



URSA

Undergraduate, Research,
Scholarship and Arts.
Benedictine University

2026 Oral Presentation Schedule

April 16, 2026 ❖ 12:00-4:30 pm ❖ Goodwin Hall 211, 212, and 213

SESSION 1: Goodwin 211 (12:00-1:30 pm)

◆ **Young Adults' Perceptions: Early-Life Influences on Juvenile Delinquency**

Emiliano Delgado

Juvenile delinquency remains a persistent social issue, with many individuals entering the criminal justice system at a young age due to early life influences. Understanding the factors that contribute to delinquent behavior in youth is critical for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. The problem addressed in this study is the lack of public awareness and agreement regarding which early life factors most strongly influence juvenile crime. I studied perceptions of early-life factors such as family environment, peer influence, school experiences, neighborhood conditions, and exposure to trauma that contribute to pathways toward juvenile delinquency. This research emphasizes how everyday individuals understand and interpret the causes of youth crime. Data was collected through structured interviews administered to approximately 30 participants. I have analyzed responses to identify common themes, patterns, and frequently cited influences related to juvenile delinquent behavior. It was hypothesized that most participants will identify family instability, negative peer influence, and environmental factors, such as high-crime neighborhoods and lack of resources, as primary contributors to juvenile delinquency. During this study, I anticipated that fewer participants would recognize psychological or developmental factors, highlighting a gap between the way the public sees it and academic research on juvenile crime.

Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

◆ **The Evolution of Domestic Violence within the Criminal Justice System**

Kaylee Ludwig

Domestic Violence (DV) cases continue to reveal significant challenges within the legal system as research into this field continues to develop. My studies of DV cases and observations in the courthouse itself shed light on how DV has been gradually addressed within our society; yet there are critical gaps in accountability and procedural support in addressing DV cases. My experiences, observations, and research within the Domestic Violence Courthouse in Cook County have raised my awareness of numerous key issues that still remain prevalent. This research identifies the persistent barriers in how the legal process handles DV cases. The understanding of survivors in gaining proper legal guidance to file correct and informational protective orders and being educated on their options legally to obtain the safest order is slim. Although many non-profit organizations and legal aid societies attempt to relieve these burdens, the amount of funding they receive and the scope of assistance they are allowed to provide financially is extremely limited. Are there ways to remediate the shortcomings in current DV response frameworks? This presentation emphasizes possible reform targeting survivor-centered legal support and protection that prioritizes safety and combatting the present decline in reported DV cases.

Faculty sponsor: Michael Plaisted

- ◆ **Inside the Ranks: Police Perceptions of Community-Oriented Policing**

Jocelyn Medina

Community policing is a police initiative that has been implemented throughout law enforcement to help strengthen the relationship between community and local police. This strategy focuses on reducing crime and law enforcement and communities working together to build trust. The problem this study addresses is the effectiveness of community policing and its ability to build trust and appropriately reduce crime within communities. A main focus of this study is how law enforcement efforts to implement community policing are perceived within their communities and attitudes pertaining to law enforcement who are implementing these policies. I studied local police officers' attitudes towards community policing and their perception of community oriented policing. This study examines community trust, police legitimacy, and reduction of crime. I conducted this study by interviewing local law enforcement officers in Illinois and asked them a series of questions pertaining to community oriented policing strategies. I hypothesize that local law enforcement will have positive attitudes towards community oriented policing but do not actively practice these initiatives daily or long term. It is hypothesized that police officers who are specifically assigned to implement these strategies to their community will report more positive long term relationships with their community compared to regular patrol officers who are not specially assigned community policing initiatives.

Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

- ◆ **Music Education Now: Exploring Benefits, Disability Culture, Cultural Diversity, and New Approaches**

Claudia Podurgiel

Music education is a part of many students' schooling experiences, but it is often overlooked, and its importance is can be questioned. This presentation will explore recent studies and articles to analyze current music education from various aspects: how it benefits students, what changes it may need, and its role in shaping disability culture and cultivating cultural diversity in education. Although studies found that music education can help foster students' social, cognitive, and emotional skills, obstacles such as financial and social inequity along with a lack of diversity make music education inaccessible or difficult to pursue for some students. Fortunately, new approaches, such as the ecosocial approach, creative problem-solving (CPS), and self-determination theory, as well as broadening the perspective of music beyond conventional Western culture and traditional rules could help music education grow into a field more inclusive of disability and diverse cultures while supporting students' skill acquisition and effectively preparing them to be sensitive, aware, engaged, and positive members of society.

