wolf in order to properly characterize Tolstoy’s philosophical stance on free will in the context of early-modern philosophy and contemporary philosophy.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Christina Murphy
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: David Oh
MAJOR: Communication Arts
SCHOOL: School of Contemporary Arts

PROJECT TITLE
BuzzFeed’s Tasty: The Best Virtual Cookbook

ABSTRACT
Currently, all six of BuzzFeed’s Tasty pages come to a total of 112,405,948 followers on Facebook. Since launching in 2015, Tasty started six other pages, each specific to a country known for delicious recipes. The countries and their respective pages are; Proper Tasty which is specific to the United Kingdom, Tasty Japan, Tasty Demais, the Brazilian page, Bien Tasty which offers Spanish recipes, Tasty Einfach, the German page, and Tasty Miam, the flagship page of France. The mission was to find out how and why recipe videos shared on Facebook increase the likelihood of people cooking more for themselves or others through interviews with college-aged men and women. My primary conclusion was that in result of these videos people have found new and creative ways to make food, which is important because of cross-cultural knowledge, social media sharing habits and for learning about cooking in general. It has become second nature to “share,” “like” and “comment” on the social media giant. Sharing helps others who are unfamiliar with the content to be exposed to it, at which point creates a domino effect. The result of this impact allowed me to discover if Tasty has been the reason for other users’ cooking success stories.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Grace Maute
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Seonmi Kim
MAJOR: Social Work
SCHOOL: School of Social Science & Human Services

PROJECT TITLE
Effects of the Cooperative Model on the Empowerment of Marginalized Female Workers in the Home Health Care Sector

ABSTRACT
How does the worker cooperative model affect the empowerment of marginalized female workers in the home health care sector? The cooperative movement seeks to put power in the hands of workers so that they can build a workplace and career that benefits them. Cooperatives of home health care workers are not widespread throughout the United States, but as the demand for home health care workers increases it is possible that this model will be followed. There is significant research on the ways in which the cooperative movement affects the quality of care that is provided to individuals, but there is little research into the effects of the cooperative movement of the lives of marginalized female workers in the home health care sector. In this study, empowerment will be defined in terms of worker’s sense of self-efficacy and access to resources, such as education and supervisor support, and how they are able to translate those resources into power within the workplace and their lives. Data was collected via one-on-one in-depth interviews for one hour; 20 workers of the Cooperative Home Care Association (CHCA) in Bronx, N.Y., were interviewed by two researchers between October 2016 and March 2017. The conclusions drawn will be triangulated with additional observations, additional interviews with a manager of CHCA, and multiple researchers. Primary findings indicate that the cooperative model increases the empowerment of marginalized female home care workers, providing them with essential education and support so that they can advocate for themselves in the workplace. Findings will provide valuable insights into the impacts of the cooperative model on the lives of marginalized female workers in the home health care sector.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Michael Flood  
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Eric Wiener  
MAJOR: Environmental Science  
SCHOOL: School of Theoretical and Applied Science  

PROJECT TITLE  
Ecological Impacts of a Native Insect Defoliator: Chestnut Oak Defoliation, Forest Succession and Canopy Gap Expansion in a Mixed Hardwood Forest of the NJ Highlands  

ABSTRACT  
In recent decades, oak trees (Quercus spp.) in the Eastern United States have faced many environmental perturbations, including outbreaks of nonnative herbivorous insects, damage from severe storms, and increased browsing by deer. However, scant attention has been given to outbreaks of native insect defoliators. Thus, this study examined ecological ramifications after two consecutive outbreaks of Archips semiferanus (oak leaf roller) on Quercus montana (chestnut oak) trees in a mixed hardwood forest of the New Jersey Highlands. Specifically, defoliation was quantified for 185 Q. montana trees across a 5.1 hectare plot, and variation among trees of different strata, as well as within different parts of the canopy of each individual tree, was examined. To predict future successional pathways, tree species composition across different vertical strata was recorded in 34 survey plots that were located beneath severely defoliated Q. montana canopy trees. Finally, we examined how near-term mortality of Q. montana might lead to the further expansion of large canopy openings (n = 20) that were present before the A. semiferanus outbreak.  

