Class of 2016

University Honors Scholars

EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
Connecticut’s Public Liberal Arts University
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Successful thesis projects are typically the result of the contributions of many people; but none are more important than those of the thesis advisor. The following professors contributed time, energy, and expertise in the oversight of Honors Thesis projects during the 2015-2016 academic year.

Professor Jennifer Brown, Department of Economics
Professor Caitlin Carenen, Department of History
Professor Miriam Chirico, Department of English
Professor Maryanne Clifford, Department of Economics
Professor Jeffrey Danforth, Department of Psychology
Professor James Diller, Department of Psychology
Professor Kimberly Dugan, Department of Sociology
Professor Lisa Fraustino, Department of English
Professor Matthew Graham, Department of Biology
Professor Pete Johnson, Department of Mathematics
Professor Melanie Keyes, Department of Psychology
Professor Nicole Krassas, Department of Political Science
Professor Martin Mendoza-Botelho, Department of Political Science
Professor William Salka, Department of Political Science
Professor Patricia Szczys, Department of Biology
Professor Elena Tapia, Department of English
Professor Jeffrey Trawick-Smith, Department of Education

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Professor Richard Jones-Bamman, Department of Performing Arts
Professor William Salka, Department of Political Science
Professor Patricia Szczys, Department of Biology

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The students featured on the following pages are to be congratulated for their outstanding academic achievements. These students have responded exceptionally well to the challenges and opportunities afforded them through their participation in the University Honors Program, with their efforts culminating in the production of an original work of scholarship. The quality of the thesis projects described in this booklet is impressive and reflects well on the individual students, their respective thesis mentors, and the overall quality of the educational experience offered by the University. The outstanding scholastic achievements of these students has set a high standard for future Honors graduates.

William F. Salka
Director
University Honors Program
ALEXIS APEL
Majors: Psychology, Social Work
Pursue a Masters in Social Work
at Boston College

Thesis Title: Prison as Punishment: A Behavior-analytic Evaluation of Incarceration
The United States currently imprisons over 2.2 million people, 70% of which will be rearrested within three years. Behavior analysis may offer the criminal justice field a scientific method of enhancing prison’s effectiveness. In the present paper, research regarding major topical issues in assessing and enhancing the effectiveness of punishment, such as an individual's learning history, the current schedule of reinforcement, and punishment magnitude are reviewed. Findings from the behavior-analytic literature about strategies to make punishment more effective are applied to the prison system, and recommendations to reduce the recidivism rate are made.

KAROLINA CHRZANOWSKA
Major: Accounting
Minor: Economics
Will attend Sacred Heart University
and pursue Master's Degree in Accounting

Thesis Title: The Analysis of Suspicious Transaction Reporting in The Bahamas
This paper explores the impact of the global anti-money laundering campaign on the financial sector of The Bahamas and Switzerland. The Bahamas and Switzerland have been chosen for this paper because both are known for the significance of offshore banking within their economies. Through the application of Forensic Accounting, this paper utilizes both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The study revealed that The Bahamas and Switzerland are utilizing their respective suspicious transaction reporting systems to an extent, however, this paper has revealed flaws in both nations. The effectiveness of both systems is questionable, as neither nation has displayed outstanding performance in the reporting and analyzing of suspicious activity.

MIKAYLA ZAGATA
Majors: Secondary Education and English
Minors: Writing, Psychology
Plans to teach at a secondary school and pursue M.S.Ed for Secondary English

Thesis Title: Leading Us to the Slaughter-The Holocaust in Poland and its Memory: Young Adult, Historical Fiction
This thesis culminated in the form of a young adult, historical fiction novel, which focuses on the experience of the Holocaust in Kraków, Poland in the Kraków Ghetto and the Płaszów concentration camp. The story depicts the intricacies of the atrocities that the Jewish people in the ghettos and camps went through that are not often seen in other Holocaust fiction texts through the eyes of the protagonist, Raisa, a sixteen-year-old Jewish girl. Research in Holocaust/World War II history, young adult literature, the craft of writing, and psychology are implemented in this novel and explained in the critical analysis accompaniment.
Megan Velasquez
Majors: English and Theatre
Plans a career in Theater Management