Faculty sponsor: Al Legutki, Beth Sitter

SESSION 2: Goodwin 212 (12:00-1:30 pm)

- ◆ **More Than Music: Trauma, Identity and Native American Culture in Tommy Orange's *There There***

Sara Bishawi

This paper examines the way music is used as a motif in *There There* by Tommy Orange. It focuses on how music helps characters deal with trauma, reconnect with their culture and traditions despite living in urban settings, and figure out their identities. The paper will first give some historical and cultural context about music in Native communities, including its relation to powwows relocation, and cultural erasure. Then I will look at some of the literary techniques Orange uses throughout the short story cycle such as the structure of the novel, repetition, and symbolism. In this narrative, music acts as a tool for identity, a way to cope with trauma, and a way to build community among the characters. Overall, this paper argues that music plays an important role in helping the characters feel connected to both themselves and their culture.

Faculty sponsor: Wilson Chen

- ◆ **The Legacy of Trauma in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights***

Jordan Cardenas

This paper analyses how intergenerational trauma works in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* by examining close relationships between the first and second generations of characters in the novel. The project treats emotional inheritance as a central and thematic force in *Wuthering Heights* and asks how suffering, revenge, and attachment are involuntarily passed down from one generation to the next. It also explores how certain patterns of behavior repeat across generations, reinforcing cycles of conflict and emotional damage. This research also considers how *Wuthering Heights* represents emotional inheritance as a controlling, deterministic force, while also suggesting that certain characters attempt, though not always successfully, to break this representation to current understandings of psychological and intergenerational trauma.

Faculty sponsor: Wilson Chen

- ◆ **Bodies of Profit: Dehumanization and the Consumable Body in Sinclair's *The Jungle***

Paule Medziute

This presentation examines the role of the worker's body in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, suggesting that the novel views the body as an object that is consumed, dehumanized, and exploited. Sinclair depicts workers as mere capital, valued only for their results and easily discarded once their bodies fail. Through his distinct portrayals of men, women, and children, the novel shows how different bodies are exploited regardless of age, vulnerability, or strength. In this industry, all workers are reduced to expendable resources. Occupational injuries and unsanitary conditions further degrade the worker, creating and normalizing physical harm as a condition of labour. Sinclair draws parallels between the conditions of workers and the animals they slaughter, reducing the boundary between the two and critiquing the system that renders them consumable resources like the meat they process.

Faculty sponsor: Wilson Chen

- ◆ **Breaking Cultural Scripts and Reclaiming Identity in Erika Sanchez's *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* and *Crying in the Bathroom***

Valerie Perez

Erika L. Sanchez's novel *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* and memoir *Crying in the Bathroom* expose the cultural expectations, inherited trauma, and self-identity that Mexican American daughters live with. It also focuses on how Sanchez uses both of her works to explore how unrealistic expectations and silence within immigrant households cause intergenerational trauma. By examining fictional protagonist Julia's story and Sanchez's own experiences with her mother, this paper shows how Mexican American daughters must resist cultural expectations and navigate unrealistic gender roles to reclaim their agency. This paper will draw from scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga to expand the research on the effects of cultural pressure on Mexican American women and other immigrant women of color. Ultimately, I argue that Sanchez uses both storytelling and autobiography to reveal that the image of the "perfect" daughter is imposed on Mexican daughters, ruining family dynamics. Sanchez thus uses storytelling as a form of resistance and as a voice for all Mexican American daughters.

