MEET THE TEAM

FROM THE COLLEGE

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to Volume IX of *Philologica*, where you can find articles discussing research by Virginia Tech College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences students. To read the full research papers described within these pages, visit the Philologia Undergraduate Research Journal online at philologiavt.org

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It has been an incredible honor to lead Virginia Tech’s premier student research journal in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences for the past two years. We as student editors are introduced to many extraordinary research opportunities being pursued by our peers in the college and are always eager to learn more about these passions. The submissions this year were extremely varied in research areas and all incredibly well done. Thank you to all those who submitted — you make the selection process difficult every year!

This marks the second year in which the “journal” part of Philologia is completely online at philologiavt.org. There you will find the full versions of the articles of Volume IX that are summarized in this magazine by the student editors. Being able to merge these two different ways of showcasing the research College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences students are doing is rather symbolic of how creative and intelligent College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences students are, always thinking outside the box. I am proud to continue Philologia’s tradition of publishing interdisciplinary works from across the college.

It would not be possible to facilitate the publication of this prestigious magazine and journal without some help. I am tremendously grateful for the administration in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences as well as faculty reviewers for their advice and guidance. My fantastic team of student associate and layout editors also deserves enormous amounts of praise for all of their hard work, insight, and creativity.

And I’d like to thank you for picking up this magazine and learning about all of the impressive research done by the College. I hope you learn something new by reading about the fascinating and awe-inspiring work that is being done every day.

Thank you.

-EMILY WALTERS
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When Paul Veracka was 16 years old, he won tickets on the radio to see Radiohead in concert. Veracka was unfamiliar with the band’s music beforehand, but just thirty minutes into the concert, Veracka says he was “utterly floored.” He hasn’t stopped listening to their music since, and to cement his love for the band’s music, he wrote a fascinating research paper that explores the political undertones of Radiohead’s sixth album, Hail to the Thief.

Radiohead’s Sixth Album and Its Boundary-Breaking Protests

Radiohead was formed in 1985, comprised of five members: singer-guitarist Thom Yorke, bassist Colin Greenwood, guitarist Ed O’Brien, drummer Philip Selway, and guitarist/keyboardist Jonny Greenwood. Rolling Stone claims that Radiohead is arguably the most accomplished art-rock band of the early 21st century. The band’s widely anticipated album, Hail to the Thief, reached number three on the U.S. album charts. It was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Alternative Music Album, the band’s fifth consecutive nomination in that category.
“IT’S POP MUSIC AND IT’S NOT ANYTHING MORE THAN THAT”
-THOM YORKE

Hail to the Thief was recorded in just two weeks, while the band was on tour. The album was released in 2003 during a time of political unrest brought on by the British and American invasions of Iraq. The name of the album, in fact, appears to be a play on the American presidential anthem, “Hail to the Chief,” which was also a phrase used by protesters during the controversial 2000 presidential election.

One might assume that the political landscape at the time of the album’s release as well as the album’s title would validate claims that the album is politically focused; however, Thom Yorke, Radiohead’s frontman, sends mixed messages about this. While he maintains that the album is “pop music” and “not anything more than that,” he also states, “They’re not so much songs about politics as me desperately struggling to keep politics out.” He adds, “If I could have written about anything else, I would have.”

Despite Yorke’s conflicting statements, Veracka cites the research of several “Radiohead scholars” and supports the view that the album is in fact “politically focused, inspired by the band’s outrage at America’s recent ventures into Iraq.”

Veracka explores—most powerfully through lyrical evidence—how Radiohead “embed[s] their political views in with the narrative of the album.” Veracka references several songs on the album to demonstrate its subtle political undertones. Veracka’s research shows that the song “2+2=5” evokes a feeling of paranoia in a dark, authoritarian world, while the song “Where I End and You Begin” demonstrates Radiohead’s exploration into the toxic relationship and “fading boundaries” between politics and people. Those are just two of the many songs Veracka mentions in his paper.

Veracka asserts that through these songs, listeners are immersed in the dystopian world that the album depicts. This type of silent and subtle protest, he says, differs from more conventional protest albums that contain lyrics that are “unambiguous and openly critical” and directed to a “clear enemy.”