Thesis Title: Child Must Have a Ticket: An Analysis of Book-to-Stage Adaptations of Alice in Wonderland and Matilda

While many believe that story adaptations are an inferior form of text, my research on adaptation theories and adapted texts shows what adaptations are really about. While analyzing the two novels Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll and Matilda by Roald Dahl and their respective adapted stage productions, I found that adaptation is about a reconstructive process involving literary analysis in order to successfully translate a story from one medium to another. The goal of this research is to determine what it takes to adapt novels to a dramatic setting, while also determining what makes adapted stage productions successful.

Gabriela Wrobel
Majors: Business Economics and Economics
Will attend Graduate School

Thesis Title: The Effects of Paid Family Leave on the Wages of Female Faculty in New England

This study explored the effects that paid family leave has on wages of full-time female faculty at colleges and universities in New England. Research relating to family leave policy has found that paid leave may have positive effects on employee retention, recruitment and satisfaction of employees, as well as health benefits for the mother and child. A survey was created for this study, and the results were analyzed using ordinal logistic regression. The study hypothesized that availability, extensiveness and utility of paid family leave will lead to higher wage increases for faculty, while those same factors for unpaid leave will lead to decreases in wages. Results showed that the availability of paid family leave was related to higher faculty wages over a five year time span.

Alexandra Cross
Major: Political Science
Minor: Sociology
Plans to Attend Graduate School

Thesis Title: Straightening Out the Russian Mold: How Russian Nationalism Intersects with Homophobia

This research investigates the current ideals surrounding Russian nationalism and homophobia. Hyper-nationalistic tools, such as the Russian Orthodox Church, are currently being used in an attempt to create a strong sense of social cohesion, state support, and nationalism throughout Russia. The use of the LGBT+ community as a scapegoat is not unprecedented, either in global or Russian history, and this research argues that these anti-LGBT policies are an attempt to internally Russify the ethnically diverse population. This research investigates these ideas. In order to identify this as a phenomenon unique to Russia, comparative WVS data will also be collected.

Sabreena Croteau
Majors: Political Science, History
Pursue Master's Degree in International Relations

Thesis Title: Influence and Interference: U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Saudi Arabia 1956-1971

Despite the importance of oil, relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia remain on the periphery of most examinations of U.S. Middle East foreign policy. The alliance grew largely out of the U.S. need to protect Saudi oil and maintain Western access to it, despite disagreements and problems existing between the two governments. Primary sources reveal the tensions between pragmatism and idealism in U.S. policy towards Saudi Arabia. This paper argues that the need to maintain a strong alliance with Saudi Arabia due to its oil assets is irreconcilable with U.S. ideals and is ultimately detrimental to other U.S. foreign policy objectives.
**JESSICA DEFELICE**
Majors: Political Science, Economics
Minor: Women’s and Gender Studies
Pursue a Career in Public Policy

**Thesis Title:** Women’s Route to Elective Office in the United States

The Center for American Women and Politics (2014) reports the U.S. Congress is made up of only 19.4% female representatives. This field of research has received much scholarly attention from a number of perspectives, including perhaps most importantly, a woman’s decision to run. An analysis of the literature presents that women face subliminal messages that stand in the way of elective office, though many female candidates have overcome these inequalities by being comparable fundraisers and vote share earners. Still, women are not often recruited to run by electoral gatekeepers, slowing the path to proportionate representation.

