Senior Thesis Orations

Wyoming Catholic College

Spring 2025

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Spring 2025

Dear friends,

When Plato is not denigrating rhetoric, he instead portrays it as a religious event, done under divine inspiration, a sacred act of dedication and praise to a god. Later Hellenic culture wholeheartedly accepted this latter view, and at sacred festal times the city's celebrations would always include the crowd gathering to hear amazing oratorical feats. At its best, such epideictic oratory would invite the crowd to contemplate the true meaning of the festival and usher the city into an immersive experience of festal leisure and cultural formation. The Church Fathers took up the pagan festal culture and elevated it to new Christian heights. The Christian feasts were celebrated with prodigious works of oratory that continue to form the Christian imagination: polished phrases, well-balanced schemes and tropes, and vivid images, all put together to lead the congregation to both contemplate and embody the sacred mysteries being commemorated.

It is in the spirit of this Christian festal oratory that WCC gathers as a community during these three days of senior orations. The oldest Marian feast on the Church calendar is February 2, where Mary is shown to be the angelic throne, the new ark of the covenant, bearing her Son into the Temple. Thus, Mary is the Seat of Wisdom most properly in the Feast of the Presentation, a feast which we as a college extend to a celebration in her honor as *Sedes Sapientiae* on February 4, to culminate the week of orations. Like our patronal feast, these orations carry the final echo of Christmas some forty days later, giving us a last moment of festivity before the turn into the penitential forty days of Lent.

At the same time, these orations help reveal just why the College has taken the Seat of Wisdom as her patroness. For while Mary is most clearly the Seat of Wisdom as she presents her Son in the Temple, in that same moment she recedes into the background as she gives Jesus to Simeon, and through Simeon to the world. So too in one of the greatest moments of the school year, the College, as *alma mater*, puts her seniors on center stage; the fac-

ulty recede into the background, and the seniors, in anticipation of their graduation, are publicly presented as those appointed to serve as lights to the wider culture.

In their orations, the seniors share with us the fruits of their leisurely study: the depth and breadth of their relevant knowledge, their careful and nuanced consideration of ideas, their argumentative rigor, confident organization, and rhetorically effective style. The orations are the culminating effort of the seniors' training in the trivial arts, with each senior presiding over an hour of speechmaking and question and answer, without a manuscript, on a topic they have been considering for at least the last six months. At the same time, we hope, this culmination is also a foreshadowing of the way our seniors will share with the world at large the common goods of truth and beauty in which they have immersed themselves these last four years.

In that spirit, as President, I gladly welcome you to the Senior Orations of the Wyoming Catholic College Class of 2025. This booklet contains the title and abstract of each oration, along with a schedule for the coming days. Enjoy these next three days, and make sure to thank our seniors for the great service they provide in helping us celebrate in such grand style.

President Kyle Washut

Wednesday, February 5

8:15 AM *The Spirit of Adventure as a Foil to Modern Rationalism*
Joseph Collins, p. 27, Augur 113
Panel: G. Arbery, Holmes, Hamilton

The Incommunicable Person: A White Stone and a New Name
Dominic Brown, p. 19, Augur 114
Panel: Shields, Grove, Zepeda

9:30 AM *Is Transgenderism the Perfection of Man? An Exploration into the Philosophy Behind Transgender Ideology*
John Renouard, p. 50, Augur 113
Panel: Zepeda, Zimmer, Tonkowich

"Who Do You Think You Are?": Painful Providence and the Conversational God
Marietta Mortensen, p. 45, Augur 114
Panel: Holmes, Grove, Hill

"I Have Called You Friends": The Necessity of Vulnerability and Honesty in Prayer
Elizabeth Beardslee, p. 16, Orchard
Panel: Dziad, Shields, Hamilton

10:45 AM *Does Truth Really Set Us Free? Exploring the Mysterious Identity of the "Enlightened Person"*
Bren Walsh, p. 62, Augur 113
Panel: Dziad, Papadopoulos, Bolin

Wednesday, February 5

10:45 AM *Departure from the Divine: Acedia and the Crisis of Modern Man*
Cecilia Pautler, p. 47, Augur 114
Panel: Olsson, Grove, Zepeda

"By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them": How External Forms of Decorum Can Lead to Moderation and Virtue in the Soul
Veronica Britt, p. 18, Orchard
Panel: V. Arbery, Hill, Hamilton

12:15 PM Mass (Immaculate Conception Oratory)

