Fourth Year Thesis Titles and Abstracts—April 2011

Reginald Benbow

> *Gay is NOT the new Black: Why LGBT Activists Lost the Black Vote in California's Proposition 8*

This study examines why LGBT activists lost the Black vote in California's Proposition 8, a ballot initiative that banned same-sex marriage in 2008. I gather evidence from formal interviews with LGBT activists, content analysis of newspaper & magazine articles and campaign advertisements, and secondary research to contest and move beyond the popular, media-driven narratives that "comparatively high church attendance and homophobia" drove Black Americans to vote for Proposition 8.

First, I argue that the politics of respectability offers an important framework for understanding Black voters' opposition to same-sex marriage. Scholars define the politics of respectability as the way in which white middle class (i.e. mainstream) norms and ideals are reflected and reinforced in Black communities as a strategy for mainstream inclusion and racial advancement. I show how Black figures invoked ideas of normative sexuality and the uplift of black communities to garner support for Proposition 8, and argue that Blacks' opposition may be seen as part of a larger strategy to protect the collective image of Blacks against the prevalent notion of Blacks as sexually deviant. While previous authors have looked at the relationship between respectability and class, my investigation elucidates the essential relationship between respectability and conservative notions of sexuality.

Second, I focus my attention upon LGBT activists. I find that the whiteness of gay culture, organizations, movements and communities, and homo-normativity, which reject intersectional and integrated analyses and deny the interlocking of oppressions in their embrace of white middle class normativity, help to explain why LGBT activists lost the Black vote because they inhibited activists' strategy, outreach and engagement efforts. Further, I find that the controlling image of Black gay men as imposter/fraud led to the marginalization of Black LGBT persons and normalized the exclusion of Black LGBT persons from gay organizations; this image negatively affected the ability of activists to garner Black support, as Black LGBT persons are best equipped to bridge Black-gay divides.

In the next chapter, this thesis investigates the impact of suburban politics as the primary catalyst for Northern Virginia's political development; the massive growth of the Washington metropolitan area and the impact of this on the population and newly formed communities created a new set of needs of state political leaders. The chapter poses the central argument that this social change, and not the vacillating partisan ideology of the state, plays the central role in the direction of post war state politics.

Finally, this thesis looks at economic development in Northern Virginia and illustrates how the influence of federal bureaucratic growth contributed to the local economy not only by government agencies and public works but also with the arrival of high tech, defense, and other related industries. Using the widening economic gap between Northern Virginia and the state, this thesis argues that the economic "boom" in Northern Virginia can be attributed almost exclusively to its advantageous location.

Scott J. Bowman

The Science of the Heart: A Socio-Psychological Overview of Online Dating in the 21ˢᵗ Century

Over the past decade, online dating has erupted into mainstream American culture. Today there are more than 1,500 different dating websites that generate annual revenue of nearly $1 billion collectively. These sites market themselves in a variety of ways, but this thesis will focus on dating websites such as eHarmony, which seek to help singles enter serious relationships and find lasting love. The rise of online dating raises several academic questions, which this socio-psychological overview of marriage-minded dating websites will address. This thesis will consider why online dating has emerged so quickly in America. It will also reflect on what place, if any, science has in human love and attraction. To address the issue of applying science to love, it will assess eHarmony, focusing especially on the effectiveness of the "science" the site employs.

Before considering the websites themselves, I ask whether one can apply science to the realm of attraction at all. The first chapter considers the question of positivism—the use of the scientific method to discover insight into human interaction. It outlines two philosophers' arguments for and against the reductionist theory. I argue that research in the social sciences can make meaningful contributions to our understanding of human attraction, but that it has its limitations. Any scientific research on human interaction should claim to identify trends and correlations within a specific culture rather than to uncover universal laws. It is reasonable for dating websites to use research in the social sciences to match singles, provided the websites acknowledge the limitations of doing so.

Next, I consider different sociological factors that account for the quick rise of online dating. I argue that the growth of social media websites such as Facebook normalized online profiles, helping to erode the stigma of online dating. Additionally, I examine the evolution of courtship in America to identify two voids that online dating fulfills. First, today's hook-up culture has frustrated singles looking for more serious commitment. Marriage-minded dating websites such as eHarmony appeal to these frustrated singles. Second, American singles no longer receive guidance from any type of

authority when choosing a spouse. The "science" that the websites advertise provides singles with the direction they crave.

To understand the online dating phenomenon and its implications, one must examine a specific website. I assess eHarmony's matching system as a concrete example of the application of science to romance. To assess the site, I delineate four heavily researched, basic factors that determine a successful marriage—religious views, personality, gender-role ideology, and personal interests. EHarmony ought to consider these four factors in its questionnaire and match singles whose responses are the most similar.