Defoliation of upper portions of Q. montana canopies was significantly higher than in lower portions of the same canopies, and defoliation of Q. montana trees in the canopy stratum was significantly higher than for conspecifics in the subcanopy. A simple successional model suggests that the abundance of Q. montana canopy trees will likely decline if further outbreaks lead to substantial mortality. Q. rubra (red oak) and several other tree species are in position to take advantage of any decline in the Q. montana population. All of the canopy openings in this study that naturally arose prior to the A. semiferanus outbreak will likely expand if chestnut oak mortality rates increase. This phenomenon may lead to a dramatic increase in the forest area that can be colonized by shade-intolerant, invasive plants.
ABSTRACT
This paper examines queer relationships and marriage, specifically contract marriages in East Asia and gay marriages in the United States. In China and Korea, filial duties create inevitable pressure for gay and lesbian individuals to marry and start a family. This poses a significant dilemma for these individuals, who must disavow their sexuality and consent to the hegemonic, heteronormative order and traditional ideals of kin and lineage. Contract marriages allow gay and lesbian individuals to maintain their true relationships by creating a front; within these arrangements individuals seek each other out with the express purpose of giving the illusion of a false, heterosexual marriage. In order for contract marriages to function successfully couples must enact believable performances that can deceive hundreds of people and felicitously perform speech acts which they inherently oppose. Drawing upon authors such as Erving Goffman, Arlie Russell Hochschild, J.L. Austin, Frederick Engels, and Lewis Morgan, the paper interrogates the ways in which marriage has historically disenfranchised and benefitted queer people, and the ways in which queer individuals involved in marriages can manipulate a historically repressive system to challenge hegemony and heteronormativity.
STUDENT PRESENTERS: Nicole M. Amada, Kelton Wilmerding, Amanda Chugg, and Julia Vehar
FACULTY SUPERVISORS: Naseem Choudhury and Claudia Carrara-Augustenborg
MAJOR: Psychology
SCHOOL: School of Social Science & Human Services

PROJECT TITLE
Implicit Learning: Unconscious Attitude Formation

ABSTRACT
This study investigates the phenomenon of implicit learning to examine how unconscious stimuli can influence individuals’ outlooks, attitudes, behavior, and decision-making. From this approach, absence of access or explicit awareness does not imply absence of processing and learning. The study employed a distractor pattern game and evaluative conditioning to bias participants towards or against previously neutral feature groups using gain or loss of points. Conditioning was assessed by a forced choice decision task requiring participants to associate features with emotional adjectives and characters. Participants were found to respond significantly faster to emotional features and associated emotional features with emotional adjectives and characters at a significantly higher rate than the control condition. These results are in line with current theoretical models of emotional and unconscious processing, and have significant implications for treatment of learning disabilities, confronting racism and sexism, and approaching media and advertisements.
STUDENT PRESENTERS: Patrick Erb, Holly Ellerbusch, Christine Szpond, and Sean Farrell
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Eric Wiener
MAJOR: Environmental Science
SCHOOL: School of Theoretical and Applied Science

PROJECT TITLE
Migrant Raptor Use of Different Pathways through the Atlantic Flyway: Comparisons at Different Geographic Scales and Across Species

ABSTRACT
Tens of thousands of raptors migrate through the Atlantic Flyway each fall. The purpose of this study was to better understand how individuals of different raptor species select their specific routes through the flyway. Pathways at two very different scales were considered. First, raptor use of seven narrow pathways that are all visible from the Ramapo Mountains (straddling the border of Bergen and Passaic Counties, Northern New Jersey) was recorded and evaluated for the 2016 fall migration. In addition, data from raptor counts during the 2014, 2015 and 2016 fall migrations were compared among three major pathways through the Atlantic Flyway: the Kittatinny Ridge (west), the Atlantic coast (east), the region between the other two pathways (central). At both scales, raptor use of different pathways varied dramatically at different times of the day, across different days, and among different raptor species. Within the Ramapo Mountains, hourly shifts in which pathways were used often corresponded with the development of thermal updrafts by late morning. Furthermore, wind direction was often a good predictor of which pathways were used at the narrowest geographic scale. The degree to which wind direction was predictive of the larger-scale pathways that were used on any given day varied among raptor species. Wind direction tended to be somewhat more predictive of large-scale pathway selection by species that rely more on thermal updrafts than species that are less reliant on thermals. Overall, it is clear that much of the variation in pathway selection on different days and across different raptor species is still poorly understood. Further work that includes additional years of new data at narrow geographic scales, and more precise weather data (close to raptor watch sites) at broader scales, could be particularly insightful.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Thomas Perez
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Iraida López
MAJOR: Spanish Language and Literature
SCHOOL: Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies

PROJECT TITLE
That Unique Career without Enough Men: The Social Issues Facing Males in Nursing

ABSTRACT
Currently, many activists advocate for the greater inclusion of women in male-dominated occupations such as engineering or firefighters. While support is needed to reduce the marked segregation of women from these professions, discrimination, stigmas, and stereotypes also affect the reversed scenario: men working in women-dominated fields. The following essay will focus on the representation of male nurses and the challenges they face working in the field of nursing. Using the findings from multiple studies, I analyze the different stereotypes associated with male nurses as well as the prejudices that male nurses confront. Throughout the essay, the differences between men and female nurses in a hospital setting illustrate the social differences between the roles of male and female nurses along with the overall view of how society values male nurses. Furthermore, the social construct that nursing is an occupation only for a woman will demonstrate the issues of identity, role, and respect with which male nurses struggle. Discussing the social challenges male nurses face will allow for the deconstruction of this social construct in order to create a more welcoming atmosphere within hospitals. By improving the gender diversity within the nursing staff, male nurses and patients will begin to feel more comfortable and bring a host of benefits.
STUDENT PRESENTERS: Noel Anglero, Alec Barton, Joe Dziema, Sabrina Hemming, Matt LaCanna, Richard Perez, David Pisano, Travis Quinon, Ariana Rivera, Jonathan Rojas, Paul Sanford, and Daniel Sclafani

FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Ann LePore

MAJOR: Visual Arts

SCHOOL: School of Contemporary Arts

PROJECT TITLE
A Sample of Artistic Processes Used In Scientific Visualization Applied to Animation

ABSTRACT
Molecules and even micro-organisms are too small for us to directly observe them. Science often provides non visual methods of description. Even when images can be photographed with an electron microscope, we often are left without video or other time-based imagery that helps us to understand what is taking place (or in the case of microscopic fossils, events that took place millions of years ago).

The colors used to label things, the way motion is represented, the composition of a single frame of animation are all decisions made by artists that have a direct effect on the viewer’s interpretation of the image. Impacts can be made on what viewers notice in what order, what they see as important, associations they may have with existing colors or lighting.

Often, if biological research is going to have a large impact, on using research to solve wider problems such as eradicating disease, people outside the circle of the researcher will have to understand the research and empathize with it.

Fine artists are practiced in turning observation to image and communicating nuance and emotion, compelling viewers to participate in understanding ideas. Fine artists who enjoy reading primary sources, have an expanded vocabulary, and are skilled in computer animation, and often come out of a Liberal Arts education may find themselves uniquely qualified to turn scientific research into a touchstone for broader human understanding.

This experiment shows the interpretation of nine animators who attempted to visualize information from primary sources that involved biological research elements of which were too small to observe with the naked eye. The research sampled is from within the last 24 months and ranges from Loricifera fossil and protein drawstring discoveries to authors focusing on plastic-eating bacteria, nano-motor payload delivery, and astrocytes’ role in neurogenerative diseases.
ABSTRACT
Sankofa is a symbol used by the Akan people of Ghana that literally translates to “go back and fetch it.” The Sankofa symbol is popular among members of the African Diaspora because it expresses the need to go back into the past to learn from mistakes and better guide the future. History is cyclical and in order to not fall into the same cycles of oppressions one must look to the past for guidance. That is the essence of this research. This research evaluates the claim that lynching still exists today in the “post-racial” American society. First, I define lynching past and present and look at social, political and economic factors behind lynchings in different periods of American history including post-Civil War, the Great Migration, and the Civil Rights Movement. I then examine lynching as a form of social control, lynching as perpetuating the myth of black criminality and black people’s responses to lynching in these time periods. It is my argument that lynching does still exist today but in different forms. Black bodies may not be hanging from trees but I argue that excessive use of force by the police and the murder of people by the police are some of the ways lynching has transcended time and presents itself today. Black people today are still being socially controlled and criminalized, and respond to the injustice they face. I conclude my research by explaining why it matters if lynching still exists and the significance of these continued oppressions in the era of Trump as President and Jeff Sessions as Attorney General. I encourage readers to go back and fetch it, to look at the information I have presented to them from the past so they can advocate to construct a better future.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Karlito A. Almeda
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Dean Chen
MAJOR: Political Science
SCHOOL: Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies

PROJECT TITLE
Bridging the Gap: A History, Evaluation, and Forecast of the Trans-Pacific Partnership

ABSTRACT
Since World War II, the United States Government (USG) has led the rules-based trading system through establishing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Progress to liberalize global trade has stagnated, however, since the Doha round of WTO negotiations stalled in 2001. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a multilateral assentation to the reduction of trade barriers that also encourages economic liberalism, represents USG policy to pursue regionalism as means to circumnavigate or encourage development at the WTO level. The TPP, incorporating 12 Asia-Pacific countries and linking both sides of the Pacific Ocean, has specific economic and strategic significance for the USG, and was finalized on February 4, 2016. Consistent with the Obama’s policy toward the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the TPP utilizes a “hedging” strategy, which incorporated aspects of assurance and containment to respond to the rise of China. Furthermore, the TPP buttressed the Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia” by maintaining visible American leadership and embedding the United States in the region. The TPP, however, appears to have collapsed since President Trump issued an executive order on January 23, 2017, which unilaterally withdrew the United States from TPP negotiations. Withdrawal from the TPP enhances the power of the PRC, strengthens the success of Beijing-backed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership’s (RCEP) potential of success, and complicates the USG’s hedging policy. While the Trump administration advocates for an “America First” policy, which appears protectionist or mercantilist in fashion, it faces structural and institutional constraints which prevent the new president from radically transforming America’s liberal internationalist economic policy. Initially Trump’s China policy appeared combative, but as exemplified in recent events the administration signaled a traditionalist or liberal approach. In the absence of the TPP, the USG will pursue alternative regional FTAs to support allies and constrain Chinese influence.
STUDENT PRESENTERS: Sydney Kauffman and David Cifelli
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Thomas Owen
MAJOR: Biology
SCHOOL: School of Theoretical and Applied Science