2:00 PM *Spies Can Lie: Reconciling Scholastic Thought with Political Reality*
Ethan Boord, p. 17, Augur 113
Panel: Papadopoulos, Olsson, Dziad

The Spark of Curiosity: A Defense of Modern Art in Churches
Anna Daskiewicz, p. 32, Augur 114
Panel: Tonkowich, Grove, V. Arbery

Living in a False Reality: A Literary Analysis of Self-Deception
Luke Christopherson, p. 24, Orchard
Panel: Schubert, G. Arbery, Shields

3:15 PM *"Be Angry, and Sin Not": How You Should Be Angry*
Sean Cartier, p. 22, Augur 113
Panel: Papadopoulos, Hamilton, Zepeda

Wednesday, February 5

3:15 PM *"Accept Suffering and Redeem Yourself by It": The Susceptibility of Suffering to Divine Grace in* Crime and Punishment
Anne Cocker, p. 25, Augur 114
Panel: Olsson, Schubert, Bolin

Plutarch, Machiavelli, and Why We Study History
August Seeber, p. 51, Orchard
Panel: G. Arbery, V. Arbery, Dziad

4:30 PM *A Philosophical Exploration of Objects in the Digital Space*
Mattea Hagestad, p. 35, Augur 113
Panel: Hamilton, Papadopoulos, Holmes

Health Leads to Holiness
Hope Crawford-Guarnera, p. 29, Augur 114
Panel: Shields, Zimmer, Hill

"Oh, Charles!": An Exploration of Caroline Ingalls as the Authentic, Unoppressed Feminine
Maria Camardo, p. 20, Orchard
Panel: Grove, Zepeda, Olsson

Thursday, February 6

8:15 AM *"To Live and Die in Dixie": The Need for Preserving the American South*
Ryan Craver, p. 28, Augur 113
Panel: G. Arbery, V. Arbery, Tonkowich

Angel or Animatron: The Simplification of Man in Scientific Materialism and Cartesian Dualism
Hayley Heidt, p. 38, Augur 114
Panel: Shields, Zepeda, Olsson

"Love One Another, Even as I Have Loved You": The Innocent Guide as the Remedy for the Errant Conscience
Elizabeth Eckel, p. 34, Orchard
Panel: Cooper, Dziad, Grove

9:30 AM *Reborn in Hope: An Examination of the Numinous in Tolstoy's* The Death of Ivan Ilych
Mary DeSilva, p. 33, Augur 113
Panel: V. Arbery, Schubert, Cooper

Why Pornography Is Not Revealing Enough
Jerome Daly, p. 31, Augur 114
Panel: Dziad, Holmes, Olsson

The Crisis of Postmodernity: A Rejection of the Transcendentals and of True Rhetoric
Clare Bagdazian, p. 14, Orchard
Panel: Shields, Grove, Zepeda

Thursday, February 6

10:45 AM *Seeking the Good Through the Emotions*
Benjamin Seeley, p. 52, Augur 113
Panel: Grove, Hamilton, V. Arbery

Love, Laugh, Live: Shakespeare's Revelation of the Beauty of Man's Irrationality
Benjamin Haywood, p. 37, Augur 114
Panel: Hill, Cooper, Schubert

Are the Orthodox Churches Schismatic?
Joseph D'Antonio, p. 30, Orchard
Panel: Anderson, Holmes, Papadopoulos

12:15 PM Mass (Immaculate Conception Oratory)

2:00 PM *Meter, I Hardly Even Know Her: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Meter and Poetic Vision*
Elijah Lee, p. 42, Augur 113
Panel: Hamilton, Dziad, Schubert

To Infinity and Beyond: The Profoundly Human Art of Poetry
Lathan Layfield, p. 41, Augur 114
Panel: Cooper, V. Arbery, Grove

Beyond Doctrine: A Guide to Using Art as a Tool for Salvation
Ellen Hesselbrock, p. 39, Orchard
Panel: Holmes, Zepeda, Hill

Thursday, February 6

3:15 PM *"Because the Holy Ghost over the Bent World Broods": An Inquiry into the Cooperation of Grace and Nature in* Beowulf
Grace Tabeling, p. 57, Augur 113
Panel: Hill, Zepeda, Papadopoulos

"I Sound My Barbaric Yawp over the Roofs of the World": Whitman and the Genesis of American Poetry
Edward Collins, p. 26, Augur 114
Panel: G. Arbery, Cooper, Dziad