I applaud the company for addressing three of the four factors, and also for its ethos that similarity rather than difference is a better predictor of marital success. However, I then offer several critiques of the site's methodology, focusing especially on its research as well as instances in which the business model may interfere with the objective to effectively matches singles in serious relationships. I determine that much of eHarmony's research has not been published for peer review, and thus it should not be considered academically-acceptable science.

Finally, I consider the future of online dating and the implications of my conclusions. To close, I contend that although online dating has become more popular, its influence on the future of courtship has limitations: science can only tell us so much about interpersonal attraction.

Caitlin Carr

Resource Flows: Why Water and Sanitation Should Not Be Neglected

I argue that access to clean water and adequate sanitation are integral components of other development areas and should even be prioritized in some situations. Water and sanitation issues play a role in each of the Millennium Development Goals, but funding for these issues is decreasing while funding for health and education is increasing. Throughout this paper, I look at the relationship between water and health, education, women's rights, and economic opportunity using four criteria for comparison—breadth, cost-effectiveness, impact on community, and chronological prioritization.

Water and sanitation-related diseases are a leading cause of death in the developing world, but the scope of the impact of dirty water and inadequate sanitation exceeds these diseases. Water and sanitation issues have an impact on many distinct health areas including: neglected tropical diseases, malnutrition and cognitive development, maternal and newborn health, and HIV/AIDS. Along with their health implications, water and sanitation issues also affect school attendance rates and positively impact women's rights. Cost-benefit analyses have shown that water and sanitation initiatives are wise investments with positive financial returns.

When assessing the benefits of water and sanitation projects, it is also important to explore other development initiatives. I look at both participatory development projects and vaccination campaigns and compare these to water and sanitation projects based on two criteria—community participation and cost-effectiveness. I conclude that, although there is no "magic bullet" that will solve poverty issues, improved access to clean water and adequate sanitation can have a positive effect on many development areas.

Anna Duning

News without Newspapers: American Journalism in Transition

In light of the decline of newspapers and the changing structure of the news media environment at large, I address several of the challenges as well as promises associated with sustaining quality journalism in the United States. I orient the thesis around the newspaper, because, as I establish in the introduction, its reporting is foundational to journalism across all types of news media. Further, I believe it represents, at its best, what quality journalism is capable of doing and, at its worst, the ways in which digitization can enhance the future of American journalism in its many forms.

I discuss the history, current state and future of journalism in several respects. First, I provide a brief overview of the newspaper's preeminence as a standard for American journalism and describe the business model that generously sustained it for so many decades. It was an advertiser-based model that transformed the newspaper into a general interest intermediary and made possible some of the best reporting for which the country's top papers are known. I then explain how the internet threatened this age-old model, tearing newspapers across the country asunder, while simultaneously establishing the platforms for innovative journalistic ventures in blogging, social media and nonprofit public interest media.

Framing the thesis with this contemporary media history, I spend the first chapter discussing new media platforms with a more critical evaluation of the potential for new media tools in the United States to democratize the entire news system and for similar tools abroad to revolutionize entire nations. While new media posits promising new avenues for social and political change, technology alone is no panacea, I argue.

With an interest in the potential for news media to benefit society, I look at the rise and nation-wide proliferation of nonprofit and self-defined public interest news organizations attempting to make up for diminished local and investigative reporting at traditional newspapers. With three case studies of examples in hyper-local, regional and national reporting, I establish these organizations are becoming informatively valuable in their communities and enriching news sources in the greater media environment, though present limited promise of long-term sustainability.

Finally, I return to commercial newspapers to assess how they've weathered a rough and widespread media storm, acknowledging the nearly unavoidable challenges for metropolitan newspapers despite the extraordinary success of the *New York Times*. Discussing what's lost and what remains of print journalism, I argue for the importance of strong and sustainable news organizations such as the *Times*, but show that few other print news organizations around the country will emerge from this media transition like the *New York Times* has.

Concluding, I note several other connected issues and explain the difficulty, or the ill-advised hastiness, of determining the future of news media since it remains a period of transition. What is evident is that no single medium will ever dominate the news environment as the newspaper once did; but with intentional and public commitment, there exists cause for optimism in a multi-dimensional, diverse, and still-changing news system.

Ishraga Eltahir

The African Union: Promise and Prospects for Africa's Future

I argue that the African Union (AU), at minimum, is a powerful and important symbol to have in Africa. The marginalization of the continent and its people for so long has created a dire need for proof of African agency. Over the last few decades, African countries experienced a series of challenges, particularly in the areas of development, peace, security, and governance. Formed ten years ago, the AU is as an intergovernmental organization that seeks to steer its member states toward African self-reliance in overcoming their challenges and advancing their citizens. Simultaneously, the AU takes into account the realities of globalization, and works to ensure that African states are strong contenders in its dynamics.