Faculty sponsor: Wilson Chen

SESSION 3: Goodwin 213 (12:00-1:30 pm)

- ◆ **Self-Overcoming and Moral Dependence in Nietzsche's Philosophy**

Miranda Garcia

Nietzsche critiques the basis of Christianity, stating that Christian morality values weakness rather than strength failing to have a foundation structured in reality. Nietzsche defines the strong as having to overcome both inner conflict and outside pressures to conform in order to reach full expression and thus needing to overcome the very moralities he wants to eliminate. I analyzed Nietzsche's *The Antichrist* and his various critiques on Christianity. I also

analyzed other works by Nietzsche such as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Origin of Knowledge from The Gay Science*, and *On The Genealogy of Morals*, finding common defining features of the relationship between commanders and obeyers. I hypothesized that traditional moralities such as Christianity are necessary even in Nietzsche's understanding of both roles, the obeyer and commander. My findings show that Nietzsche defines the strong as having to overcome both inner conflict and outside pressures to reach its full expression. This shows that while traditional moralities are the very moralities that Nietzsche wants to eliminate, they are also necessary to fulfill the roles of being a commander or obeyer.

Faculty sponsor: Steven Burgess

◆ **The Flaws of “King Cotton”: How Dreams of Empire Can Cloud Realities**

Connor Price

In the historiography of the U.S. Civil War, an often understated aspect is the exceptional nature of the Confederate secession from the United States. The Confederacy was the culmination of secessionist strategies that were decades in the making, centered on the idea of “King Cotton.” The Southern leadership believed that their monopoly on cotton production would force the Great Powers of Europe to recognize their independence. The strategy was flawed, as the leadership of the Confederacy had underestimated the market versatility and production capabilities of the European powers. The Confederacy had also underestimated the impact of the Union's naval assets. The Union's naval blockade prevented Confederate cotton exports from leaving the country in significant numbers. King Cotton was a strategy that did not hold up to scrutiny. Despite this, King Cotton was a strategy that gave the secessionists enough confidence to kick off a war that would eventually become the bloodiest in American history. Therefore, it warrants investigation to find what had emboldened the Confederate States into secession, and what caused Southern leadership and the plantocracy to have a blind spot to the holes in King Cotton.

Faculty sponsor: Kaveh Hemmat

◆ **The Weight of Being: An Existentialist Analysis of Eating Disorders**

Sabreen Saleh

Are eating disorders a response to a deeper existential condition (e.g., loneliness, disembodiment, control)? Under the wide-spanning umbrella of mental illness, eating disorders are among the most misunderstood and misrepresented, despite their effect on a significant portion of the global population. Rather than focusing on the signs, symptoms, and habits of sufferers, this study aims to analyze this state of being from an existentialist perspective, exploring the condition as a coping mechanism to the overwhelming angst of existence in a state of self-awareness and radical freedom. Being in this world is a perpetual struggle, becoming the breeding ground for feelings of loneliness, a lack of control over oneself, identity crises, etc. These conditions may manifest as one or more self-soothing mechanisms, healthy or otherwise. While there are many different proposals as to the causes/pathology of sufferers from a psychological perspective, this presentation will focus on eating disorders as one attempt to manage the feelings of discomfort and internal unrest amidst a state of chronic awareness and uncertainty. This analysis does not attempt to explain eating disorders at the individual level, but as a broader response (among personal conditions and particulars) to the burden of "being-in-the-world."

Faculty sponsor: Kaveh Hemmat

◆ **Educational Experiences and Political Socialization: Foundations of Political Awareness**

Maryam Malkana

People begin forming political beliefs at a young age, yet the role of school experiences in shaping those beliefs remains insufficiently understood. There is limited qualitative research examining how individuals recall encountering political ideas during their schooling. This study explores how individuals from diverse backgrounds remember learning about politics in school and how those experiences contributed to their political awareness. To investigate this question, I conducted qualitative research using semi structured interviews with approximately thirty participants. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes and was conducted either in person or via Zoom with participants' permission to record. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify

recurring patterns in participants' experiences. Key themes included classroom discussions about political issues, teacher attitudes toward politics, exposure to current events in school, peer conversations about political topics, and the broader school climate surrounding political expression. Preliminary findings suggest that political understanding is shaped more strongly by informal experiences within schools than by formal civic curriculum alone. These findings highlight the role of everyday educational environments in shaping early political socialization.
Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

