



# THE HONORS PROGRAM

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## SPRING 2014 THESIS ABSTRACTS



EDUCATION LOVE AND HUMANITY U.S. DRUG EDUCATION AND POLICY GENERAL BIOLOGY  
POETRY AND PERFORMANCE ART CRITICISM  
**HONORS**  
QUESTION EXPLORES SKILLS COMPOSE  
DEBATE PERSPECTIVE INVENT FOCUS IMAGINE ENVISION RESEARCH CAPTURE



## CHELSEA ALLOCCO

**Thesis Title:** Cryptographical Topics and Experiments in DES, Rabin's Method and RSA

**Thesis Advisors:** Lawrence Fialkow, Computer Science

This is a research paper done in order to get more acquainted with cryptography. DES (Data Encryption Standard) and RSA cryptosystems are both explained in detail. This paper also contains examples of both systems and attempted truncations of DES. There are also examples of Pollard's (P-1) algorithm, and factorization by perfect squares as well as computer code for these in both Java and Mathematica. In conjunction with the examples of Pollard's (P-1) algorithm and factorization by perfect squares, there are several proofs to help explain the theorems behind RSA.



## ANNMARIE ARSANIOUS

**Thesis Title:** Social Injustice in Education: Examining the Everyday Misrepresentations and Barriers Faced by Students

**Thesis Advisors:** Julia Friday, English

This thesis will aim to point to and to expose social justice issues in Education today. I hope to tackle major issues in regards to underrepresented groups who are subsequently misrepresented. Through daily ignorance, students are treated unequally all across the borders. Education within the United States may mean something different to varied regions, and this is a massive issue that I plan to tackle.



## SINEAD ATKINSON

**Thesis Title:** Terra Incognita: The Dramaturgy of Eric Overmeyer’s “On the Verge; or, the Geography of Yearning”

**Thesis Advisors:** Connie Rotunda, Theatre Arts  
Frank Trezza, Theatre Arts

One of the most important modern feminist works in the theatre, Overmeyer’s “On the Verge,” explores and subverts traditional gender roles as three brave lady explorers travel on a journey through time from Victorian England to the United States in 1955. The idea of “terra incognita,” the unknown world, and the discovery of the power of womanhood, is central to the plot and the growth of the principal characters; the three explorers, Mary, Fannie, and Alex, use their newfound independence to make life-changing discoveries about themselves, their sexualities, their changing world, and their philosophies. Overmeyer’s use of esoteric language, allusions to pop culture, and changing definitions and ideals of what it means to be a woman mark this play as a new modern classic, which naturally caught the attention of the SUNY New Paltz theatre department. In this thesis, it is my aim to document the research behind director Connie Rotunda’s vision and eventually, the nuances and character work of the actors, after which I will present my findings through a critically feminist lens.



## CAMERON BURKHART

**Thesis Title:** The House of Too Much Trouble

**Thesis Advisors:** Dennis Doherty, English;  
John Palencsar, History

In my thesis I hope to treat Coney Island’s theme parks at the turn of the 20th century as both an aesthetic and historical subject matter. In using both primary and secondary historical materials I will treat Coney both through text and as a text, culling images, idea, and experiences in order to put them in conversation with one another. I hope that by treating history in a decidedly non-historical medium I will be able to draw out insights and understandings of the time not necessarily limited by the (supposedly) “objective” stance of historical writing. Poetically I also hope to capture the mood, tone, images, etc. of the time and apply poetic technique in order to capture experiences that may be alienated or absent in strictly historical documents.