The African Union comes from a long legacy of movements that were based on Pan-Africanism. This ideology brought people of African descent together to conquer European colonialism and gain their independence. The AU is calling upon it once again. Being borne directly out of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), its predecessor, the AU is founded on a strong belief in African unity, dignity, potential, and agency. These Pan-African ideals are manifested in the structures of the AU and the goals they seek to accomplish.

I start my paper by highlighting the history of Pan-Africanism and the movements it has inspired. I define Pan-Africanism as an ideology that has motivated and mobilized African people to change their political, social, and economic structures over the course of the last century. By tracing a brief history and overview of Pan-Africanism, I emphasize the events that led to the formation of the OAU, and subsequently the AU. Then, I breakdown the structures of the African Union, and highlight the organization's major departures from its predecessor. Mainly, these changes capture the shift from being an organization that focused on collaborating to achieve independence for all, to an organization working for economic and political development. The AU also pays more attention to peace and security, seeing those factors as prerequisites for development.

Therefore, I showcase the AU's new culture of peace and security. To illustrate the AU's level of commitment in this area, I use the cases of violence in Sudan and unconstitutional government takeover in Madagascar. Both of these events and the AU's response exemplify the organization's capabilities, potentials, and challenges. My paper also explores the AU's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), without which any analysis of the African Union would be incomplete. Since the AU's inception, NEPAD has taken the lead in promoting development and good governance projects coming out of the African Union.

My findings show that the African Union is an organization that Africa needs at this moment in history. Not only does it provide a forum for African cooperation and problem-solving, but it also provides a vehicle for broadcasting African opinions to the rest of the world. Furthermore, I acknowledge the many challenges to the AU's efficacy coming from within its own structure. Most noteworthy of these weaknesses is the AU's reliance on foreign funding, a

lack of popular recognition of the Union, and little political will from member states to fully support the organization. Nonetheless, I maintain the importance of the African Union's symbolic value and the great potential found in its structures, policies, and plans.

Erin Franey

The Roots of Change: The Role of Community Organizing in Addressing Inequality in the United States

I argue that community organizing is an important means of addressing inequality in the United States. Disparities in political, social, and economic power weaken democracy, polarize communities, and contribute to a wide range of health and social problems. Community organizing moderates inequality by reducing barriers between the socially marginalized and the political process through leadership development, political education, and action towards more just policies.

In my first chapter I discuss growing economic disparities since the 1970s and how they affect American politics and society. I argue that increasing concentrations of wealth among the rich in the United States distorts political access and influence in their favor because those with money can use its power to effectively shape government's actions in their own interests. Poverty has always existed, but the disparities between the most and least privileged in America today are extreme and not predestined. Taken holistically, the purpose of my first chapter is to present why the causes and consequences of inequality should concern all citizens.

Saul Alinsky, known as the father of community organizing in the United States, worked principally in Chicago in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, to establish People's Organizations. In my second chapter I analyze the underlying philosophies which guided his work and continue to influence the field of community organizing. Alinsky believed that all people possess the ability to understand the dynamics of power and organize with their neighbors around issues of common concern. His ideas are important in the context of my thesis because they stress the significance of local civic participation to building strong communities and invigorating American democracy.

Community organizing in the twenty-first century distinguishes itself from other local non-profits in its orientation toward goals of social, economic, and racial justice, ending forms of prejudice and oppression, and empowering the voices of those traditionally marginalized from the political process. In chapter three I explore the strengths and limitations of community organizing. I present four essential elements of the organizing process: leadership development, political education, relationship and community building, and action. I discuss how these aspects of local organizing strike at the core of what the *process* of community organizing can engender – citizen leaders who take collective action toward a more just society.

I conclude my thesis bringing the ideas discussed in the three preceding chapters into conversation with one another in order to explore why community organizing is critical to addressing inequality. The extent of economic and social disparities in the twenty-first century

presents an opportunity to reevaluate and rebalance the relationships between the public sector, the private sector, and working and middle class Americans. Community organizations equip members with the skills to take power for themselves; in doing so they can work locally to challenge current structures and policies which perpetuate inequality. Community organizers also help their members develop a vision for a more just society – Americans across the country need such vision of the common good in order to reorient current trends. I argue that local community organizing is an essential part of local, statewide, and national shifts toward greater social and economic justice.

Lillian Frost

How Does Al-Jazeera Arabic Influence Jordanian Political Attitudes and Identities?