Veracka’s paper is a compelling look into what makes a protest album, and how Radiohead’s album unconventionally protests not just politics but everything from climate issues to government surveillance. Veracka also notes that Hail to the Thief is targeted at the internet-savvy listeners, who make up an “innately powerful crowd of voices.”

Veracka, who is pursuing a double major in Language and Literature and Creative Writing, is graduating in the spring of 2017. He hopes to make time to continue exploring works of art that successfully tackle social issues.
SUMMER IN SAN FRANCISCO

Poem by: ALISON MILLER
San Francisco
lousy with the smell of food teeming
with people
and noise and excitement.
San Francisco
baseball nights and garlic fries
lure in the gulls off the bay
but little boys stand at the ready
to chase them through the bleachers.
San Francisco
traps you too easily in shopping and
sourdough bread
fresh from the oven.
San Francisco
redwoods stand taller than towers
and bridges that you have to crane
your neck to see.
San Francisco
where the sun seems only visible
on alternate Tuesdays
and the ocean is warmer than the air.
San Francisco
where the plates are square.

San Francisco
where fog falls fast
rolling through streets as flat
as the sky is green –
that is to say, not at all.
San Francisco
clouds hang damp and heavy
over trolley tracks and houses in rows
chased by sharp biting wind
that cuts straight through to your
bones
and makes them ache.
San Francisco
wishes that it tasted of a
summer in the Antarctic snow
where the ice actually melts
and the days are long
and the sun never sets.
San Francisco
which would be most appropriately
populated
by penguins
instead is populated by
trendy people in winter clothes
bicycles attempting to parse poorly
marked roads brief forays into
pockets of sunshine and
– buffaloes.
San Francisco
by all rights
should be called the Windy City –
I have walked the streets that laud
themselves thus
and theirs is but a gentle breeze
compared to San Francisco
filled with plenty of gardens and not
enough grass.

San Francisco
where the smell of food teeming
with people
and noise and excitement.
San Francisco
baseball nights and garlic fries
lure in the gulls off the bay
but little boys stand at the ready
to chase them through the bleachers.
San Francisco
traps you too easily in shopping and
sourdough bread
fresh from the oven.
San Francisco
redwoods stand taller than towers
and bridges that you have to crane
your neck to see.
San Francisco
where the sun seems only visible
on alternate Tuesdays
and the ocean is warmer than the air.
Alec Masella’s “Stitches: The Relationship Between Women and Fabrication in Short Legal Fiction” is a fascinating look into the role women play in legal fiction. Feminism, female community, and the role of women in the justice system are all explored within his research. Masella delves into the definition of fabrication, and how both the literal and figurative definitions of fabrication are used as a plot trope when female characters are present in legal fiction. Masella argues and demonstrates that fabrication is used for both the empowerment and trivialization of women, offering an interesting insight into the role women play in legal fiction. Fabrication is utilized in Masella’s research to mean both the making and wearing of articles of clothing, as well as fabrication in the sense of creating stories to fool the justice system. While fabrication connects and empowers women in legal fiction, Masella explores the complexities it creates in short legal fiction as well. The dichotomy of the power that women hold in the justice system and fabrication’s role in demonizing women as schemers and liars creates new perspective on how women are treated by and contribute to the legal system.