PROJECT TITLE
Use of Genome Editing to Delete the SIT Gene in Osteoblasts

ABSTRACT
SIT (SHP2-interacting transmembrane adaptor) was identified as being potentially involved in regulating bone mass in a study comparing gene expression between the bones of normal and osteopetrotic mutant rats. SIT is a member of the family of transmembrane adapter proteins that have tyrosines in their intracellular tails, which are phosphorylated by kinases of the c-src family. Prior to our lab’s work, SIT was only known to be involved in the function of T-cells in the immune system. Members of our lab had previously shown that in a small sample of mice in which the SIT gene had been deleted, a number of trabecular bone parameters were significantly altered including increased bone volume, trabecular number and trabecular connectivity. Since the SIT knockout mice are not readily available, we are using the CRISPR gene editing system to delete the gene in bone cells in culture to further study the mechanisms through which SIT affects bone mass. A guide RNA for rat SIT predicted to have the best balance between efficacy and lack of off-target effects was chosen and its coding DNA cloned into an all-in-one CRISPR plasmid (PX458: both guide RNA cloning and Cas9) at the Bbs1 sites. Cloning of the guide RNA was confirmed by DNA sequencing. This plasmid is currently being introduced into the rat osteosarcoma cell line ROS 17/2.8. Following drug selection for transfectants, cell sublines will be isolated. The levels of SIT RNA and protein expression in these lines will be compared to those of cells transfected with the empty vector. Cells where SIT expression is very low will be analyzed for markers of osteoblastic differentiation over a 12-day time course. These markers include cell proliferation, alkaline phosphatase enzyme activity, and the expression of the osteocalcin and matrix Gla protein genes.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Cassandra Kronenfeld
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Rosetta D’Angelo
MAJOR: Liberal Studies/Italian
SCHOOL: Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies

PROJECT TITLE
Artemisia Gentileschi

ABSTRACT
For Scholar’s Day I will be looking at the work and the life of the Renaissance artist Artemisia Gentileschi. She is known now as one of the most accomplished women artists of the time, but during the Renaissance Gentileschi was overlooked because of the controversy surrounding her name. After working with Agostino Tassi to decorate a prestigious building in Rome, Gentileschi’s father hired Tassi to privately tutor his daughter. Gentileschi’s life became difficult when she was raped by Tassi and she and her family decided to press charges against him. My project will focus on Gentileschi’s life, the trial that followed her rape, her artwork, and the inspiration her bravery and strength have provided for women throughout the ages. I will be looking at the books and films about her as well as her own works and story.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Emylee L. Salkind-Garcia  
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Rosetta D’Angelo  
MAJOR: Liberal Studies/Italian  
SCHOOL: Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies

PROJECT TITLE
Music is a Mirror

ABSTRACT
As an Italian minor who is inspired by the country as a whole, I intend to delve into the history of Italy with a focus on society and music. With my project, I wish to express to viewers how Italian music and society have been intertwined from the Renaissance period to the modern era. The project focuses on individual songs or overarching themes that existed within each time period, inclusive of a summary of how the music and conditions of society at a given time inevitably interconnect. In terms of format, I will provide a timeline which demonstrates how the music has changed throughout the years. I believe that this project will offer insight into the interconnection between Italian music, history, and society.
PROJECT TITLE
Impact of Information on a Cooperative Game Network

ABSTRACT
Cooperation is a natural human phenomena studied from many perspectives. We model a cooperative game on a network, in which each round consists of a player deciding to either cooperate with or defect from all of its neighbors. We simulated several games in SageMath in which we altered the amount of cooperation history that each player made available to its neighbors. We present the impact that varying this information has on the cooperation network.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Heidi A. Pilla  
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Lisa Williams  
MAJOR: Literature  
SCHOOL: Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies

PROJECT TITLE  
Motherhood Compared in “To the Lighthouse” and “Beloved”