This paper argues that Al-Jazeera Arabic, an independent satellite news station, emphasizes pan-Arab identity and provides the space for political liberalization. This research builds off of Marc Lynch's *Voices of the New Arab Public* and aims to reassess his ideas concerning Al-Jazeera's ability to create Arab unity as well as divide Arab among sectarian lines as well as to help generate political and social reforms in the region by providing a venue for the dissemination of information, expression of opinions, and acceptance of debate. I examined Lynch's 2006 theories about Al-Jazeera in terms of 2011 Jordanian political attitudes and identities in two ways: first, by engaging 59 personal interviews conducted in Irbid and Amman, Jordan from January 5th through January 21st, 2011; and, second, by examining television news coverage of Al-Jazeera Arabic and Jordanian responses to this news before, during, and after the fall of former Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

I chose Al-Jazeera because it is by far the most popular independent satellite news network in Jordan and the Arab world, and I selected this news event because it captured the daily attention of Jordanians across social class, religious sect, and age group, while highlighting questions concerning Al-Jazeera's role in spreading information, uniting Arabs, and inspiring political change.

Personal interviews that I conducted in Jordan provided evidence of individual perspectives explaining and supporting Al-Jazeera's pan-Arab identity. Many people I interviewed also highlighted Al-Jazeera's abilities to help generate political and social change, as evidenced by the events that spread from Tunisia across the region. In addition to establishing these two main conclusions, I evaluated Jordanian opinions toward and reactions to the Tunisian Revolution as well as Jordanian perceptions of Al-Jazeera's popularity, credibility, and socio-political position in the Arab world.

I examined the news concerning this event by watching archived news broadcasts on Al-Jazeera, provided by Arabia Inform, and then assessing public responses to the news in Jordan by looking at the articles, opinion pieces, and comments published on two of Jordan's most popular news websites: Ammon News and Saraya News. This research further led me to conclude that Al-Jazeera emphasizes pan-Arab identities across the region with newscasts that highlight the

struggles and successes of the Arab people as well as the corruption and mistakes of Arab regimes. Similarly, Al-Jazeera newscasts provided the space for viewers to receive a variety of opinions, debates, and general information that helps create the type of critical thinking necessary for a more liberal and democratic civic environment.

I argue that among the implications of Al-Jazeera in this region, the most relevant, compelling implications exhibited in Jordan are the gradual liberalizing of the Arab public sphere, which facilitates political and social reform, and the influence of this network on reflecting and bringing out pan-Arab identities, while also revealing the divides between nationally oriented and pan-Arab identities as exhibited among Jordanians.

Brian James Gerrard

A Comparative Analysis of Supreme Court Decisions, Legislation, and Philosophy Paralleling United States Mexican Immigration Policy and Anti African-American Jim Crowism

My thesis argues that contemporary Mexican immigrants/Mexican-Americans are experiencing disenfranchisement and facing xenophobic attitudes that parallel the Black American "Jim Crow experience." I posit that by examining United States Supreme Court decisions, Senate legislation, media pundits, and discriminatory philosophies, one arrives at undeniable methods of discrimination. I try to establish an historical basis for my claim before introducing philosophical and social arguments for recognizing this vicious cycle.

My first chapter strives to legitimize Mexican immigrants as worthy of comparison to the Black American. Immigration is typically thought of as a contemporary issue, however Mexicans have a longstanding history of abuse and second-class treatment in America, particularly the Southwest. From 1845 to the Clinton presidency, I comb through examples of legislation, political rhetoric, and instances of social rejection to craft my argument. Once the Mexican historical precedent is established, I outline Jim Crow laws in a much narrower scope. I focus on voting rights, educational opportunity, residential segregation, and anti-Black violence that permeated the era. Each Supreme Court case, law and hate act is chosen in relation to the present and future obstacles Mexican Americans face.

The third chapter studies the philosophies behind discriminatory practices and attaches them to two intertwined theories regarding the assimilation of black and brown peoples. Author Leo Chavez, attaches Americans' fear of Mexicans to a mixture of myths created by media, political pundits, and ignorance. It is fair to say that so far, he is correct. Nevertheless this is a rather optimistic view, because Chavez he does not attach any of the difficulty of assimilation to systems of white unification. Derrick Bell develops this theory in its application to black Americans. He believes that American race relations are much more complex, and that poor and wealthy Whites have established a silent covenant to deter Black progress. I connect the two philosophies stating that Bell's theory applies to, and is the underlying reason Mexicans cannot

assimilate. Simply put, Mexicans are experienced the same America that Blacks have endured over the last one hundred years. When the two theories are layered on top of one another, one must conclude that American conservatism, xenophobia, and racial hierarchies, founded on racial covenants and ignorance, work to prevent the full inclusion of Blacks and Mexicans in an equal American society.

Chloe Jordan

A New Age of Affirmative Action: Can the Argument of Class-Based Affirmative Action Resolve Today's Inequalities in the U.S. Public Education System?