**SARAH DENUHAN**
Major: Biology
Plans to attend Graduate School

**Thesis Title:** Genetic Structure and Conservation of Common Terns (Sterna Hirundo) in Manitoba, Canada

Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) are globally distributed water birds that nest colonially in both inland and coastal habitats exhibiting varying colony size and density. Despite being designated as Least Concern by the IUCN, many populations of Common Terns have shown a decreasing trend in population numbers. This study investigated Common Terns nesting on Lake Winnipeg in Manitoba, Canada. To help delineate effective management units, we characterized variation in six microsatellite loci among 121 Common Terns from the five breeding colonies. We found population-wide differentiation. All colonies showed significant genetic differentiation from each other, despite relatively small geographic range and lack of physical barriers to gene flow. We speculate that a combination of inbreeding, the Wahlund effect, site tenacity, and habitat disturbance is responsible for the documented genetic differentiation.

**LINDSEY SCHAFFRICK**
Major: Mathematics, Computer Sciences
Minor: Economics
Plans to work in the Insurance Industry before pursuing a career in Actuarial Sciences

**Thesis Title:** Application of Survival Models to the United States and Ireland Life Table Data

This thesis studies several survival models in order to observe the probability of human survival, and conversely human mortality, for any age. Two models studied closely were the Gompertz Distribution and the Makeham Distribution. These models were applied to the 2005 United States Male and Female and the 2006 Ireland Male and Female life table data provided by the Human Life-Table Database. This thesis was interested in exploring the trends in survival across different nationalities and genders.

**SARAH TONZI**
Majors: Mathematics, Early Childhood Education
Plans to teach Elementary School

**Thesis Title:** Increasing Mathematical Disposition in Preschool

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the use of math-related children’s literature would affect interest in mathematics learning. Teachers in two preschool classrooms read high quality children’s books during group time. During subsequent free play periods, these books were provided for children to look at—one book on each day of observation. In addition, an accompanying activity was offered that relates to each book. Children were observed before, during, and after this literature strategy. The frequency and length of visits to the math center and the mathematical play activities children engage in were tallied. The literature intervention was found to lead to a significant increase in the use of the math center and more frequent mathematical play activities there.
SOLVEIG MILLETT
Major: Psychology
Minor: Music
Plans to pursue a Masters Degree in Occupational Therapy
Thesis Title: Stress in Parents of Children with Cerebral Palsy
This study examined the difference in stress between parents of children with CP and parents of typically developing children. Twelve parents of children with CP and 11 parents of typically developing children completed the Parenting Stress Index Short-Form, 4th Edition and demographic questions. Stress scores were significantly higher in the CP group than the control group. These results support existing research that parents of children with CP experience more stress than parents of typical children. Results should help to inform resource allocation as well as how therapists and clinicians can best help these families.

IAN PETERS
Major: Economics
Minors: Mathematics, Physics
Will Pursue a PhD in Economics at the University of Delaware
Thesis Title: It’s All Very Taxing: Interstate Tax Competition and the Balanced Budget
In economic downturns, state governments respond to decreased activity by lowering corporate tax rates, to attract outside firms. This behavior leads to states competing for firms, engaging in tax competition. Previous research shows that tax competition is ineffective, due to a race-to-the-bottom, leading states to lose their advantage. This project focuses on both the effects of tax competition on small states compared to large states and on state government budgets. Econometric modeling and location theory are used to test and measure these impacts. Multiple methods of regression are employed to determine the reliability of the models and explain the results.

ERIN DROUIN
Major: Political Science
Pursue Master’s Degree in Political Communication at the University of Delaware
Thesis Title: From Tradition to Twitter: An Analysis of Traditional Media and Social Media Coverage of Sexual Assault on College Campuses
This research has examined the process by which social media and traditional media coexist and react to one another to respond to the social issue of sexual assault on college campuses and examined whether sexual assault on college campuses has been gaining media attention due, at least in part to its presence in social media, particularly Twitter. The case examined is that of the 2013 University of Connecticut sexual assault scandal. Through analysis of both traditional and social media coverage of the case, it can be argued that the availability associated with those Twitter narratives thrust the issue into the public forefront and changed the way in which the topic has been constructed within both media.