ABSTRACT  
When reading Toni Morrison’s novels through the lens of Virginia Woolf’s writing, we see a stark contrast between the lives of the characters in both writers’ work, specifically in the mother-child relationship. In Barbara Christian’s essay “Layered Rhythms: Virginia Woolf and Toni Morrison,” she argues that Woolf may be Morrison’s “white mother” and rhetorically asks Morrison if she can invent “a fiction” comparing the two authors, (484). She writes, “I am inspired by your and Virginia’s different, yet related projects—layered rhythms I call them,” (484). Through Christian’s writing, readers can conclude that Woolf and Morrison may be compared because they are strong anti-war writers whose novels explore the shell-shocked warrior, their characters’ internal consciousness and connection to nature, as well as the issue of inner time versus outer time. Christian, however, argues that perhaps, the most profound reason they should be compared is that “Virginia... was concerned that women were expected to write about love—love here meaning romantic love: she insisted that women also wanted poetry, dreams, imagination. Without question so do you, [Morrison] though in a different context,” (498). Through this different context, Christian contends that Morrison will write about “a tradition of people, who from their beginnings in this country had been denied the right to express love, and thus have invented their particular strategies to hold onto it,” (498). This tradition of people concerns the lives of slaves, who have been denied the right to express love through the demolition of their families, specifically the separation of mother from daughter. The “particular strategy to hold onto it” that Christian suggests refers to the way that Sethe attempts to kill her daughter in Beloved.
ABSTRACT
At first glance, India seems to be a mystical, spiritual place brimming with spiritual enlightenment and “exotic” spices and foods. However, this view is fundamentally flawed in that it ignores the realities of a developing nation. One of the most threatening realities, both environmentally and economically, is that of waste management. Environmentally, unmanaged waste accumulates along roadways and waterways, polluting soil, water, and air as pollutants leach out and are burned into the atmosphere. Economically, certain caste structures limit people from managing waste, and harms those that do, leading to inefficient management of waste and ineffective management of funds. Certain organizations are attempting to remedy this situation, such as Environmental Support Group (ESG), a not-for-profit organization in Bangalore, India. ESG involves itself in public interest litigations, or legal action taken on behalf of minorities or for the public good. Through a case study of Environmental Support Group’s interventions into sustainable waste management, the past, present, and future of sustainable waste management in Bangalore and across the globe is assessed.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Anna N. Milovich
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Lisa Williams
MAJOR: Literature
SCHOOL: Salameno School of Humanities and Global Studies

PROJECT TITLE
Ideals of Feminine Beauty as Tools of Oppression in Toni Morrison’s “The Bluest Eye”

ABSTRACT
In 1931, Virginia Woolf coined the term “the angel in the house” to encompass the societal rules of the patriarchy which keep women imprisoned by their gender. Sixty years later, Naomi Wolf begins The Beauty Myth with Virginia Woolf’s assertion that “it is far more difficult to murder a phantom than a reality.” Wolf explains that despite the successes of Virginia Woolf’s peers and their mid-century descendants in killing the Angel of social decorum, the backlash would intensify the modern “Beauty Myth” as an alternative means of oppression. Consequently, as Toni Morrison notes, beauty has become a verb, and women spend countless hours and vast sums of money “doing” beauty in the hopes of fitting the increasingly unattainable model set forth by those who wish to oppress them (The Bluest Eye xi). Morrison’s novels often take place during the period surrounding the wars of the early- to mid-twentieth century, when the Beauty Myth was evolving rapidly to overtake the strides women were making in gaining their voices. Morrison’s works show us that for as difficult as white women find it to kill the Angel and debunk the Myth, women of color are at an even further disadvantage because these beauty standards are rooted in the idolization of a femininity that is inextricable from constructions of whiteness. Holding all women to these white ideals deliberately and aggressively shoves black and brown women even further into the role of “other,” and in The Bluest Eye, Morrison explores the havoc wreaked on the psyches of black girls when they are constantly inundated with images conflating beauty with whiteness, especially in a culture where “whiteness” is synonymous with “goodness,” and how the ties that left white women like Virginia Woolf feeling restrained have been used to entirely suffocate women of color.
STUDENT PRESENTERS: Brianna Romer and Meghann Herman
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Joost Monen
MAJOR: Biology
SCHOOL: School of Theoretical and Applied Science

PROJECT TITLE
Live Imaging and Analysis of Wild-Type Versus HCP-3 Depleted Embryos in the Nematode, Caenorhabditis elegans