I argue in this thesis that class-based affirmative action, as opposed to race-based affirmative action, within the public education system should be recognized as a comprehensible and legal policy tool for enabling persons of color (e.g. African-American applicants) the opportunity to gain admission into a accredited four-year universities or colleges. Whether they are labeled with the single status of first-generation applicant, a minority applicant with financial security, or a historically disadvantaged minority applicant with low socioeconomic status (SES), all three categorical "terms" are often misused and misrepresented in three ways. First, they work to stigmatize these students by faulty methods and underrepresentation in scholarly data; second, in the way that admissions officers in higher education determine and assess high-achieving students of color through correlative data; and third, these labels become misreported in data used to determine the rate of need for federal programs, especially when state-ballot initiatives block legal access to them. This thesis proposes there are three specific movements, or events, that have interrupted the parallel relations between race-based affirmative action and conventional civil rights movements, with the combined effect of impeding the social and economic mobility of the black community. The objective of this thesis was not to determine if either race-based or class-based affirmative action should be chosen for congruency in policy decisions about the use of racial preferential treatment in admissions processes. Instead, three separate chapters seek to examine key policy events that may have interrupted the progress academic institutions have made in addressing racial and material inequality since 1964.

The complexity of the debate on this issue has challenged me to research and outline my chapters in a way that de-emphasizes theory and relies more on concrete civil rights events. I analyze key moments that have affected the breakdown, or continuity, of racial preferential treatment in higher education in the United States starting in mid-1960s leading up to the 2003 U.S Supreme Court Case, *Grutter v. Bollinger* at the University of Michigan. I frame my overall conclusion in the form of question at the end of chapter three: in what way can we continue to secure the constitutional foundations for race-conscious diversity policies that still adhere to the Court's directive to rely on individualized review and at the same time avoid using the diversity rationale simply as a cover for "racial balancing"?

Lauren Hillary Kimmel

From the Inside Out: A Questioning of Central-Core Imagery in Feminist Art and an Examination of Its Reception

In this thesis, I explore the various ways that artists of the Feminist Art Movement (1960s-1970s) used so-called "central-core," or vaginal, imagery to promote the broader ideas and efforts of the Feminist Movement. For the sake of time and space, I consider only the works of Judy Chicago, one of the first artists to portray this type of artwork. I direct my attention primarily to her 1979 installation piece, *The Dinner Party*, bringing in other related works when need be. After explaining the wide-ranging functions of vulvar art, I critically examine arguments against the representation of the central core. I conclude by deciding whether central-core imagery is ultimately an effective method in feminist art.

In Part One, I begin by asking, why has vulvar artwork become so central to feminist art? I detail the ways in which feminist artists depicted uniquely female experiences in relation to the female core. I also discuss key feminist practices, such as consciousness-raising exercises, which were crucial to new interpretations of womanhood during this time; activities like these led to the now-infamous feminist motto, "The Personal is Political," which challenges the notion that specificities of womanhood are to be kept within the private sphere. Here, I look individually at two distinctively-female events, menstruation (which has painted the woman as impure) and maternity (which has painted the woman as unconditionally nurturing), to illustrate my claims. In Part Two, I address another purpose of central-core imagery—to display, in a public forum, women's newfound rejection of their repressed sexual identities and the ever-objectifying male gaze. Here, I discuss vaginal artwork with specific reference to its air of female empowerment and the language of the central core as a visual symbology for newfound sexual identity.

Part Three explains the reality of *The Dinner Party*'s reception and the wide-ranging reactions for and against the depiction of the vaginal core. While some critics praised the installation as ingenious and poignant in its depiction of womanhood, others were quick to find fault with it. Here, I discuss the particular reactions of Chicago's contemporary feminist thinkers, who worried that the project's close connection to the vagina would merely strengthen the toxic misconception that women are inextricably linked to their sex. Other women activists of the time (particularly black and gay feminists) protested the assumed whiteness and heteronormativity of the piece, which they said did not resonate with their own female experiences. At long last, I conclude by evaluating for myself whether central-core art is effective. From my research I deduce that vaginal art has proved to be effective in suggesting a community of women connected by their "core" experiences. Still, artists like Chicago must be aware of the fine line they walk between bodily liberation and biological limitation.

Maria Pluta

Kristin Lavransdatter: *A Study of Marriage In Medieval Norway*

Marriage rates in America have declined, and academia, the media and your average Joe have noticed. The piece of historical fiction, *Kristin Lavransdatter*, set in medieval Norway, offers a cultural framework through which to understand this institution as it "flourished." This thesis identifies the practices and values that sustained the institution of marriage for Kristin, and reflects on the relevance of these values in marriage today. It considers Kristin as a maiden, wife, householder, mother, and holy woman in context of her marriage, following her life from age seven until death. By performing a combination of sociological place-setting, medieval legal history, textual exegesis, and analysis, this thesis asks the question, "do Kristin's roles still have currency in today's vision of marriage?"