SONJA GAGNON
Major: Psychology
Will attend Graduate School at UConn’s School of Social Work
Thesis Title: Family Functioning and Eating Attitudes in Emerging Adulthood
For several decades research has been conducted about whether family functioning is characteristically different for families of eating disordered patients. There have been mixed results in past research. In the present study, 174 participants from Eastern Connecticut State University and Hanover Psychological Research on the Net completed the FAD and the EAT-26 online. Results indicated that family functioning was significantly different for women who have unhealthy eating attitudes compared to healthy women. Results will be useful for helping understand the role families play in eating attitudes and eating disorders. Implications for eating disorder prevention are discussed.
**JONATHAN HENAUT**  
Major: Biology  
Pursue PhD in a Biology Related Field  
**Thesis Title:** Testing the Validity of Subspecies Designations for a Large but Little Known Scorpion from the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts  
Abstract: In 1983, the rock-dwelling scorpion species, *Smeringurus vachoni*, was proposed to represent two separate subspecies. Modern morphological assessments did not support this hypothesis. In this study, we tested the validity of subspecies designations by analyzing genetic patterns from *S. vachoni* specimens collected in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts. Phylogenetic assessments identified 11 separate clades, lending little support the initially proposed subspecies. A molecular clock suggested that the 11 clades diverged during the late Miocene, Pliocene, and Pleistocene. We propose that tectonic activity, ancient lake systems, and periodic river avulsions throughout the region promoted diversifications in *S. vachoni*.  

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**EMILY KOMORNIK**  
Majors: History, English  
Plans to work at Yale before pursuing a career Practicing Law  
**Thesis Title:** The Rhetoric of Rebellion: A Comparison of the Great Awakening and American Revolution, 1737-1783  
Though the Great Awakening and American Revolution encompassed different goals, similarities lie in the fact that rhetorical strategies such as religious allusion, appeal to emotion, and graphic imagery were all utilized in order to inspire change in the masses. This paper illustrates and analyzes these similar rhetorical strategies, finally illuminating how effective the power of language is in persuasion, motivation, and ultimately, rebellion. Rhetoric, though employed for a multitude of different reasons, holds the power to spark significant change. Identifying which strategies are most successful is vital to understanding how and why rebellion begins.  

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**ALEXIS KURTZ**  
Major: Theatre, Performing Arts  
Minor: English  
Plans to gain work experience in the Industry before pursuing an MFA in Acting  
**Thesis Title:** I Have an Accent: Modules to Assist Nutmeggers in Performing Six Major American English Dialects for The Stage and Screen  
I was hearing “I have an accent?!” from quite a few Connecticut natives in various performance capacities, and that is what inspired my thesis topic. As I discovered, there is also not much literature in existence that documents this very real Connecticut dialect. Accordingly, I have developed a set of electronic modules that offer resources and techniques to enable actors who are specifically Connecticut natives to take on dialects from other parts of the United States for performance purposes. I have narrowed the scope of my research to six major dialects, creating Connecticut speaking electronic learning modules for each.  

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**Samantha Marsh**  
Majors: Sociology and Early Childhood Education  
Pursue a Master's Degree in Special Education and become a Teacher  
**Thesis Title:** Choices Preschoolers Make During Free Play Centers: Analyzing the Effects of Ethnicity, Socioeconomic Status, Age, and Gender  
Free play is a vital component in any preschool program. The centers students choose to spend their time in is influenced by many factors. Students were watched during center time to record where they spent their time. Data was analyzed on an individual demographic category basis through an ANOVA and the interactions among them using loglinear analysis. Significant differences in children's choices were found for age, gender, ethnicity, and SES, also among the interactions of the demographic areas. Teachers can use this information to determine what centers need to be changed and where students are most likely to spend their time.