SESSION 4: Goodwin 211 (1:30-3:00 pm)

- ◆ **Echoes of Decency: How Echo Chambers on Social Media Increase Political Polarization**

Jimmy Fiore

Social media is one of the primary ways people interact with politics today. Due to this, there is a concern that social media users may find themselves in a political echo chamber, an environment that promotes similar viewpoints and disparages opposing viewpoints. To what extent do echo chambers on social media increase the political polarization of its users? I studied this by first looking into prior research done relating to the topic and coding the data into groups. I then interviewed thirty people of differing identities, age groups, and political affiliation, and asked questions according to a pre-prepared interview guide with room for off-script probing to gather complete data on the subject. I coded the responses into similar groups, then compared the responses to previously coded research data to find similarities. My primary findings are as follows: 1) The more an individual is active on social media, the more likely it is that they will be in a political echo chamber, and consequently hold highly polarized political views. 2) Most individuals in an echo chamber do not realize that they are inside one. My findings broadly indicate that political echo chambers are detrimental to how individuals view and interact with the political environment and people who hold different political views.

Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

- ◆ **Climate Change, Environment, and Urban Green Infrastructure: Exploring Adaptation, Resilience, and Sustainability in Urban Landscapes**

Yannely Ramirez

This study examined how individuals understood the effects of climate change in urban areas and their views on green infrastructure as an adaptation strategy. As cities faced increasing challenges such as rising temperatures, flooding, and ecosystem loss, green spaces became crucial for enhancing resilience and protecting communities. To explore the public perspectives, this research employed qualitative methods, including 30 semi-structured interviews with Catholic college students in the Midwest. Participants discussed their views on climate change, environmental impacts, and the need for sustainable urban planning. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to identify common themes. The findings indicated that most participants demonstrated a general awareness of climate change and its environmental impacts. The results suggested a growing recognition of the importance of green infrastructure in addressing urban climate challenges. Overall, this study highlighted how individuals perceived climate change issues and emphasized the value of nature-based solutions in future urban planning.

Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

- ◆ **The Making of a Monster: Serial Killers in Film and Media**

Natalia Repetowska

Images of serial killers are created by the current media and influence popular perceptions of crime, deviance, morality, and justice. This study analyzes twenty media texts, including dramatized films, documentaries, and streaming series. Some examples include *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile*, *Dahmer-Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*, and *Mindhunter*. Offender centrality, romanticization of violence, gender framing, racial framing, and victim representation are among the areas where the research concentrates. It has been found that there are

recurring trends where criminals are personalized and sold as heroes or exceptional people, while structural reasons and institutional breakdowns are sidelined. Victims, in most cases, especially women, LGBTQ+ persons, sex workers, and people of color, are often marginalized and underdeveloped. This paper also concludes that aestheticized and sensationalized violence leads to the commodification of crime and the strengthening of cultural myths on the topic of criminal genius. Such descriptions have the potential to make offenders more compelling, less sympathetic to victims, and influence the perception of right and wrong by the population. I conclude by calling for the need to have more ethical, victim-driven, critically informed media portrayals.

Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

◆ **When the Story Misses the Point: Media and Gun Violence**

Michael Shelley

Even though gun violence is still one of the most pressing social and public health concerns in the US, how news outlets report on these instances has a significant impact on how the public perceives the issue and potential remedies. My hypothesis is that most of the coverage will emphasize law enforcement viewpoints, focus on episodic framing, and provide little to no discussion of structural causes or prevention. Therefore, rather than supporting a more comprehensive public-health approach, I anticipate that news reporting may inadvertently reinforce limited, crime-centered understandings of gun violence. My research used qualitative data by interviewing 30 Catholic students at a college University. I recruited various genders and races. All 30 interviews were semi-structured, in which I asked a series of questions that I had prepared ahead of time, but also asked off-scripted questions if needed. Interviews were completed within an hour or an hour and a half. I went through the transcripts to ensure the conversation was properly recorded. After all interviews had been transcribed, I coded the data for analysis. I looked for common themes related to gun coverage reports in the media. I expect to find framing, shaping the public perception of gun crime.

Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

SESSION 5: Goodwin 212 (1:30-3:00 pm)

◆ **The Silencing Aspect of Nineteenth-Century Slave Narratives: Interpreting William and Ellen Craft's Multi-Genre *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom***

Trinity Blanche

This paper examines the understudied and infrequently taught slave narrative of William and Ellen Craft, a couple from Georgia who devised an ingenious escape plan to "run a thousand miles to freedom" by using Ellen's ability to pass as white to their advantage. It can be argued that *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom* can be read as autoethnographical, autobiographical, and as a picaresque novel. Furthermore, the text can be analyzed in relation to topics like the abolitionist political movement, crossdressing, sexism, and many more. It reveals the true intelligence of formerly enslaved individuals while also having a male-centered vendetta. This argument is relevant because it shows how early American literature is often silenced by either racism, sexism, or even publishing organizations.

Faculty sponsor: Wilson Chen

◆ **The Other Women in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening***

Morgan Magnabosco

This presentation examines *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin and how the novel contributes to our understanding of the ideologies of separate spheres and "The New Woman" in the late nineteenth century. Many people read this novel as representing liberation for women because of the resistance Edna Pontellier has to her typical and domestic life. However, when we take a deeper look into the novel, we see this liberation is not accessible to all women during this time. In fact, many critics reinforce that the ideologies of separate spheres and the "New Woman" were not equally experienced. By focusing on the characters Mariequita, Celestie, Adele Ratingolle,

Mademoiselle Reisz and Edna, this paper will expose the experience each of these women had based on their social class, race, and livelihood. Edna is able to have her “awakening” because of her whiteness and class, while other women were confined to their homes or forced to do labor. Ultimately, we see a limited lens through Chopin’s writing on separate spheres and “The New Woman” due to its centering of the experience of upper class white women.

Faculty sponsor: Wilson Chen

- ◆ **Literary Nonfiction and Poverty: Representation and Subjectivity in Katherine Boo’s *Behind the Beautiful Forevers***
Seth Peterson

Katherine Boo’s work *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, based in a settlement on the periphery of Mumbai, India, follows the lives of multiple people in a slum called Annawadi. In engaging with her well-researched subject through the form of literary nonfiction, Katherine Boo is able to create an intimate experience for her readers. As an American author, writing for a largely American audience, Boo is able to utilize her unique genre and novelistic style to create subjectivity for the individuals with whom she spent so much time, offering a different, personal, literary representation of the effects of globalization on the lives of migrants and workers. As an award-winning journalist and American, Boo questions her place and her authority in writing about this topic. I argue that her project is a socially responsible and important one that is not an exploitative, simplistic representation of a marginalized population within a developing country experiencing some of the effects of globalization.

Faculty sponsor: Wilson Chen

SESSION 6: Goodwin 213 (1:30-3:00 pm)

- ◆ **From Home to Classroom: The Hidden Power of Parenting Toward Academics**
Bianca Geromini

Social environment and parenting styles play a significant role in shaping an individual’s academic performance, whether it be social interaction with family, friends, and peers, which all contribute to better academics—showing a positive and supporting community that could also provide encouragement and accountability and foster productive study habits throughout. However, having a hostile environment with negative social factors, such as peer distractions or hostile school environments, can hinder academic focus and mental health altogether. There are many factors of having a better and more supportive community regarding their mental health and enhancing their school performance, whereas negativity significantly impacts their motivation and performance. In all, the quality of social interactions and their surroundings are crucial factors that hinder academics. I have conducted a series of interviews with 30 people to figure out what parenting style fits better to them growing up and what they think they will use in the future if and when they have kids. After analyzing the interviews stress and mental health play a role in how these kids grow up in school, as well as how their social skills start to develop.

Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

- ◆ **How Do Attitudes Toward Immigration and Immigration Policies Vary by Age, Race, Education, and Socioeconomic Groups in the United States?**
Habiba Siddiqui

This paper examines attitudes toward immigration and immigration policies, as well as their variations across age, race, education, and socioeconomic groups in the United States. Using data and surveys, I analyze the different perspectives on immigration and how specific factors play a role in their respective perspectives. I explore relevant historical patterns, such as recurring cycles of inclusion and exclusion, which are closely tied to the state of the economy. I anticipate finding a divide between the viewpoints of the current generation and the past generations. Younger respondents tend to lean more favorably towards immigration-friendly policies compared to older respondents. Furthermore, I expect to see clear indications of how individuals’ education and socioeconomic status influence their attitudes towards immigration policies. Overall, the study aims to analyze the attitudes of individuals

and groups of individuals and how social factors such as age, race, education, and socioeconomic status affect them.

Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

◆ **Polarized Minds: Inside Student Views on Extremism in the U.S.**

Jeremiah Wilson

Using semi-structured interviews, the research examines college students' definitions of political violence, what they deem the sources of extremism, how media and online spaces contribute to the situation, and what impact increased political tension and quotidian social interaction have on attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions about political violence. Thematic analysis indicated that those patterns continued to be prominent, with issues including political polarization, misinformation, social division and exposure to political conflict, particularly through social media. Respondents frequently linked extremism with online radicalization, algorithmic exposure, social fracture, low trust, and loss of trust in institutions, but also suggested the emotional and psychological effects on their lives resulting from political animosities. The vast majority of students, already reluctant to engage in political violence, had begun to worry about democratic stability and social polarization. The study also addresses student-identified early preventative measures including community conversation, media literacy, increased social solidarity, and attention to online disinformation and radicalization. These findings provide valuable insights into young adults' experience of political threats as well as student-centered solutions to building resilience among this demographic through the dual means of combating extremism and empowering youth to engage with democracy inclusively.

Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

◆ **Understanding Hate Crimes Through Student Perspectives**

Dayana Vega

Hate crimes are still a serious problem in the United States. They can affect individuals, schools, and whole communities by making people feel unsafe and scared. Many hate crimes are never reported because people may feel afraid, unsure, or believe that nothing will change if they speak up. This is important to understand how students see and experience hate crimes in their everyday lives. This study focused on how classmates understand hate crimes, what they have seen or heard, and how safe they feel in their school or community. The research used qualitative interviews with 30 students to learn about their thoughts, experiences, and awareness of hate-related incidents. Students were asked questions about how they define hate crimes, if they have witnessed or heard about them, and why some people may not report these incidents. The interviews also included questions about trust in authorities, the role of social media, and how communities respond to hate crimes. Each interview helped give a better understanding of student perspectives. The results helped identify common ideas and patterns in how students view hate crimes. Some students showed different levels of understanding and shared concerns about safety and reporting. This study highlights ways schools and communities can improve awareness, support victims, and create safer and more respectful environments for everyone.

Faculty sponsor: Patrick Polasek

SESSION 7: Goodwin 211 (3:00-4:30 pm)

◆ **Cortisol Is the New “Buzzword”: Stress, Misnomers, and the Cultural Misuse of Endocrinology**

Rida Ali

Cortisol is a hormone that plays a vital role in the body's stress response. In today's wellness culture, however, “cortisol imbalance” has become a catch-all term used to explain fatigue, excess weight gain, burnout, and other symptoms, leading to an oversimplification of endocrine physiology for a general audience. For instance, wellness communities attribute such symptoms to “high cortisol,” promoting simplistic solutions such as avoiding caffeine or taking supplements. The discourse surrounding these solutions often frames them as the definitive answer for correcting cortisol imbalance. This misinterpretation reflects a cultural trend in which structural stressors such as workplace obligations, economic uncertainty, and systemic discrimination are reframed as individual moral failings.

This pattern reflects the idea of medicalization of suffering, where individuals rely on biomedical narratives, in this case, hormonal explanations, and assign meaning to their suffering. Understanding these trends is vital for addressing health concerns at the individual and societal levels, identifying and challenging the inequalities that often shape health outcomes.