A range of short legal fiction is analyzed in Masella’s research, including short stories by Agatha Christie, Somerset Maugham, and Achy Obejas. A special focus is placed on Susan Glaspell’s “A Jury of Her Peers” in order to fully explore the role of fabrication and its connection to women in legal fiction. Glaspell’s powerful story is about three women in rural Iowa connecting to one another and solving a crime through fabrication. Following the murder of John Wright, his wife, Minnie Wright, becomes the prime suspect due to her peculiar behavior when the Wright’s neighbor, Lewis Hale, comes by and finds John’s body. The country sheriff, Mr. Peters; the county prosecutor, George Henderson; Lewis Hale; Hale’s wife, Margaret; and the sheriff’s wife, Mrs. Peters go to the Wrights’ house to try to find evidence against Minnie Wright. As the story progresses, Margaret Hale and Mrs. Peters...
discover that Minnie Wright was abused by her husband and killed him out of self-defense. By noticing strewn objects around the house, the strange state of a canary cage, a dead bird, and the unclean state of the kitchen, Margaret Hale and Mrs. Peters begin to solve the crime together. After finding a quilt Mrs. Wright was making, the women notice the quilt has uneven stitching and is unfinished, suggesting Mrs. Wright’s nervousness the night her husband was murdered. Throughout the story, the three women become connected through the evidence and their similar state of being seen as trivial and unimportant by their husbands. After discovering other clues, Margaret Hale and Mrs. Peters hide a piece of evidence that would convict Minnie in order to help her case. Margaret Hale and Mrs. Peters do their own fabricating by lying to their husbands and refusing to show them the incriminating evidence. The story is wonderfully analyzed as it relates to fabrication, both in Minnie Wright’s quilt and the construction of a story by Margaret Hale and Mrs. Peters in order to spare Minnie Wright.

“Stitches: The Relationship Between Women and Fabrication in Short Legal Fiction” explores the theme of fabrication in “A Jury of Her Peers” within the context of other stories featuring women playing roles in the justice system. The wide selection of stories, all from different time periods and about women from diverse backgrounds, demonstrates how linked women and fabrication have become, and have been throughout literary history, specifically in legal fiction.

Masella decided to write his research about women and fabrication in short legal fiction in a course titled Literature and the Law. As he read short stories for the course, he noticed that most female characters in the stories knitted and sewed throughout the plot, specifically after important plot-twists. Once “A Jury of Her Peers” was assigned, he noticed what a large role fabrication plays in the story, thus confirming his idea that fabrication is a recurring theme in short legal fiction with female characters. Masella’s exploration of the way legal fiction depicts women, specifically with both literal and figurative fabrication, insinuates that fiction can influence people’s perspectives on how women actually are involved in crime in reality. Masella says that Mrs. Wright’s unfinished quilt “holds a certain literary power to it. It also speaks to the generally unnoticed influence women have in dire legal decisions.” In drawing attention to the way women are overlooked by the legal system in short legal fiction, and how fabrication binds them together in these stories, Masella highlights the importance of women in the justice system both in fiction and reality.
Few, if any, books come close to being as beloved—or as ubiquitous—as J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, which have enabled millions of fans to escape through the hobbit hole to a magical world where the forces of good and evil are clearly defined.

Best-sellers for decades, they became even more popular on the heels of Peter Jackson’s Oscar-winning film adaptations. *The Lord of the Rings* is one of the best trilogies ever written, with over 150 million copies sold. This, combined with the commercial success of its Academy-Award winning motion picture adaptation, has helped transform *The Lord of the Rings* into a household name. Throughout, fans have not only read the books, they’ve engaged with them, building one of the most active and creative fan communities in the world. The response to Tolkien’s work has been nothing short of astonishing. In fact, it would be accurate to label it a cultural phenomenon. Even 30 years after the author’s death in 1973, his books are hugely popular.
According to *Time* magazine, 11 million copies were sold in 2001 in the United States alone. Sales worldwide approach a staggering 50 million copies, thanks in large part to the enormous success of the movie trilogy based on them. As a result of his stories, Tolkien is credited with helping to create the literary genre known as fantasy.

Tolkien’s writings about that imaginary world captivated succeeding generations like few books had ever done. Borrowing from ancient literature and mythology, he gave life to his own brand of elves, dwarves, fairies, goblins and trolls, and to some new creatures he called “hobbits.”

This latter race of small people became the core of the story as they attempted to save their world from the ultimate evil. Tolkien, who was a professor of both Anglo-Saxon Language, drew upon influences like Beowulf and Norse mythology to find his idea for Middle Earth and all of its unique properties. Daniel Nozick’s essay, “Arthurian Influence on *The Lord of the Rings*,” traces Tolkien’s use of Arthurian legend and the Holy Grail through *The Lord of the Rings* by examining major parallels between characters and plot devices. Nozick examines King Arthur embodied within Aragorn and Frodo, and the One Ring versus the Holy Grail. He posits that *The Lord of the Rings* and Arthurian legend teach the same moral from opposing sides—power is self-destructive if used for selfish purposes.

