



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

ARTS & LETTERS



2021

SENIOR THESIS PROJECTS

Study everything. Do anything.SM

**Martin Heli**

- Majors: Political Science and Russian
- Certificate in International Security Studies
- Advisor: Michael Desch

Post-Truth or Truthful Posts? Truth and Falsehood in Twenty-First Century Disinformation

With all the concern about “fake news” and falsehoods in modern propaganda, I decided to evaluate the performance of truth and lies on social media. Analyzing Russian Facebook ads in the final month of the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign, I found that truth still has an important role to play in propaganda and, in many ways, outperforms lies.

I read article after article about Russia’s interference in the 2016 election. Many mentioned fake news; some even showed it. But no one paid much attention to when IRA trolls used what we might call “real news.” Unconvinced that we are living in a post-truth society, as some have argued, I wanted to look at what actually got results in modern propaganda.

**Laura Henares**

- Major: Economics
- Supplementary Major: German
- Minor: International Development Studies
- Advisor: Patrizio Piraino

Differences Between Urban and Rural Educational Outcomes in Brazil

In this research, I used econometric regressions to quantify how demographic and socioeconomic factors influence a student's ability to attend college in Brazil. Since the country is extremely unequal and mosaic, calculating this provided insight into the debate on whether federal or state-based policies are more efficient for Brazil.

As a Brazilian citizen, I was extremely privileged to be able to attend a top-quality school through my 14 years of education. I want other Brazilians to be able to not only have access to education, but quality of education as well. This will only be achieved by effective policymaking.

Traveled to Brazil.

**Declan Hotter**

- Major: Economics
- Minors: Russian and Accountancy
- Advisor: Eric Sims

Negative Interest Rates

For this project, I ran a macroeconomic analysis on 11 countries to determine if a one-point policy rate change in the negative range has the same effect as a one-point change in the positive range.

I chose this topic because unconventional monetary policy was very interesting to me after I took Eric Sims' Monetary Policy and Theory class. Because this policy is relatively new, I figured it would be a very interesting research topic.

**Elinor McCarthy**

- Majors: English and Russian
- Minor: Digital Marketing
- Advisors: Ian Newman and Melissa Miller

Surveying *The Gadfly*: A Case Study in Comparative World Literature

My thesis was completed for both my Russian and English majors and focuses on the novel *The Gadfly* by Ethel Voynich. The novel explores themes of revolution, religious disillusionment, and personal sacrifice. I interpreted it through Irish and Russian cultural and historical lenses.

I chose this topic because it spans my primary subjects of interest — Irish and Russian culture and literature. I was fortunate enough to study abroad in both Dublin and Moscow, and this thesis is a testament to the impact both countries have had on my education and worldview.

**Evan Muller**

- Major: Political Science
- Minor: Russian
- Certificate in International Security Studies
- Advisor: Eugene Gholz

Political Interference on the Military Justice System During Counterinsurgencies

My thesis examines when political interference, such as cover-ups or pardons, is performed on the military justice system in war crimes proceedings during counterinsurgency operations.

As someone who is entering the Marine Corps, hopefully as a judge advocate, I find the intersection of law, morality, and counterinsurgency extremely relevant.



**Charles Sedore**

- Majors: Political Science and Russian
- Certificate in International Security Studies
- Advisor: Sebastian Rosato

The Russian Waltz: Predicting Future Russian Alliances

The uncertainty of future U.S.-China relations and the resurgence of Russia on the world stage have raised questions about who Russia will ally with and support. With this issue in mind, my thesis uses a theory of alliance formation to predict future Russian alliances under the different possible circumstances Russia may face in the near future.

If asked who Russia would side with, given the choice between the U.S. and China, many individuals would probably choose China. However, I was not convinced that this answer is correct. It was this dissatisfaction that drove me to find an answer that is supported by data, through my own efforts and understanding of alliance formation theories and the history of Russian alliances.

**Jack Sitarski**

- Major: International Economics (German)
- Advisor: Daniel Hungerman

How Does Native Religiosity Affect Immigrant Outcomes in the German Labor Market?

The recent influx of immigrants from Muslim-majority countries has spurred Islamophobia in Germany and raised questions about the role of religion in the challenge of integration. My paper looks at the domestic side of the equation, studying whether Germans' own religious beliefs affect the labor market outcomes of immigrants. In particular, I used survey data to analyze the effect that regional differences in degree of religiosity have on immigrants' wages and employment prospects. I chose this topic due to my interests in migration and the religious identity of Germany. I think it is important to understand what types of features make one location more hospitable to immigrants than another. Given Germany's sharp regional divide in degree of religiosity, this seemed like a good lens through which to study migration and integration.

**Matthew Twargoski**

- Major: History
- Supplementary Major: French
- Minor: German
- Advisor: Ian Johnson

A Curse in Disguise: The Mechelen Incident of January 1940

The swift defeat of France in 1940 is perhaps Germany's greatest military achievement in World War II, yet the invasion would have failed without an unintended error. My project studies German military strategy following an incident when a German courier plane crashed in Belgium in early 1940. The crash resulted in the Allies capturing the original German battle plans. The new strategy was a success, but who devised this plan, Hitler or his generals?

I have always been interested in military history, particularly World War II, and I am also interested in studying foreign languages. I wanted to find a topic that would not only combine my interests, but also one which is not frequently discussed. The Mechelen Incident checks all these boxes. I studied the topic I love while reading primary sources from France, Germany, and Belgium in their original French, German, and Dutch.