Kristin's culture demands a social existence from all its participants. This primary feature of her surroundings defines her marriage and the manner in which she loves. One does not marry an individual, but marries rather in the presence of witnesses. The marriage rite marks only the beginning of the marital contract, lived out in full in community. Kristin's love manifests in many different forms as she builds their own community, including her sexual love for her husband, her care, worry, and physical spending for her children, and her labor on their manor for her sons' futures. Her loves consume her life, redefining her identity, making claims on her body, altering her beauty, and most importantly providing her with a means by which to experience God's presence.

The culture of Kristin also presumes the sacramental feature of her marriage. This is the mixing of Christian values with local culture into a physical and permanent sign that gives grace. This fact of permanence presumes an experience of suffering in a marital narrative, though it also presumes the element of time necessary to transform this suffering into good fruit. Kristin's triumphant death contrasts starkly with the life that supplies her with anguish, sorrow, and pain. Her marriage is a participation in the kingdom of God. The family she builds and nurtures is the cross she carries, but also the promise of salvation that she witnesses.

Kristin's marital roles suggest a form of womanhood that blossoms in motherhood and other roles of ascetic character, contrasting with modern preferences for individualism within personal relationships. Although her narrative may not be immediately attractive, her roles and values offer a form of Lenten-like yet fruitful renewal for the institution.

Milan Monet Reed

"I, too, am America": The Academic Achievement Gap between Black and White Students

This thesis explores the complexity of the Black-White academic achievement gap from national, state, and local perspectives. I argue that the disparity in performance between Black and White students can and will be closed through the collective effort of policy makers, educators, parents,

community members, and students. The academic success of all children is the responsibility of everyone.

The achievement gap is a systemic issue. It exists before students enter formal schooling and is apparent through each grade level. The implementations of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and No Child Left Behind from a national standpoint have tried to eliminate the achievement gap. This legislation has attempted to rectify the years of discrimination and social inequities forced on the Black Community, but taken together, it has yielded few meaningful results. Examining the achievement gap from a national standpoint I argue that there is a disconnection between the policy makers and educators in the classroom. The United States has given billions of dollars in funding to increase the academic success of its students, but the policies made at the top do not necessarily resolve the problems in the classroom.

The state of New Jersey's efforts to close the achievement gap have shown that large amounts of funding do not, on their own, guarantee higher achievement. School districts must use the funding effectively and set clear academic goals for its educators and students. This efficient usage of funding was demonstrated by the *Abbott v. Burke* ruling in 1985. The *Abbott* decision led to an increase in school aid to urban and predominately low-income school districts throughout New Jersey. New education entities, known as the Abbott districts attacked the achievement gap in its early stages by requiring all students to learn how to read by the age of nine. This academic goal produced significant improvements in the educational attainment of minority and low-income students across the state.

In an analysis of the Essex County Public School District, I found that the achievement gap does not exclusively depend on the financial background or residence of a student. The gap is also present in suburban districts. Hence, there are other factors that influence the gap, including stereotypes of racial inferiority, lack of confidence in one's academic abilities, issues of disengagement in the classroom, and failures in the structural elements of education institutions. The elimination of these factors is a vital part to the closure of the achievement gap.

Finally, in attempting to close the academic achievement gap it is important to examine policies and initiatives that have worked for other schools. How can these successful polices be implemented in other school districts? Clearly, the achievement gap will not end overnight. But I argue that the gap can and will be closed through collaborative effort and through the determination to achieve the desperately needed improvements in today's schools. The most important aspect is to not lose hope.

Anna Sosdian

Conscientious Capitalism: The Struggle to Balance Profits and Ethics in Corporate Social Responsibility

An investigation of corporate social responsibility is fundamentally motivated by questions about business' role in society. How can business be connected to ethical concerns of how to "do good?"

Do companies create societal benefit by maximizing profits, or is there more to take into consideration? Is the expectation that business benefit society legitimate to begin with?

In the classical capitalist model, companies exist to pursue profits. This is based on the concept of Adam Smith's "invisible hand," in which a company may act in its own self-interest and simultaneously benefit society. Those benefits are typically conceived as the products that companies provide to consumers and the improving stock portfolios they give to investors. Yet debate has been growing in recent years as to whether this is enough. At the same time, more companies are finding that transparency, working toward a purpose other than profit, and "responsible" business practices do make them more money. Many companies are reorganizing their businesses to recognize the fact that emotional connections to consumers, investors, and employees foster loyalty to their brand. Because of the positive economic impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR), movement toward "green," "sustainable," and "social" companies is increasing.

This thesis explores two case studies that provide very different examples of how to approach CSR. First, Coca-Cola is at the forefront of the corporate social responsibility field as one of the largest multinational corporations and most visible global brands. Coca-Cola strategically selects its CSR initiatives to reflect its strengths as a company and potential payoff for the company. Although Coca-Cola is a leader in CSR, its justification for participation is still quite basic. The company focuses on the instrumental importance of CSR. Most initiatives are a conceived as a way to build Coca-Cola's brand and image. Little room is given to normative considerations of Coca-Cola's moral duty as one of the largest corporations in the world today. The company does express a value-based mission, but values are ultimately subservient to profit.

