



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

ARTS & LETTERS



2020

SENIOR THESIS PROJECTS

Study everything. Do anything.SM

**Elly Bleier**

- Majors: Political Science and Russian
- Minor: Business Economics
- Adviser: Susanne Wengle

The Politics of the Most Vulnerable: The Dima Yakovlev Law and Public Opinion in Russia

I argue that the Dima Yakovlev Law was more than just a political move or a purely public reaction to tragedy. By examining media coverage of international adoption in Russia, I argue that it was also a prime opportunity for Russia to take advantage of pre-existing suspicion of the West and scandalize the relatively few adoption-related tragedies in order to further the narrative of a paternal and morally superior Russia.

I was adopted from Crimea when I was 3 years old. During my various trips to Russia, I was confronted with questions about the adoption ban and heard for the first time that at least some Russians see America as a potentially dangerous place for orphaned children. I wanted to explore the politics behind that narrative.

**Brennan Dour**

- Majors: Program of Liberal Studies (PLS) and German
- Sorin Fellow
- Adviser: Jennifer Newsome Martin

Interrogating the Tenability of Catholic Universalism: A Genealogy of Universal Salvation in Scripture, Tradition, and Contemporary Theology

In my thesis, I undertake a holistic consideration of universal salvation by examining its scriptural, patristic, and medieval roots. I then analyze its place in contemporary theology, with a particular focus on the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar and David Bentley Hart. I argue that, given a full picture of the New Testament and the Church's soteriological tradition, a Catholic can very reasonably adopt certain versions of universalism.

I first became interested in the issue of inclusive salvation while living in Jerusalem the summer before my junior year. I was curious about how the Catholic Church's ecumenical and interfaith efforts I witnessed in the Holy Land could come into harmony with its position on the reach of salvation to those of non-Christian religious traditions.

**Nathan Gundlach**

- Major: Civil Engineering
- Supplementary Major: German
- Adviser: Mark Roche

Luther and Lessing

Martin Luther, the great reformer, and Gotthold Lessing, the enlightenment writer/thinker, are both German intellectual giants. By comparing their works and placing them in dialogue with one another, I draw parallels between them and their respective movements and illuminate their fundamental differences.

A quick search of the Hesburgh Library yields numerous books on German literature from Lessing to Luther but hardly any comparing their thought and works. I chose this topic for my thesis because I believe it helps fill that void.

**Mary Elsa Henrichs**

- Majors: English and German
- Adviser: Jesse Lander

The Miraculous in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*

In my thesis, I explore various questions about Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* — examining its unwieldy plot, fairy tale roots, deus ex machina, miraculous reconciliation, and affirmation of divine providence, with particular attention to the treatment of these elements in performance.

Cymbeline inspired my love of Shakespeare when I initially encountered the play in high school. After having the incredible opportunity to direct this play for the Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company in the fall of my junior year, I was excited to explore more deeply the questions I have by examining the scholarly conversation surrounding it.

**Will Jones**

- Major: Program of Liberal Studies (PLS)
- Minor: Russian
- Sorin Fellow
- Adviser: Thomas Stapleford

Caritas and the Just War

My thesis examines the role of the Christian conception of charity, or *caritas*, in the understanding of warfare. I began with an examination of St. Thomas Aquinas' theories on ethics and the morality of actions, particularly regarding actions of justice and warfare. I then proceeded to examine the theories of war and justice presented by contemporary just war theorists, Christian realists, and Christian pacifists.

I chose this topic to better understand how the Christian tradition reconciles the relationship between actions of political force in order to uphold earthly justice and Christ's call to love one another — and to determine if these ends are contrary or complementary.

**Elizabeth Kolb**

- Major: Arabic Studies
- Minors: Russian and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
- Adviser: Hana Kang

Second Language Acquisition Ideologies of Online Polyglots

This study investigates the language-learning ideologies of two members of the online polyglot community, Steve Kaufmann and Benny Lewis. Through an analysis of Kaufmann's and Lewis' proprietary online language-learning platforms, I compare the polyglots' methodologies and evaluate their efficacy in learning Arabic and English.