Since their appearance in the 1950s, Tolkien’s books have inspired readers to see parallels between events in the story and ancient mythology. But, there are also connections of the real world today. Readers have drawn conclusions connecting the story to different political environments and time periods, as well as many allusions linking *The Lord of the Rings* to religion. The debate as to what Tolkien meant by his stories continued up to the author’s death in 1973. Since that time, primarily as a result of the successful release of the movies, *The Lord of the Rings* has gained a new generation of fans and converts. And like their parents (or grandparents) before them, this generation has found their own meanings in the books.
Abstract: In the 1960s, The God Committee was a group of seven everyday citizens, not doctors, given a trolley problem: they were tasked with selecting which people could receive costly renal failure treatment and turning the rest away. Because dialysis was new and only available in Seattle, if the committee did not select you for the procedure, you were as good as dead. As one could imagine, choosing who lives and who dies was not an easy task, nor was it free of societal values. Racism, ageism, sexism, ableism and classism were all evident within the decisions made by these individuals. Whether the decisions were based on pure prejudice or justified using the monetary disadvantages caused by these values being institutionalized is debatable, however. Unfortunately, while it does not take place in this exact form today, morality within science is still a contemporary issue.
When you think of scripture, what do you think of? Salvation? Classical literature? The possible nuances that were lost in translation? The history behind scripture is shrouded in age-old controversies, the spoils and suffering of war, and literary beauty. Critics and analysts have spent centuries writing on these complicated scriptures. Perhaps one of the most poetic and most analyzed books of scripture is the Psalms.

According to Rachel Sutphin, Psalm 136 is uniquely composed within the psalter. She asserts that this particular psalm reflects the poeticism of the psalmists and works to enhance their theological volumes. Sutphin’s article “The Star of the Psalms: The Geometric Structure of Psalm 136” is the culmination of more than half a semester of research and takes an in-depth look at a piece of religious scripture and its thematic and stylistic structures. Sutphin’s article takes a detailed and organized approach toward analyzing Psalm 136. She makes a section-by-section and line-by-line analysis that truly brings a strong argument to the realm of theological criticism. Her article is easy to follow (for the casual theologian) and eloquently written for a clear analysis.

Always attracted to the Psalms for their poetic expression of “raw emotions such of belief and disbelief, pain and joy,” Sutphin admired the psalmists’ devotion to their faith “despite the fluctuations of emotions and historical circumstances.” However, she specifically chose Psalm 136 for its relationship to the hessed covenant, a subject of much discussion in her work. Sutphin refutes past claims and works to prove her geometric theory through careful assertions. Another critic, Dr. Jacob Bazak, outlines a four-part geometric structure for Psalm 136 in an article from 1985. Not only does Sutphin explain how Bazak manipulates the language and structure, her research displays a clear alternative. Her research considers Psalm 136 in five sections and denotes how the subjects and themes of each section can be arranged in a geometric pattern that makes a five-point star. Sutphin’s proposed geometric structure calls new attention to more intricate details within the psalm’s poetics and argues that the psalmists made these rhetorical choices more deliberately than others have considered in similar research. At the heart of her research, she strives to prove her theorized structure with a format that she believes “respectfully represents the Psalm.” In her opinion, her proposed structure and its new method of analysis make the reader more aware of the purpose of the psalmist. She hopes and believes that her article will bring “a heightened appreciation for the psalm and its place within the Judeo-Christian history and faith.” It is up to her reader to judge whether she accomplished this goal. A modern take on a piece of religious writing, Sutphin’s research shows an intricate consideration of Psalm 136, and offers new and useful insight into theological criticism.
FUELING THE NEW JIM CROW:
MASS INCARCERATION & RACIAL BIAS
The history of not only the United States but the world, knows racism all too well. Races and groups have been discriminated against time and time again, solely based on the color of their skin. With these prejudiced people and their views have come racial caste systems, Jim Crow being one of the most widely recognized.