Patagonia provides an example of how a smaller, privately owned company may go about corporate social responsibility. Patagonia focuses solely on the environment in its CSR. In fact, its environmental mission is conceptually stronger than its business mission. While profits are essential to the continuation of any company, they are de-emphasized at Patagonia. As Board member Jerry Mander has said, "Without giving its achievement primacy, we seek to profit on our activities. However, growth and expansion are values not basic to this corporation." Profit is considered a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

CSR is one way that companies can prove their value by demonstrating that they have a net positive impact on the world. This is a departure from neoliberal logic that places intrinsic value on markets, competition, and business activity. Most companies have realized the need to engage in a new kind of logic; a logic born out of increased visibility, global communication, and cynicism of multinational corporations. This new mindset accepts the notion that business must play an active role in society, not only in terms of pursuing profit, but also in making targeted societal and environmental contributions.

Corporate social responsibility is a growing field in which companies must now engage. For many, CSR is just another way to dress up standard profit-oriented business practice. But as the trend develops and as ethical considerations become more prominent in business rhetoric and consumer expectations, more companies may rethink their responsibilities to society. Many

have already done so. Corporate social responsibility does not represent any radical rethinking of business' role in society, but it does indicate that profits alone are no longer enough.

Ann Marshall Thomas

Development in the Name of Christ: Examining the Mennonite Central Committee's Work in Bangladesh

Christian missionary groups are notorious in the global development world for evangelizing to the people they aim to help.   Like other types of development organizations, their work is often associated with colonialism, imperialism, and western hegemony. All types development organizations should use caution as they proceed in foreign nations, but this thesis explores whether Christian organizations warrant special consideration.

In 2009, I traveled to Mymensingh, Bangladesh with a classmate to study a collaborative project between the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and a small, locally based sex workers' rights organization called Shourav. MCC had just begun the Alternative Employment Program, through which it provides job training for Mymensingh women who wish to leave the sex trade. During interviews with American MCC workers, more than one person told us that being obedient to God's will was more important than the concrete "success" of their programs. Despite these troubling declarations, I began to question some of my negative beliefs about religious aid because of the positive attitudes expressed by the Bangladeshi people who worked with MCC and received their aid.

MCC was founded to provide relief to Mennonites stranded in Russia during the 1920s. Today it considers itself both a relief organization and a development organization that operates on a global scale. MCC's activities range from HIV/AIDS education campaigns to infrastructure improvement to job creation programs. MCC is widely respected by both religious and non-religious development workers.

There is a wealth of information about the history and goals of MCC written by the organization's founders, but we should not overlook the perspectives of those who receive MCC's aid. Bangladeshi culture is rich and multi-faceted, with populations ranging from educated elites to religious fanatics to rural farmers trying to make ends meet. For the purposes of MCC's collaboration with sex workers in Bangladesh, I have examined some of the history of and social circumstances surrounding sex work in the Mymensingh region.

In order to simplify the discussion about Christian missionary groups, I have divided them into two ideal type categories: conversion-focused mission and development-focused mission. Conversion-focused mission groups are concerned primarily with saving souls and spreading the word of God while development-focused mission groups attempt to alleviate poverty and suffering through sustainable projects designed to improve the lives of aid recipients. I argue that MCC shares many characteristics with development-focused missions.

I think there are four criteria we can use to determine whether a Christian mission group can be considered a development-focused group. They are 1) What is the organization's policy

about evangelizing? 2) What are the group's criteria for selecting employees and volunteers? 3) How does the group decide which population to target for aid work? 4) Where does the group stand on tough policy issues that may conflict with religious teachings? I believe these criteria are useful tools in thinking about Christian missionary work and that they can be extended to non-religious aid groups as well.

Jeffrey T. Webb
Fragments of a MacIntyrean Liberalism

In this thesis, I examine the relationship of Alasdair MacIntyre's critique of modern moral philosophy to the philosophical tradition of political liberalism. To do so, I first explicate MacIntyre's arguments over the course of his career, concentrating on his seminal work, *After Virtue*. I then argue that MacIntyre's arguments deserve to be taken seriously because most current forms of liberalism rest on universalist and ahistorical arguments that ultimately are insufficient as the basis for a political tradition. Instead, I argue that the salience of MacIntyre's attacks (hyperbolic as they are) give us reason to consider whether we might be able to accommodate them while retaining the undeniable benefits of liberalism.