ABSTRACT
The centromeric protein CENP-A is critical for kinetochore deposition and chromosome segregation in mitosis. In the nematode Caenorhabditis elegans two CENP-A homologs exist, HCP-3 and CPAR-1. HCP-3 plays a conserved centromeric role critical for mitotic chromosome segregation, whereas CPAR-1’s role has yet to be determined. To demonstrate the function of HCP-3, an RNAi feeding protocol was used to deplete HCP-3 from the embryos of a wild-type GFP:Histone-H2b/GFP:gamma-tubulin expressing strain. Both wild-type \(n=11\) and HCP-3 \(n=6\) depleted embryos were imaged on a Zeiss Axiovert 200M epi-fluorescent microscope using time-lapse microscopy at 30 second intervals. HCP-3 depleted embryos display a clear chromosome segregation defect and fail to properly divide. Close examination of spindle pole dynamics indicate that in HCP-3 depleted embryo, spindle poles separate prematurely likely due to the failure of the spindle to attach to chromosomes. These experiments are consistent with previous studies and provide a robust and reproducible assay to test RNAi depleted perturbations and analyze chromosome and spindle pole dynamics in live embryos. Future experiments will include a determination to the extent at which HCP-3 is depleted under RNAi condition as well as a similar characterization of CPAR-1 depleted embryos to test the functional role of CPAR-1 in early embryonic development.
ABSTRACT
This study was designed to examine age differences in how people can do a cognitive processing task that involves color perception, verbal ability, and reaction time. There were three age groups that consisted of younger adults, middle-aged adults, and older adults. All three groups’ reaction times were compared. Each group had to perform the tasks in three different conditions. Participants were asked to identify colors of words while being tested on their reaction time to complete three versions of the task. The first test consisted of color words matching their meanings. The second test consisted of color of words that differed from their written meaning. Lastly, the third test had random words that were not related to the color. The research is based on a branch of cognitive psychology relating to attention. In order for psychologists to study automatized behaviors they tend to put participants in situations where an automatized behavior is in conflict with a desired one. This allows them to study and test particular characteristics of automatized behaviors by noting their influence on other easily measured behaviors. One such phenomenon has become known as the Stroop effect, and has been widely studied. The results of the Stroop effect have been replicated many times in many variations. The results of the current study were that age did affect reaction time of completing a task and that age interacted with the version of the test. Older people particularly had a hard time with the mismatch test.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Andrew Herrera  
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Ashwani Vasishth  
MAJOR: Environmental Studies  
SCHOOL: School of Social Science and Human Services  

PROJECT TITLE  
Conservation as Discrimination? Putting the Maasai/Protected Area Conflict into Context  

ABSTRACT  
This research will focus on the “wicked problem” of park management and land rights, particularly in the southeastern African countries of Kenya and Tanzania. They are famous for their spectacular, imperiled wildlife, but the indigenous Maasai herdsmen who live with them in the savanna are at risk as well, of losing their way of life. The Maasai have continually had their property rights and thus their ability to live as pastoralists constrained by new laws and businesses. Mwangi (2009) traces this problem to its beginnings with the arrival of the British, but it has continued through Tanzania’s independence to the present. Native Tanzanians want to farm land that Maasai may inhabit, and this leads not to gunfights but to legal battles that often portend dire consequences for the Maasai’s independence, as discussed by Askew, Maganga, Odgaard, Lund, and Boone (2013). But this is not merely the familiar conflict between indigenous peoples and settlers: the Maasai often must contend with wilderness conservation groups that force them off of their land or exclude them from the management process. Goldman (2011) discusses the strife that develops as Maasai are denied the right to work with conservationists with the animals they know so well, a conflict that sometimes disrupts the ecological sustainability of a protected area. This research has synthesized a hypothesis that while the ecotourism industry should (and may slowly be) changing to benefit and include the Maasai, this gulf between Maasai concerns and conservation interests is reflective of inequalities and disconnections rooted throughout the governments of the East African Community at multiple levels and within the major actors in the growing conservation industry.
ABSTRACT
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the longest-running conflicts in the modern era. It is now one of the most extensively dealt-with conflicts in the world. In the past 45 years alone, the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis has been the subject of serious attempts at mediation by many countries and respectable international organizations. Presidents, prime ministers, and ambassadors from all over the world have tried to mediate the conflict between the two parties. International organizations have devoted their attention to it; high-level emissaries have come to the region to try their hand at mediation and compromise. If history has proven anything to us, it is that a sovereign Palestinian state, with respect to an already sovereign Israeli state, is the only solution to this protracted conflict. The purpose of this work is to substantiate this assertion by first explaining its inevitability through historical observations of the unacknowledged Palestinian reality and, then constructing a blueprint that outlines certain key and foundational elements that need to be addressed in anticipation of said sovereignty: economic independence, territorial integrity, access to resources, independent governance, and education. Through these elements, this thesis conceptualizes the needs and infrastructure necessary for the successful functioning of an independent Palestinian state.
STUDENT PRESENTERS: Pritha Aggarwal and Devashri Parikh  
FACULTY SUPERVISORS: Seung-Sup Kim and Nicole Rodstrom  
MAJOR: Biochemistry  
SCHOOL: School of Theoretical and Applied Science  

PROJECT TITLE  
Biochemical Studies of Bacterial Growth and Protein Expression Patterns of Gut Microbes Including Lactobacillus Rhamnosus GG and Escherichia Coli K-12 Using UV-VIS Spectrophotometry, Two Dimensional Gel Electrophoresis and Fast Performance Liquid Chromatography  