Jim Crow laws were local and state laws that imposed racial segregation in the South. More specifically, African-Americans had a “separate but equal” status but were treated far from equally. Their facilities were inferior and underfunded compared to others, or simply inexistent. Jim Crow established countless educational, social, and economic disadvantages for African Americans, ones that are still being felt and channeled today, as Michelle Alexander discusses in her book The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness and Carson Barlett in the corresponding research paper.

Carson, a psychology, multimedia journalism, and political science triple major hoping to attend law school, was inspired to research the social psychological perspective of Alexander’s book when she simultaneously had classes in social psychology and jurisprudence. Black Lives Matter and police brutality were also major topics of national concern, as the Justice Department had recently released its investigative report on the police department in Ferguson, Missouri.

Carson recognizes Alexander’s book as a hallmark of modern research on race and mass incarceration, but believes it leaves out a large part of the cause for the problems it discusses, which can be drawn from social psychology. “As racial tensions and police policies continue to plague our political environment, it is important to view these issues through a lens that is informed not only by facts and history, as Alexander analyzes them, but also through the lens of human behavior and expectations,” she says. She hopes that her research gives this second look at these long-lasting issues.

Alexander boldly accuses the United States of unfairly targeting blacks as criminals, however she does not believe that people are explicitly racist. Using social psychology, Carson attempts to explain what Alexander does not, which is that race changes the way we behavior toward others, whether we are conscious of it or not.

Article by: Taylor Bennett
Research by: Carson Barlett
As violence and political turmoil plague parts of the Middle East, many scholars in international relations are searching for a new way to build democracy and promote peace in the area. With such a complicated political environment, though, there are endless theories as to how the United States should best move forward diplomatically. According to senior political science and history major Grayson Lewis, there is one group in the Middle East whose potential as an ally is incredibly underrated and underexplored: the Kurds.

Many people may not be familiar with the Kurds, although their position in the struggle against ISIS and their role in the US invasion of Iraq have earned them notoriety among political scholars in recent years. Kurdistan, which is not an officially recognized state and which has no autonomous government, is an area of land situated in the Middle East that comprises parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.

Through his research, Lewis advocates for Kurdish liberation, not for the sake of liberating the Kurdish people but as a diplomatic possibility for the United States to attempt to stabilize the region: “The US likes to play this game of democracy building...We want to have an ally that’s a democracy, but it’s also got to be one that’s stable, and it’s also got to be one that’s a friend of Israel, and the Kurds have all three,” said Lewis.

For Lewis, the allure of Kurdistan is that unlike many other nations in the Middle East, it has shown a commitment to democracy and even more unlikely, an enduring and stable democracy. The Kurds of Rojava in northern Syria, for example, have an autonomous democratic government. They are progressive in terms of gender equality and representational equality,

AN INDEPENDENT KURDISTAN
A BENEFIT TO US FOREIGN POLICY

Article by: Carson Barlett
Research by: Grayson Lewis
Map Courtesy of: kurdistanaid.org
among other democratic features.

Establishing allies and a favorable opinion of the United States in the Middle East has been a struggle for decades, and it only seems to become more and more pressing with each passing year. If the United States plans to have any kind of cooperative relationship with countries in that area, Lewis argues that they should seek out a democratic ally and that Kurdistan is the best possible contender.

In regards to the question of the process of Kurdish independence, Lewis says that he is more concerned with deciding whether a nation would be an asset to the free world before considering establishing it as an independent state. "Land is land, and you can't just draw a line on a map. I specifically didn't go into how that was going to work," said Lewis when discussing the ramifications of establishing an independent state irrespective of existing borders. For Lewis, independence should be a question of global benefit rather than strictly a historical or cultural question.

"I don't think wanting to be independent is the best judge of whether a group of people should be independent...A better questions is: will they be democratic?" Lewis found, surprisingly, that the body of research on Kurdish independence, and even on the strategic relationship that the US and Kurdistan could establish, was limited.

In his research, Lewis compiles information about the history of democracy for the Kurds, the vibrancy of the democracy in Rojava, and hypothesizes a United States diplomatic strategy that would take advantage of the stability of the Kurds in the Middle East.
Violence is a subject we all like to think is not a huge issue but know in the back of our minds that it is prevalent throughout the world for various reasons. However, what we do not often consider is how our word choices perpetuate violence within our culture and society. Elizabeth Howe opens our eyes to how our language affects this issue.