I attempt to construct just such a type of liberalism that, using as a model MacIntyre's own theory of a moral tradition. In formulating this conception, which I call (without much creativity) liberalism-as-a-tradition, I must consider what a teleological, character-rather-than-rules driven liberalism can be, including the specification of its cardinal virtues and the philosophical underpinnings of such a conception within the body of liberal theorists past. I argue that not only is the construction of liberalism-as-a-tradition a theoretical possibility, but it is superior in many ways to the types of traditions MacIntyre himself lauded, even by MacIntyre's own standards of what constitutes a good tradition. In particular, I argue that liberalism's value on political involvement and the development of independent practical reason give liberalism-as-a-tradition the opportunity for dynamic growth where other traditions have failed.

Finally, I turn from the purely theoretical to the still-theoretical-but-slightly-less-so task of examining what kinds of political institutions best support the fledgling tradition that I have just constructed. In so doing, I choose two models. First, I analyze the Greek city-state, or polis, one of the models MacIntyre himself believed was particularly conducive to human flourishing, and I conclude that, while the size and localism of the polis is particularly suited to liberalism-as-a-tradition, the militarism and xenophobia of Greek culture make the polis an unsavory model for any kind of liberalism. The second model I examine is one that retains the localism of the polis but exists in modernity—the contemporary university. I argue that, while there are significant logistical differences between a self-sufficient polity and the university, it nevertheless provides us with a useful model, if only a general one.

Three general and tentative conclusions are proposed: (1) it is possible to construct a liberalism that eschews universalism, draws from a deep and broad body of liberal thinkers, and adheres to MacIntyrean standards of a tradition, (2) that such a conception avoids both the

theoretical problem of the not-actually-neutral state, and the oppressive tendencies of MacIntyrean traditions past, and (3) that a character-driven liberalism mitigates, at least in part, the shrill tone and emotivist tint of modern moral discourse.

Andrew Chando Yu

The Origins of Extraordinary Acts: The Condition of Agency and Its Paradoxical Heritage

In this thesis I argue that what motivates individuals to act extraordinarily above all else is their sense of agency—their control and capacity to act in the world. I suggest that as an individual's sense of agency increases, so does the probability of the actualization of the belief that he or she can create a change or perform an extraordinary act in the world. At the same time, I acknowledge that opposing forces such as determinism and luck cannot be discounted because there is evidence of them in our everyday lives. Although attempts to understand the paradox that agency coexists with determinism and luck are usually set aside (because of the tension and discomfort the paradox causes), I argue that, nevertheless, the individual who profoundly understands, accepts, and moves forward with this paradox is likely to act extraordinarily.

The question at the center of this thesis—what motivates people to act extraordinarily?—cannot be answered *a priori*, but to argue for my hypothesis I first acknowledge the problem of exceptionality: the act of judging whether an act is, in fact, extraordinary is inevitably subjective. This inevitable subjectivity notwithstanding, I believe that agreeing that *some* acts are extraordinary is something that we simply *do*. The theological, classical, and Kantian traditions provide their own arguments for how appropriately to judge an act as extraordinary, but nevertheless I argue that as humans we simply look at certain acts and judge them as such. Thus to make the question more manageable, I narrow the definition of an extraordinary act to *'an exceptional response against a seemingly overwhelming human evil.'* To lay the groundwork to analyze my hypothesis, I also suggest that a sense of agency can be learned through nurture, or what Fisher and Ravizza call "moral education." Though agency lies at the heart of extraordinary acts, it certainly isn't the only factor motivating individuals to act. I suggest that, in addition, the conditions of empathy and concern for humanity, as well as the ability to identify a human evil, are also necessary factors.

I analyze the three doctrines of determinism, luck, and agency to find what kinds of characteristics an individual would have by abiding by each of these. Individuals who follow the doctrines of determinism and luck are more likely to view themselves as under some control, and thus feel less responsible for acting against a human evil. Determinism and luck seem to suggest that there are other forces at play in deciding our actions; such beliefs deter individuals from taking the personal initiative to act against injustice. This is my main hypothesis. And yet, humans are not free from the forces of determinism and luck, which in many ways govern our lives to an extent that we may not even be aware of. Thus we seem to face an inescapable paradox: the existence of all these forces together seems to be contradictory. But this suggests a secondary hypothesis: perhaps an understanding and acceptance of this paradox of determinism and

agency allows an individual to have a new and more holistic perception of the world. And perhaps this perception allows one to act in ways that ordinary people would not.

I understand that the question at hand is abstract and unanswerable, but I provide an analysis of four case studies – Wallenberg and Peshev's heroics during the Holocaust, Rusesabagina's acts during the Rwandan genocide, and King's leadership during the Civil Rights Movement – that I hope will provide a more robust version of my hypotheses. In its true and objective form this thesis is merely a simple exercise in thought and analysis; but at its most ambitious, it attempts to move closer to understanding the certainty of uncertainty.