ABSTRACT  
The long term goal of this project is to understand the symbiotic effect of the gut microbes and the current goal of the project is to qualitatively analyze the protein expression patterns of the two most common probiotic gut microbes, Lactobacillus rhamnosus GG and Escherichia coli K-12 strains, in different growth conditions including aerobic and anaerobic. The specific strains of the two target bacteria have been identified using common 16S rRNA sequencing. The growth studies of both bacteria were completed under aerobic and anaerobic conditions using UV-VIS spectrophotometry. For the UV-VIS spectrophotometry analysis, an OD600 measurement was used and the result clearly showed the differences in the growth phases of the two different bacteria under the same conditions (Tryptic soy broth media, 37°C and aerobic or anaerobic). Currently, analysis of the protein expression pattern in different air conditions for the bacterial strains studied is being conducted using the two different methods: a Fast Performance Liquid Chromatography (FPLC) and 2-D Gel Electrophoresis. In the future, the effect of symbiosis on protein expression among the common gut microbes will be studied.
STUDENT PRESENTERS: Soo Jin Koo, Christine Jaipersaud, and Rojina Shrestha
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Seung-Sup Kim
MAJOR: Biochemistry
SCHOOL: School of Theoretical and Applied Science

PROJECT TITLE
Biochemical Studies of N-Terminal and C-Terminal Contacts of e. coli Recombination Protein RecR and its Interlocking Mutants using Gel Electrophoresis and Fast Protein Liquid Chromatography

ABSTRACT
The RecFOR pathway is one of the bacterial DNA recombination processes, where DNA double strand breaks are repaired by homologous recombination. The long-term goal of this project is to study the structure-function relationship of E. coli RecR protein in the RecFOR pathway. The current goal of the project is to study the effect of N-terminal and C-terminal interface for oligomerization mechanisms of RecR protein and its interlocking mutants, G39C and A172C, which contain artificial disulfide bond(s) at N-terminal and C-terminal, respectively. In the first stage of the project, recombinant proteins of the native E. coli RecR and its mutant forms were produced using T7 bacterial over-expression system and purified using various protein chromatographic methods, including the conventional Ni-NTA affinity chromatography and the size exclusion chromatography via FPLC system. The purified proteins are being subjected to various oligomerization studies using gel electrophoresis (gel-shifting assay) and FPLC. In this project, the effects of the interlocking at N-terminal or C-terminal of the RecR protein for their oligomerization were analyzed and discussed. The preliminary data showed that C-terminal interlocking has a greater impact on the oligomerization of the RecR protein. In the future, studying the mechanisms of the RecR oligomerization will lead us to understand better the DNA-binding property of the RecR protein and the role of RecR in bacterial FOR pathway.
PROJECT TITLE
Do Robert Horry and His Seven Rings have a Shot at the Hall of Fame? A Predictive Model of Entry into the Basketball Hall of Fame

ABSTRACT
Sports writers and fans alike often argue about whether or not winning affects an athlete's legacy. We wanted to examine which side of this argument had empirical merit. This should lend insight into whether or not firms reward employees who are simply lucky enough to be a part of better performing groups. Robert Horry is a perfect example of a relatively average basketball player who happened to be a part of many championship teams. We use a Cox Proportional Hazard regression to model the effects of winning on a player's time to induction. We find that winning a championship leads to a decrease in wait time, though unfortunately for Horry, his seven championships do not seem to be enough for enshrinement.
STUDENT PRESENTER: Alyssa Jahren  
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Eva Ogens  
MAJOR: Teacher Education  
SCHOOL: School of Social Science & Human Services