Should Catholics Dance?
Everest Wagner, p. 61, Orchard
Panel: Tonkowich, Olsson, Bolin

4:30 PM *Why the Wheel and the Computer Are Different: The Foundation and Effects of Modern Technology*
Jacob Landry, p. 40, Augur 113
Panel: Hamilton, Papadopoulos, Olsson

Ends Corrupted by Means: That Schools Should Not Use Grades
Brigid Van Hecke, p. 59, Augur 114
Panel: Holmes, Hill, Grove

The March of Spirit: Hegelian Insights into Greek History
Aidan Luzarraga, p. 43, Orchard
Panel: Shields, Cooper, V. Arbery

Friday, February 7

8:15 AM *"Heaven Is Where Juliet Is": Understanding* Eros *in Shakespeare's* Romeo and Juliet
Matthew Vidimos, p. 60, Augur 113
Panel: Schubert, G. Arbery, Holmes

The Incomprehensible Horror of Divine Love
Luca Castronova, p. 23, Augur 114
Panel: Shields, V. Arbery, Cooper

9:30 AM *"The Beautiful Eyes Which Love Had Made into the Snare That Caught Me": The Conflicting Ideas Between Lady Philosophy and Beatrice*
Frank Magongwa, p. 44, Augur 113
Panel: Schubert, Holmes, Shields

Quit Harvard, Go Sailing: Custom as the Gateway to Compassion in Dana's Two Years Before the Mast
Nyra Ortiz, p. 46, Augur 114
Panel: Papadopoulos, Hill, Hamilton

Embracing the Absurd: How Prostitutes and Giant Cockroaches Illuminate Man's Path to Salvation
Abraham Tardiff, p. 58, Orchard
Panel: Cooper, Dziad, V. Arbery

10:45 AM *Does the Free Man Do Whatever He Wants? A Comparison of Aquinas's and Ockham's Views of Free Will*
Clara Ramsay, p. 49, Augur 113
Panel: Zepeda, Papadopoulos, Shields

Friday, February 7

10:45 AM *"Life Is Paradise": The Incarnational Nature of Particulars in Dostoevsky's* The Brothers Karamazov
Teresa Amorose, p. 12, Augur 114
Panel: Cooper, Dziad, Schubert

From Selfies to Stewardship: Aldo Leopold, Farmers, and the Future of Our National Parks
Hayden Raines, p. 48, Orchard
Panel: Hamilton, V. Arbery, Hill

12:15 PM Mass (Immaculate Conception Oratory)

2:00 PM *Tobit as the Domestic Moment of the Biblical Epic*
Jacob Baska, p. 15, Augur 113
Panel: Grove, Hill, Dziad

Finding Vocation Through Transgression: The Heart's Transformation in The Scarlet Letter
Grace Sherman, p. 53, Augur 114
Panel: V. Arbery, Cooper, Bolin

Why I Am Giving This Oration, and Why It Is Not Being Streamed
Kolya Sidloski, p. 54, Orchard
Panel: Holmes, Shields, Papadopoulos

3:15 PM *"You Are the Light of the World": Why a Disordered Regime Does Not Negate Our Duty to Exercise Christian Citizenship*
Catherine Stancliffe, p. 55, Augur 113
Panel: Papadopoulos, Shields, Cooper

Friday, February 7

3:15 PM *"Though We Are Many, We Are One Body in Christ": The Individual's Role in the Liturgy*
Helen Carstens, p. 21, Augur 114
Panel: Holmes, Olsson, Grove

Why Does Misery Love Company? An Exploration of Communal Suffering in The Brothers Karamazov
Clara Anderson, p. 13, Orchard
Panel: Hill, G. Arbery, Schubert

4:30 PM *"O Night More Lovely than the Dawn": A Reconciliation of the Apparent Contradiction Between the Darkness and Certitude of Faith*
Anna Tabeling, p. 56, Augur 113
Panel: Dziad, Shields, Cooper

The Artist and His Humanity: The Tension Between Beauty and Morality in the Arts
Grace Hamilton, p. 36, Augur 114
Panel: Schubert, G. Arbery, Papadopoulos

Teresa Amorose

"*Life Is Paradise*": *The Incarnational Nature of Particulars in Dostoevsky's* The Brothers Karamazov

Friday, February 7, 10:45 AM — Augur 114

Life is Paradise—your everyday life. Are you skeptical? So was Ivan Karamazov. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky explores the conflict between our desire to make sense of reality and our inability to find an order that fits with our ideas of justice, good and evil. These problems are dramatized in Ivan Karamazov, who rejects reality as a sort of Hobbesian chaos, where man is pitted against man.