Faculty sponsor: Jean-Marie Kauth

◆ **The Influence of Islamic Traditions on Modern Day Medicine**

Umar Farooqie

Medicine as we know it today has been influenced by ancient civilizations such as the Greeks, the Romans, the Persians, and the Indians. Islamic medicine has been an excellent transition between the ancient world and today's world in medicine. It was during the medieval period that Islamic medicine was at the height of its influence. They synthesized their own Islamic principles with the principles of previous civilizations. Today, it is rare to see medical practitioners take from ancient civilizations' medical wisdom. Another issue is that trust is often not established between physicians and patients. Trust was a top priority in the era of medieval Islamic medicine. This paper also describes how Islamic practitioners established trust with their patients and compares and contrasts Islamic with Western biomedical ethics. Finally, it engages with debates as to whether Islamic medicine is legitimate or not, arguing that historically sophisticated Islamic medicine is compatible with some parts of modern biomedicine, provided its practices meet contemporary standards of safety, efficacy, regulation, and informed consent. Integrating these insights can support culturally responsive, evidence-based care, especially for Muslim patients.

Faculty sponsor: Jean-Marie Kauth

◆ **Bureaucratic Authority and Dehumanization of Care: A Rhetorical Analysis of Prior Authorizations and Insurance Denials in U.S. Healthcare**

Amaan Faruqi

Most physicians (93%) report that the process of prior authorizations (PAs) causes delays in treatments. For example, in a cohort of pediatric patients with Crohn's disease, a delay of 10+ days was found, with the majority of time spent on insurance processing. In addition to the loss of autonomy and physical harm that such delays cause, previous studies have found a linguistic shift in blame within medical literature that can restrict care and dehumanize patients and their narratives. These techniques often neglect a patient's subjective experience and focus on technical jargon such as billing codes and diagnoses, which can exploit their vulnerability in the clinical setting. The present study examines the rhetoric from external review cases of billing denials and PAs from the Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services, specifically identifying reductionism, fragmentation, irony, and other indicators that weaken a patient's position. Across all cases, there are consistent patterns of patients being reduced to clinical data, of prioritizing bureaucratic authority over clinical judgment, and of the absence of patient narratives—undermining their experiences. Such analysis allows policymakers and advocates to tackle the structural barriers within the U.S. healthcare system that often exploit patients' health illiteracy, prioritizing profits over people.

Faculty sponsor: Jean-Marie Kauth

◆ **The Intersectionality of Race and Gender in Cardiovascular Health: Improving Care for South Asian Women Through Cultural Competency**

Marium Hussain

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is highly prevalent among individuals of South Asian ancestry, accounting for nearly 60% of heart disease cases worldwide. South Asians face an elevated risk of CHD, with higher mortality rates at younger ages and with greater severity compared to other groups. This increased risk has been linked to metabolic factors and epigenetic influences shaped by historical exposures such as famine. However, these risks have also contributed to stereotypes that disconnect individuals from their cultural identities and traditions. Medical discourse frequently groups South Asians with CHD as a single category, ignoring individual patient experiences. Women are often excluded from the narrative and present with non-traditional indicators, leading to underdiagnosis,

undertreatment, and underrepresentation in cardiovascular research. Healthcare gaps are even greater in minority women, highlighting the intersectionality between race and gender that creates unique barriers in healthcare. Addressing these disparities requires physicians to expand cultural competency and better recognize the intersection of race and gender in cardiovascular health to reduce bias and discrimination. While medicine should remain race-impartial, including race as a way of identifying high-risk patients with CHD allows health professionals to target minority groups that have historically been undertreated, leading to better representation in healthcare.
Faculty sponsor: Jean-Marie Kauth

◆ **Inequity in Illustration: Deconstructing the Racialized Lens of Medicine**

Ishaa Jain

Visual imagery has been used as a learning tool for centuries, yet its objectivity has been repeatedly debunked by examining the historical environment of these depictions. Medical illustrations and visual media in the past, most notably the nineteenth century, have produced and reinforced false biological narratives about African Americans and their inferiority to white Europeans. The purpose of this project is to analyze modern medical textbooks and educational media to look for persistence of these under/misrepresentations of nonwhite bodies. By drawing on research on implicit bias among medical professionals, the aim is to investigate how such visual disparities contribute to cognitive frameworks and further lead to ill-informed decisions in diagnosis and treatment. Observations of contemporary textbooks and medical political media show that while medical schools are making an effort in their curricula to undo the past racialization of medicine, true objectivity is difficult to accomplish. Illustrations and photographs in medical education deserve a critical reevaluation rooted in historical contexts in order to best strive towards more equitable healthcare.