## MICHAEL COSTA

**Thesis Title:** Whine Sampling: Understanding Whining in Young Children

**Thesis Advisors:** Alison Nash, Psychology;  
Gowri Parameswaran, Educational Studies

Whining has been shown to be a salient behavior in young children that causes both parents and teacher of preschool age children much annoyance and irritation. Surprisingly, little is known about why children whine. Previous studies found that whining and motherese, a form of child-directed speech, share similar acoustical properties – alike in increased pitch, slowed production, and varied pitch contours. Motherese has been shown to serve an attachment function, so just as whining has acoustical similarities to motherese, perhaps whining also serves a similar function. We conducted naturalistic observations at a child-care center comparing the amount of whines to familiar adults (i.e. teachers), unfamiliar adults (i.e. assistants) and peers. Our study indicated that children whined significantly more to teachers and peers, supporting an attachment relation. Further, a behavioral code was developed in order to better understand the reasons for whining and how recipients respond to the behavior. We found that even when children’s whines didn’t get what they want, this behavior did not disrupt their interactions. Therefore whining may serve as a way to modulate young children’s emotions, allowing them to continue their interactions with caregivers and familiar peers.





## BRITTNEY DEPAOLA

**Thesis Title:** Autism for the Newly Graduated Clinician: Welcome to Holland

**Thesis Advisors:** Andrea Abramovich, Communication Disorders; Sue Books, Secondary Education

Autism for the Newly Graduated Clinician is a guidebook for aspiring Speech-Language Pathologists, although related fields and parents of children with autism may find it useful. The purpose of this thesis is to introduce the reader to autism for more than its diagnosis and associated symptoms. This guide is meant to help you understand autism as a disorder through history, myths, incidence, prevalence, theories, possible causation, and current treatments and approaches. It is important to keep in mind that this guidebook was completed before the introduction of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM) V in May of 2013. In the DSM V the five categories under autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have been removed and replaced solely with the diagnosis of autism spectrum (AS). Although the information in this guidebook is now outdated, it is still important to understand the older diagnostic labels. Many families and people with autism continue to create an identity through these labels. As incidence of AS climb throughout the world, it is imperative we band together as a society and learn more about autism. I am hopeful that one day in the near future people with AS will be embraced for their individual strengths and accepted for their weaknesses. Education is the first step toward this goal. Cultural competency is a crucial aspect of this acceptance. As people learn more about AS perceptions of autism will change, and in learning more about this disorder we may find perceptions of ourselves and the world changing as well.





## ALYSSA FIELD

**Thesis Title:** Speech and Linguistic Outcomes of Cochlear Implant Recipients: The Impact of Age at Implantation

**Thesis Advisors:** Andrea Abramovich, Communication Disorders; Rebecca Swenson, Communication Disorders

This thesis will explore the history of cochlear implant surgery and the background behind how cochlear implants work. It will discuss some etiologies and types of hearing impairment. It will examine different types of assessment and screenings for hearing impairments. Next, the thesis will segue into the ethical controversy behind implantation relative to opinions and attitudes of the Deaf community. It will discuss the legal and ethical perspectives of implantation during the critical period for language development, implications and speech/language outcomes of implantation during this period and future research implications.



## TOVAH GOLDFARB

**Thesis Title:** Misconceptions in U.S. History Education: The Case of Columbus

**Thesis Advisors:** Susan Lewis, History; Sue Books, Secondary Education

In the field of United States history education, there are many misconceptions that Americans have about our nation's past. After conducting both formal and informal surveys, interviews, and secondary research, I have found that the root of many of these begins in elementary school. A lack of teacher education and stringent focus on standardized testing causes American students to exhibit less individual, progressive thinking than their peers abroad. In this thesis, I discuss misconceptions in general; where and how they originate. I focus on the misinformation surrounding Christopher Columbus' journeys to America and propose a model of teaching history to Elementary School students that can be used to teach historical topics that precede it. I include lesson plans differentiated for several grade levels that give teachers an example of how to teach Columbus in a culturally inclusive and honest manner that encourages students to think creatively and critically about the person who supposedly "discovered America".