During her undergraduate years, Howe was invited to work with Dr. Paul Heilker’s Nonviolence in Communication Research Group. When asked about her work, Howe answered, “the research group was such a great project in that all eight of [the students involved] were able to adapt the topic to fit our specific interests, and the research we produced varied across all fields of the humanities.” Howe’s project within the group was influenced by her experiences as a military child, an ROTC cadet, and an aspiring journalist. Her work in military journalism “drew [her] attention to the relationship between the military, mainstream media, and the masses” and the conflicts that arise from these relations. She states that “certain euphemisms, enthymemes, and logical fallacies are enlisted to partially obscure truths or convey strategically constructed messages,” and this is the main idea that she draws from in her research paper.

In her paper Howe explains each side of the argument: whether violence was being inflicted through skewed communications (language) or the public was being sheltered from violence in this way. The culmination of a semester’s work with Dr. Heilker, her paper takes an objective stance toward her thesis, explaining the issues while simultaneously anticipating the counter argument.

Howe first draws from everyday speech and common phrases that have an underlying connotation of destruction or violence. This example clearly explains to the reader that this is not only a problem in military communications, while also giving a simpler example to start off with. She then goes on to elaborate on euphemisms used in military communications, making examples of contemporary issues such as American operations against forces in Iraq and speeches made by former President George W. Bush.

Not only does Howe bring contemporary issues into the spotlight, she turns back to America’s past to display that this is not a newly-learned habit in our military communications. She asserts the euphemisms that are currently used were part of a generation-to-generation inheritance of common language, resulting in the current issue.

Howe also offers criticism to this idea of institutionalized concealment in our language and as result, our media. She shows that language can deceive or reveal what is truly happening in our world. If we choose to use words that deliberately change the connotation of our communications, are we protecting our citizens or keeping them in the dark? It ultimately comes down to whether the public should know the movements and operations of our nation’s military to its fullest extent. This subject is clearly open to further debate, but Elizabeth Howe offers a truly stellar piece of research to the table.

Article by: Rachel Paige Moore
Research by: Elizabeth Howe
“A Socialist Theory of Privacy in the Internet Age: An interdisciplinary analysis”, written by Scott Confer, explores multiple facets of privacy in modern society. The author discusses the shift from the need to protect the government from the people, to the need to protect the consumers from corporations as they grow more and more powerful. As technology has advanced, so have the skills of corporations. The author explains how they, the corporations, can now quickly access the consumers’ information without their knowledge or even their permission. He also discusses the need for the protection of privacy to change when the context of the situation changes. His research begins with the discussion of classic theories of privacy incorporating ideas from theorists such as Ferdinand Schoeman, Herman Tavani, and Christian Fuchs. These theories include the definition of privacy, the components of privacy, and what differentiates the liberal and socialist theories. Confer then argues that the socialist theory, when compared to the liberal theory, is the best approach to dealing with privacy in a world that relies heavily on technology. The main goal of the socialist theory is to protect the oppressed, vulnerable group, the consumers, from the dominate group, the corporations. In contrast, the liberal theory focuses on individuals in society instead of groups. A goal of the liberal theory is also to create a large economic surplus, something that is not seen as important in the socialist theory. Confer argues that an economic surplus should not be the end goal when it comes to the privacy of someone, but that the protection of consumers is more important. The current situation involving privacy in today’s world is not close to that goal, but he hopes this goal can be reached through politics. In his conclusion, Confer argues that by refining the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights to incorporate the implementation of the socialist theory of privacy could potentially help shift the protection of privacy from those with power to the consumers.