Faculty sponsor: Jean-Marie Kauth

SESSION 8: Goodwin 212 (3:00-4:30 pm)

◆ **A War of Many Causes: Moving Beyond the Simplified Narratives of World War I's Origins**

John Prusko

The origins of World War I are frequently reduced to one or two simplistic explanations, typically the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand or the system of alliances, overlooking the complex interplay of factors that precipitated the conflict. Like most major historical events, the causes of the Great War extend far beyond these familiar narratives, encompassing numerous lesser-known political, economic, and social factors. Examining these multifaceted origins reveals how contingent historical outcomes were and how small changes in various circumstances might have prevented the war entirely or limited it to a regional conflict comparable to earlier European wars. This presentation explores the fuller complexity of World War I's causes, illuminating the interconnected events and conditions that made global conflict inevitable.

Faculty sponsor: Kaveh Hemmat

◆ **Canadian Prohibition: The Prohibition before the United States**

Peyton Taylor

Prohibition, the national ban on alcohol, is often thought of as a policy and an era within the history of the United States, however there was also a prohibition policy in Canada. Prohibition in Canada lasted from 1918 to 1920. This was mainly a temporary wartime measure during World War I. But it varied by province and started as early as 1856 and continued as late as 1948. Canada's national prohibition came before the United States prohibition which began in 1920. It was a less strict and shorter lived national prohibition than that of the United States. Throughout Prohibition, however, there were many failures to prevent people from drinking, which fueled illegal sales in Canada as it did in the United States. The Prohibition policy that changed people's lives between World War I and World War II began and continued in Canada long before and long after the Prohibition era in the U.S.

Faculty sponsor: Kaveh Hemmat

- ◆ **South Asian Caregivers of Individuals with Disabilities: Future Planning Needs and Health Promotion**

Zalfa Shums

South Asian family caregivers of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and cognitive disabilities face significant stress, because of caregiving demands, stigma, discrimination and lack of services. Caregivers also express pressing concerns about future planning for their care recipients, particularly in contexts like India where formal services are limited. There is limited research on exploring the future planning needs and health promotion for South Asian caregivers of individuals with disabilities. Two studies focused on addressing the needs of South Asian caregivers: (1) a strengths-based mixed-methods needs assessment conducted with caregivers in India using surveys and interviews; and (2) a pilot randomized controlled trial assessing the feasibility of a 12-week Mindful Walking intervention.

Faculty sponsor: Sumithra Murthy

- ◆ **Comparing Combination Treatments for Improving CAR-T Cell Therapy Outcomes in Patients with Solid Tumors**

Ishaaq Khan

CAR-T cell therapy is a prominent form of cancer immunotherapy that involves genetically engineering an individual's T-cells to add a Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR). This CAR allows for the T-cells to recognize and bind to antigens on the tumor, prompting strong anti-tumor effects when the cells get re-introduced into the patient's body. Despite promising results in patients with blood cancers, the therapy has struggled in treatment for solid tumors. Current CAR-T cell therapy research involves the use of combination treatments to increase efficacy and tolerability. This paper discusses the obstacles that CAR-T cell therapy faces against solid tumors and utilizes literature review articles to explore options for combination treatments. While alternative treatments like nanotechnology, CRISPR, and chemotherapy have shown potential to improve CAR-T cell therapy efficacy, they are significantly hindered by clinical applicability or safety concerns. After a comparative analysis with those treatments, this paper argues for the use of radiation therapy and immune checkpoint inhibitors (ICIs) to improve CAR-T cell therapy outcomes in patients with solid tumors, citing radiation therapy's unique and synergistic effects with CAR-T cell therapy and the ability of ICIs to both amplify the efficacy of and limit the tolerability drawbacks induced by radiation therapy.

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