## ARI KAPUTKIN

**Thesis Title:** Effectiveness of 3D Time Mapping for Representing Select Topics

**Thesis Advisors:** Lawrence McGlinn, Geography;  
Jo Margaret Mano, Geography

The rapid advancement of graphic technologies and software for data visualization has produced many new and innovative methodologies for data representation and analytical approaches. Among the most promising are the innovations in 3D visualization and representation. When applied to traditional cartography by equipping maps with a third axis, or third dimension, this can affect the way we analyze and understand a data set, opening a new window through which to view maps. Changes in an environment, and the interconnectivity of parameters within a given environment, can be visualized in the form of animated, 3D maps to show changes over time. Previously, this would only be possible through producing several 2D maps. This can facilitate an interactive experience for the user, and arguably, a more effective and revealing method for representing spatial data. This study will investigate not only the effectiveness and advantages of 3D time mapping versus traditional cartographic data presentation in an educational setting, but some of the uses of three-dimensional mapping, particularly in work towards better understanding environmental hazard exposure and mitigation.





## BRENNA MCCAFFREY

**Thesis Title:** “To Hold These Two Things at Once”: Discourses of Ethics and Reproductive Justice in Abortion Activism

**Thesis Advisors:** Meg O’Sullivan, History/Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies; Benjamin Junge, Anthropology/Latin American & Caribbean Studies

Social scientists and feminist scholars have increasingly explored the topic of abortion since it entered public consciousness in the years following the landmark Roe vs. Wade decision in 1973. In the disciplines of Philosophy, Sociology, History, Anthropology, and Women’s Studies, scholars have examined the growing importance of the fetus as an agent in these debates. (e.g. Heriot 1996; Petchesky 1987; Taylor 1992; Rapp 1999). Other scholars have focused on gendered concepts of morality that surround the abortion debate (e.g. Luker 1984; Roberts 1997; Gordon 1976). There have only been a few scholars who look specifically at the issue of abortion activism. Faye Ginsburg (1989) has pioneered this work, using anthropological methods to study gendered narratives in the lives of pro-choice and pro-life activists in Fargo, North Dakota in the late 1980s. However, recent scholarship surrounding abortion rhetoric and activism has focused more on theoretical aspects of representation, specifically looking to the work of women of color in formulating a more nuanced approach to reproductive health issues (Nelson 2003; Smith 2005; Ludlow 2008). I am interested in searching how these theoretical debates—about “pro-choice” versus “pro-life” labels, representations of the fetus, and morality of abortion and motherhood—are embodied in current abortion activism in the Hudson Valley.





## REGINA PETERSON

**Thesis Title:** The Impact of Human Rights Based Initiatives and Racial Stratification in Post-Apartheid South Africa

**Thesis Advisors:** Anne Roschelle, Sociology;  
Sue Books, Secondary Education

Apartheid created a racial stratification system throughout South Africa that disenfranchised people of color and despite the end of apartheid, there is still extreme inequalities plaguing the country. Through an evaluation of human rights based initiatives, specifically issues regarding these human rights violations, how is South Africa moving towards developing a culture where its Constitution paves the way for the elimination of these injustices?



## MARIA PIANELLI

**Thesis Title:** PLACE: A Reflection in Three Parts

**Thesis Advisors:** Larry Carr, English;  
Howard Good, Digital Media & Journalism

My creative thesis explores the relationship one has with physical, emotional and societal place. My work is essentially a writing portfolio built using the creative and journalistic skills I've developed at SUNY New Paltz. It incorporates poetry, fiction, and memoir and features to help define the concept of place and our role within the world. It also features annotations and explanations of my world as well as excerpts from early drafts.



## SASHA RIBOWSKY

**Thesis Title:** The Waning Wolf

**Thesis Advisors:** Gregg Bray, Digital Media & Journalism;  
Patricia Sullivan, Communication & Media

Throughout American culture there are many negatively biased attitudes and misconceptions associated with wolves. This, over the course of many years, has led to the Mexican Grey Wolf and the Red Wolf being listed as critically endangered as a result of human intervention. This, however, has led to many environmental problems such as deer overpopulation and depleting resources. The absence of the wolf as a top predator negatively impacts other animal populations in unexpected ways and has lasting implications on the environment as a whole.

In this documentary we seek to dispel the myth of the “big bad wolf” that perpetuates this problem in order to have the audience empathize and want to take action. We will do this through interviews of volunteers from the Wolf Conservation Center in South Salem, New York (one of only two wolf conservation centers in the country). Furthermore, we aim to shine a new light on the wolf as a vulnerable and beautiful creature through b-roll of the socialized wolves that seem as approachable as dogs yet should not be treated as such. More so than just this, we want to use the problem of the endangered wolf to explore the role and moral implications of human intervention in nature and wild populations.