Confer was inspired to research this topic while working on his Philosophy, Politics, and Economics senior capstone course before receiving his degree. Confer chose to research the topic of internet privacy because he has an interest in the political, social, and economic impact of technology in the modern world. Scott Confer is currently attending Virginia Tech. In May of 2016, Confer received a degree in Economics. However, he wasn’t finished with Virginia Tech quite yet. In May of 2017 he will be receiving not only his second but also his third degree in Political Science and Business Information Technology. In his spare time, Confer likes playing video games, loves spending time hanging out with friends, and enjoys watching Netflix. Upon finishing his final two degrees this Spring semester, Confer aspires to enter the workforce in humanitarian work. Specifically, he hopes to join the Peace Corps in the summer after graduation. He is currently in the process of applying for the opportunity to serve in the Peace Corps while he finishes courses.
AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

—with Théodore Géricault’s *The Raft of Medusa*
Far off in the distance I can see a flock of birds silhouetted in the reflected sunset on the water.

But that peaceful moment is ruined, by the screams of the fools behind me. Ocean stretches out endlessly yet they drape and lounge over each other like caged beasts. They could enjoy the vast beauty, but they worry instead, about the things they cannot control, like weather, the price of fish in the market, the currents and the tides, and their crew mates starving and dying all around them. There is nothing they can do on this raft but drift;

Yet they worry about things like when help will come and how long the food will last before they turn on each other. They worry about the fins that circle below them and the birds that circle above them, but cannot change a thing.

Nothing will change with their pitiful screams, but they continue to cry for help until their throats hurt.

They could learn a lot from me, namely patience. The smart have given up, crying and crumpled around me.

I do not worry about anything in the world that I cannot change, and I do not fret over things outside of my control.

Unlike them, I am content with the situation we are in. I have a nice view of the ocean, the sunset, and the birds, and between all their meek sniveling and howling screams, I can find peace in the sounds of the waves gently crashing against our raft.

All of their worrying will not add a second to their lives, nor will it put food in their mouths. It will only drive them mad.

I do not waste time caring about them, for they won’t change. I only need to care about the majestic birds in the distance because soon it will be dark and they will disappear. And I will be left alone with these hungry howling beasts.

Poem by: Michael Cisneros
Photo Courtesy of: mentalfloss.com
As screen shatters, so does heart:
our lives are
a love affair with machines,
lit up with the pristine light
that ghostly glow
on our faces late at night.
I tend cracked glass with the care
another might show their child
and coo at circuitry
until my best friend laughs herself into stitches.

An act –
or is it?
There is a part of me
that wonders how I could take it
if my technology were ripped apart before my eyes
my laptop wrenched from my
cold dead hands
the internet dead
and my phone only good for marking a
page in my book.

THE DIGITAL AGE
Poem by: ALISON MILLER
Gender and its effect on spoken language has been a prevalent topic in linguistic research since Robin Lakoff pioneered the movement in the 1970s. Emily Walters, a senior Literature and Professional and Technical Writing double major, explored spoken uncertainty and gender in her self-designed and led research project. Through her Language and Gender course taught by Professor Abby Walker, Emily collected samples of male and female speakers speaking with normal intonation and with clause-initial falsetto intonation. She then surveyed participants on which speech pattern made each gender sound more certain.

Her results of this pilot study were surprising, challenging the standard notions of gender and uncertainty. Emily discusses her research, inspiration, and challenges in the interview to the left. Emily’s research provides a new perspective on a topic that has been thoroughly discussed for 40 years, and further research might be able to change perceptions of certainty with clause-initial falsetto.

**WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE THIS TOPIC?**

Emily: My classes have been discussing gender a lot recently, specifically, women’s uncertainty and the surrounding stigma. We’ve talked about how women frequently use falsetto and uptalk in everyday conversation. Falsetto is speaking at a higher pitch than what is standard. Uptalk is rising intonation at the end of a sentence, making everything sound uncertain and like a question. Women are stereotypically known for both of these.

I’ve also been watching a lot of Saturday Night Live lately. One of my favorite skits is Bobby Moynihan doing “Secondhand News.” The news anchor’s voice starts with very high intonation and ends with very low intonation—this is the opposite of uptalk. I wanted to learn whether this clause-initial falsetto makes individuals sound more or less certain than standard intonation.

**WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU FIND WHILE CONDUCTING YOUR RESEARCH?**

Emily: I recorded male and female voices and had people listen and rank the sentences for certainty. I shared the survey on Facebook; many of my family members took the survey and recognized my boyfriend as the male voice. This made it hard for participants to objectively rank the certainty of each sentence, as they already knew his speech patterns.

I expected men to be ranked more certain than women across the board. However, I found that women were perceived to be more certain than men when using clause-initial falsetto. This was unexpected; I need more data to confirm the results—will this pattern stick through or is it just because of the small sample size?

**IF YOU WERE TO FOLLOW UP AND CONTINUE YOUR RESEARCH, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?**

Emily: I would get more people to take the survey and ensure that strangers are taking it, rather than just people I know. This would eliminate bias. I would also change the speakers. The male speaker had no linguistic background, so it was difficult to explain clause-initial falsetto to him. I demonstrated it for him, but he had a difficult time repeating it in a way that people would recognize. The sentence they both had to say was “I like the color red,” and both speakers originally used uptalk rather than clause-initial falsetto. Next time, I would find speakers with linguistic backgrounds so they know exactly what I need.
REFUSING TO BE SILENCED

&

DEMANDING RESPECT

A CASE STUDY ABOUT BLACK FEMALE SEXUALITY IN POPULAR CULTURE
FOCUSBING ON BEYONCE KNOWLES
As our cultural values and political environments shift over time, we must always be unearthing new perspectives and constantly study how our recent past can inform our future. When Lea Trageser began studying women and gender studies, she realized that even present-day superstars and phenomena can be used to better understand age-old concepts like feminism and sexuality.

“I was finally able to merge three of my passions,” says Lea Trageser, remarking on her inspiration to research black female sexuality. Through the lens of popular culture, Trageser conducted a case study of Beyoncé Knowles and her journey to controlling her sexuality. As a long-time Beyoncé fan with interests in female sexuality and popular culture, Trageser says once she found out that it was possible to delve into those aspects together, she pursued it. Trageser will graduate in May 2017 with a bachelor's degree in human development and minor in women's and gender studies. She plans to attend graduate school to study sex therapy.

Her research is both theoretically unique and familiar, as she applies traditional feminist theory combined with a colorful analysis of the career and sexuality of Beyoncé Knowles. She breaks down the history of black female sexuality in popular culture, drawing comparisons between artists of different races and illustrating how black females can take charge of their sexuality.

Much of her analysis discusses an individualized perspective of how women can personally control their sexuality and how they are sexualized through their artistic expression. “If someone else is in charge, then it’s not their power so it’s hard to respect them,” said Trageser, elaborating on the importance of a woman taking control of her own sexualization and her own sexual expression.

Her research focuses on black feminist themes such as queer theory and intersectionality, but what is unique about her work she says, is the idea of reclamation.

Beyoncé, through the production and release of her 2013 self-titled album, reclaimed her sexuality when she created and distributed the entire album on her own terms, firing her father as a manager, releasing the album without announcing it, and filling it with explicitly sexual lyrics and accompanying music videos. While Beyoncé has been largely criticized for her work on the album, Trageser said that her work actually commanded respect from her peers and her fans by taking control of her sexual expression and the presentation of her music.

For Trageser, the topic of owning one’s sexuality and controlling one’s own sexualization transcends discussions of Beyoncé Knowles or Madonna; these are struggles that can be applied to all women. “You can apply this to almost any popular culture industry. Acting, modeling, anything where women are objectified and sexualized,” she said, further pointing out the topic's applicability to social movements like the Slut Walk and other sexual assault prevention and awareness campaigns.

While Trageser hopes to continue studying sexuality as she moves on from Virginia Tech, she says that she will likely continue to apply what she's learned about popular culture in her studies, especially since popular culture so often influences issues of female sexuality.

Article by: Carson Barlett
Research by: Lea Trageser
From creative writing to criminology, from philosophy to fashion design, students in the Virginia Tech College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences explore the richness of a range of disciplines. They bring perspectives from the arts, humanities, and human and social sciences to understanding and achieving meaningful solutions to complex human problems. Their approach reveals the university’s signature in many ways: in the technology that threads through their work, in their aspiration to serve, in their undaunted Hokie spirit.
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