PROJECT TITLE  
Animal Biomes Game Board

ABSTRACT  
Margaret Mean once stated, “Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.” As an aspiring teacher, it is critical that I provide my students with the means to learn for themselves without opinions or judgments. Through my education at Ramapo, I have discovered that learning needs to be interactive and engaging; it cannot simply be “read this textbook and answer these questions.” Children often learn better and understand the content more in depth when they are provided with an environment that allows for discovery and cooperative learning. Within my Methods of Elementary Math and Science course, I was asked to create a game, which helps students to learn creatively. This assignment did not have many directions; it was up to me to use my creativity and imagination to create a game board focused upon either mathematics or science. My game was Animal Biomes where up to four students can play at a time. Students travel around the game board, which features the five different biomes: aquatic, desert, forest, grassland, and tundra. Students must answer specific questions relating to a particular biome if landed upon. The objective of the game is to be the first to collect all the token biome cards for one specific biome.
ABSTRACT
CENP-A is a highly conserved Histone-H3 like protein, critical to centromere specificity and kinetochore assembly in all eukaryotes. Failure to properly produce or localize CENP-A leads to aneuploidy and cell death. In most organisms CENP-A has a single variant; however, in the nematode C.elegans CENP-A has two homologs, HCP-3 and CPAR-1. Based on previous studies, HCP-3 is responsible for specifying the centromere and thus critical for chromosome segregation in mitosis. CPAR-1’s role however remains to be elucidated, albeit CPAR-1 is known to be essential as CPAR-1 mutants are embryonic lethal. The first step in understanding the role that CPAR-1 plays in embryonic development is to characterize where CPAR-1 localizes endogenously. To this effect, we are utilizing an immunofluorescence assay, which allows us to visualize chromosomes, microtubules, and the CENP-A homologs in the developing embryo to get a sense of where these proteins localize in the dividing cells. To date, we have imaged the cell cycle of endogenous embryos using immunofluorescent labeling of HCP-3, in conjunction with tubulin and DNA staining to label spindle microtubules and chromosomes respectively. HCP-3 depleted cells have also been imaged and compared to wild-type to assess the efficacy of RNAi depletion as indicated by HCP-3 signal levels and to assess the phenotypic consequence of HCP-3 depletion. In the near future we hope to repeat these types of experiments with newly generated CPAR-1 antibodies as well as CPAR-1 specific gene knock down reagents. Here, we will describe our current progress, future molecular strategies and experimental design leading up to our ultimate objective to assess the role of CPAR-1 in cell division. Through these studies, we will better understand what role CPAR-1 plays in embryonic development, and perhaps gain insight into a divergent role for CENP-A not yet characterized.
STUDENT PRESENTERS: Thanuka Udumulla and Matthew McCloskey
FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Sarah Carberry
MAJOR: Chemistry
SCHOOL: School of Theoretical and Applied Science

PROJECT TITLE
Sequential Experiments to Synthesize Diphenylacetylene from Styrene in the Undergraduate Laboratory

ABSTRACT
A set of experiments were developed to convert styrene into diphenylacetylene. In the initial experiment, styrene was reacted with the Hoveyda-Grubbs catalyst in solvent less olefin metathesis reaction to produce stilbene. This reaction was successfully run in the 100+ student undergraduate organic laboratory course. With the intention to make this a three-week sequence two subsequent experiments are being tested. The second experiment, the stilbene was reacted with pyridinium tribromide in acetic acid to produce meso-1,2-dibromo-1,2-diphenylethane. In the final experiment, meso-1,2-dibromo-1,2-diphenylethane was reacted with KOH in 2-propanol to produce diphenylacetylene. The reaction yields of each experiment were 90 percent, 62 percent and 45 percent, respectively. Optimization of the second and third reactions is currently underway. This sequential process can be used in an undergraduate organic laboratory where the students can do these experiments in tandem to learn about different organic reactions, reaction mechanisms, and the design of a multi-step synthesis. The experiments were designed to minimize the chemical waste and follow some of the Principles of Green Chemistry.
STUDENT PRESENTERS: Moesha Muir, Gianna Garabo, Callie Vnencak, Lene Sansone, Nicole Meli, Sarah Keir, Samantha DiGiesi, Katherine Talian, Jenna DiTommaso, Amanda Reynolds and Katelyn Kruger

FACULTY SUPERVISOR: Robert Becklen

MAJOR: Psychology

SCHOOL: School of Social Science & Human Services

PROJECT TITLE
Predicting the Election of President Donald Trump: Why the Pollsters Failed

ABSTRACT
The 2016 Presidential election took everyone by surprise, including experts working for well-respected polling companies. How could they have guessed so wrong? The project reported here provides a plausible reason for what may have happened and how more careful procedures could have improved the predictions.

Our focus was the first debate on Sept 26, 2016. Class members viewed the complete event individually, rating the candidates along 15 attitudinal dimensions, before and after the debate. During the debate they provided running minute-by-minute judgments along a positive-negative dimension with occasional clarifying comments. Questionnaires were completed and entered into a database using a publicly visible procedure which provided credible anonymity for all participants. With responses thus delinked from respondents’ identities, any motivation to lie about ideological preferences should be greatly reduced.

Consistent with news reports our data showed near-perfect unanimity that Clinton won the first debate. Core preferences in her favor were, however, relatively weak. Clinton’s overall lead lay at 57 percent during a debate which everyone agrees she completely dominated. Ratings indicate that participants found Trump’s bluntness, expressiveness and humor refreshing despite his dismal performance.

Extrapolating Clinton’s modest advantage in this liberal region of the country to sections with different core values and extended economic malaise should have suggested that greater emphasis in surveying and campaigning in these areas would have been advisable. Among the factors thought to have contributed to a false sense of assurance that the estimates, obtained in polls dominated by East and West Coast sentiments, were stable enough to not threaten the ultimate State Delegate counts, was the likely hesitancy of voters to answer honestly. We speculate that the mere promise of anonymity was not enough to overcome such reluctance. The promise had to be made clear and concrete, as in our study, to have its desired effects.