## CHRISTINE RICHIN

**Thesis Title:** Towards a More Radiant Future

**Thesis Advisors:** Pauline Uchmanowicz, English;  
Larry Carr, English

A research and creative writing project that will require the student (myself) to read specific poetry collections by modern and contemporary American authors. This project will result in a chapbook of (15+pages) volume of poetry, which showcases my poetic voice relative to language and subject matter. Excerpt of the final version as well as a critique of aims and processes (grounded in the language of prosody and poetics) will be read in conjunction with the scheduled Honors thesis presentation day.



## RACHEL SILVERBLOOM

**Thesis Title:** Sisyphus Smiles: Finding Happiness in the Absurd

**Thesis Advisors:** Dan Werner, Philosophy;  
Bruce Milem, Philosophy

In the years since the publication of Albert Camus’s “The Myth of Sisyphus”, there has been a scattered and inconclusive debate concerning the philosophical merit of Camus’s provocative piece. Camus recants for us the myth of Sisyphus, who was condemned by the gods to hoist a boulder up a mountain only to watch it fall back down again, for all eternity. According to Camus, we, too, commit ourselves to empty projects, fruitlessly cry out for unity in a universe silent to our pleas, and enslave ourselves to values without justification. This is the heart of what Camus calls “the absurd.” Sisyphus, however, is not a myth meant to dishearten humanity. Though it is true that Sisyphus suffers, it is precisely he who we should strive to embody. When his rock escapes him again, Sisyphus peers down the mountain and confronts his fate. During this moment of lucidity, Camus claims, “One must imagine Sisyphus happy.” Many have criticized Camus – some feel that he jumps to conclusions; others might call into question the validity of the “happiness” that Sisyphus has supposedly attained. This essay will consider precisely these questions: Why is Sisyphus happy? Where does The Myth of Sisyphus fit within the current literature on happiness? Are our conventional definitions of happiness satisfying to begin with? Is absurd happiness attainable, or is Camus’s vision simply a myth, like Sisyphus himself?





## DEBORAH WALNICKI

**Thesis Title:** Yoga as an Alternative Therapy for Adult Survivors of Childhood Trauma

**Thesis Advisors:** Mette Christiansen, Sociology;  
Peter Kaufman, Sociology

Yoga is a 5,000 year old practice combining aspects of physical postures, breath work and meditation that originated in India. Today in Western culture, yoga is a prolific form of exercise that can also have profound influence in addressing trauma for adults who have PTSD, were victims of childhood abuse or sexual assault. Empirical and qualitative data show that practicing yoga can serve to heal past trauma by addressing physical aspects of trauma, as well as ingrained mental and emotional response. Specifically, yoga therapy can be helpful in facilitating post traumatic growth in both service participants and therapists.



## MELISSA WARREN

**Thesis Title:** Darlings Reincarnate

**Thesis Advisors:** Dennis Doherty, English;  
Mary Holland, English

Since the early twentieth century, creative writers have wrestled with three words: “Murder your darlings.” We are advised to remove from our work any unnecessary elements, however precious to us they may be. In this poetry collection, I bring back darlings – images, phrases, words – that I have murdered in the past, in the hope that they fare better the second time around.



## FORREST WEAVER

**Thesis Title:** The Effects of Economic Liberalization on Income Inequality in Latin America

**Thesis Advisors:** Joel Lefkowitz, Political Science/Latin American & Caribbean Studies; Mona Ali, Economics

The economy of South Africa has been becoming more liberalized since the 1970's. This has resulted in the growth of many industries, including the manufacturing and mining industries. At the same time, studies of the environment show that CO<sub>2</sub> emission levels in South Africa have been steadily rising to much higher levels since the mid-20th century. In addition to increased air pollution, the limited water supply of the country is becoming more acidic, and water supplies near mines are being heavily contaminated by runoff materials.