I chose to conduct this research because of my interest in second language acquisition. I had studied linguistics with my adviser, Hana Kang, and I wished to conduct independent research in the field before graduation. Online language-learning enthusiasts endorse many different products and methods, though there is very little research on their methods or ideologies in applied linguistics. I felt that my research could help fill this gap.

Received funding from the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program.



Si On Lee

- Majors: Program of Liberal Studies (PLS) and German
- Minor: Education, Schooling, and Society (ESS)
- Adviser: G. Felicitas Munzel

Remembering the Cosmopolitan Harmony in Philosophy and Education, or Reading David Hansen's *The Teacher and the World as a Handbook*

My project begins with a diagnosis of the contemporary problem in both education and philosophy as their separation from each other. In order to reimagine the relationship between philosophy and education, my thesis explores the philosopher Michael Gelven's insight into the phenomenon of asking, the classics scholar Pierre Hadot's articulation of ancient philosophy as the art of living, and the philosopher of education David Hansen's vision of the cosmopolitan classroom.

I've always firmly believed that education and philosophy should not be considered separate endeavors. I came across Hansen's book two years ago, thanks to Felicitas Munzel's recommendation. On my first read, I appreciated how Hansen spoke so profoundly and beautifully about the very important issues in philosophy and education. I wanted to dig more into the book and tell other people about it, too.

Regina O'Brien

- Major: International Economics (German)
- Advisers: Denise Della Rossa and Rüdiger Bachmann

Central Bank Monetary Policy Decisions and Stock Prices of Commercial Banks in Germany

My project looks into the European Central Bank monetary policies' effect on investment in Germany's largest commercial banks over the past 10 years. The analysis came up with an average 3-cent decrease in the stock price of Deutsche Bank, given a one-basis-point increase in the relevant rate while below the zero lower bound.

Negative interest rates are a relatively new economic tool, only introduced in Germany in June 2014. Although there is much research on the relationship between monetary policy and financial investment, I thought a focus on commercial banks would be extremely telling as to the attitude and behavior of investors above and below the zero lower bound.

**Jessica Saeli**

- Majors: Philosophy and Russian
- Kellogg International Scholar
- Advisers: Alexander Jech and Emily Wang

Eros and Personality: An Analysis of Nikolai Berdyaev's Philosophy of Love Through an Original Translation of His Autobiography

I analyzed and evaluated Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev's philosophy of love using several of his works, including an original translation of passages from his autobiography. Berdyaev argues that love-eros, which is a powerful love for another individual, is necessary for the actualization of the complete self and personality, since only love-eros recognizes and values the unique self of another person.

I have always been interested in philosophy and Russian literature. During my time at Notre Dame, I found how they intersected in Russian philosophy, which approaches and answers the fundamental questions of life — such as “Who am I?” — differently than Western philosophy. This different perspective fascinates me, and I wanted to promote this under-studied subject.

**James Anthony Stoner**

- Majors: Philosophy and Russian
- Glynn Family Honors Program
- Adviser: Fred Rush

Life in Hegel's Logic: Reading the Category of 'Life' in Hegel's *Science of Logic*

I offer a reading of the chapter of "Life" in Hegel's book *The Science of Logic* and its implications for his project in the *Logic* as a whole. I take the basic project of the *Logic* to be a sort of category theory: determining the basic conceptual requirements necessary for any cognitive experience in general. I discuss the relevance of "life" to this framework, with respect to thought's autonomy and "life-like" internally teleological structure.

I previously took Fred Rush's course on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I was interested in, though intensely skeptical of, Hegel's general project, particularly by what he meant in his cryptic characterizations of his entire project in the preface to that work and the "Absolute Knowledge" chapter. Having read *The Science of Logic* and some secondary literature, the ambiguous position of the category of "Life" impressed me.

Traveled to Berlin, Germany, with funding from the Glynn Family Honors Program.