In this oration, you will grapple with Ivan's complaints against God and His creation and discover how his rejection of the goodness of reality is founded on an aversion to the concrete persons, objects, and actions he encounters, while his brother Alyosha, through engagement with these same concrete particulars, is drawn into a cosmic vision of the union of the divine and human. Egoism thrives on abstraction, while an embrace of particulars and a realization of mutual human dependence culminates in a vision of reality as an incarnation of the divine.

Thesis: From the Boundary of the Particular to the Vista of the Infinite: The Revelation of Reality Through the Unintelligibility of the Particular in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Adam Cooper
Second Panelist: Dr. Travis Dziad
Third Panelist: Dr. Tiffany Schubert

Clara Anderson

Why Does Misery Love Company? An Exploration of Communal Suffering in The Brothers Karamazov

Friday, February 7, 3:15 PM — Orchard

In a fallen world filled with so much suffering, shouldn't our first response be to alleviate that suffering? Instead, we find ourselves almost unconsciously pulling other people into our suffering. It is an inescapable truth that man desires communion in his suffering, but the question this raises is why. Is it a perverse desire for others to suffer because we are afflicted? Do we simply balk at being alone in any capacity? Or can the desire for communion in our suffering indicate a desire within us for something greater, something better? Dostoevsky suggests answers to these questions in his novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. This oration will explore those answers and the depths to which the human soul needs communion in its suffering.

Thesis: Why Does Misery Love Company? An Exploration of Communal Suffering in *The Brothers Karamazov*

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Stephen Hill
Second Panelist: Dr. Glenn Arbery
Third Panelist: Dr. Tiffany Schubert

Clare Bagdazian

The Crisis of Postmodernity: A Rejection of the Transcendentals and of True Rhetoric

Thursday, February 6, 9:30 AM Orchard

Our postmodern American society has rejected the classical transcendentals, the true, the good, and the beautiful, and the results are catastrophic; few seem to value objective truth. Postmodern philosophy approaches the *Logos* of the West with skepticism and consequently doubts the existence of objective realities, changing the way we think about philosophy and rhetoric. Could this be the reason that contemporary methods of persuasion depend heavily on the redefinition of terms? In this oration, I will show how postmodern American society, which was once informed by the philosophy and rhetoric of fifth-century ancient Greece, has gradually rejected "the masters of tradition," Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, and exchanged them for "the masters of suspicion," Marx and Nietzsche, who inspired the German-American philosopher Herbert Marcuse, resulting in the loss of rhetoric and an age of sophistry.

Thesis: Deconstructed Beauty: Postmodernity's War Rhetoric on the True, the Good, and the Beautiful

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Daniel Shields
Second Panelist: Dr. Stanley Grove
Third Panelist: Dr. Henry Zepeda

Jacob Baska

Tobit as the Domestic Moment of the Biblical Epic

Friday, February 7, 2:00 PM Augur 113

The epic is a form which, according to Louise Cowan, makes a "cosmos wherein the other genres find their place and within which human life may be envisioned in its varied dimensions." A key feature of the epic is "its restoration of equilibrium between masculine and feminine forces." Within the epic there is a moment of domesticity which helps the audience understand and see clearly this restoration. Hektor comforts Andromache; Aeneas embraces Dido and they are married in the cave; Adam and Eve are united in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The same is true for the epic of Scripture. The book of Tobit illuminates the domestic image for a chosen people who live according to the Law of Moses, which is to be fulfilled in the hero of the epic: Christ Jesus.

Thesis: The Scriptural *Kosmos*: The Story of the Bible Is an Epic

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Stanley Grove
Second Panelist: Dr. Stephen Hill
Third Panelist: Dr. Travis Dziad

Elizabeth Beardslee

"I Have Called You Friends": The Necessity of Vulnerability and Honesty in Prayer

Wednesday, February 5, 9:30 AM — Orchard

God has called you His friend, but have you called Him yours? Many of us struggle with the tension between the call to intimacy with God and the call to revere Him. Regardless of our apprehensions, the fact is that God desires friendship with us. It is our duty to treat God as a friend because He is a personal being who desires friendship with us.

Friendship with God is possible because God's personhood is analogous to our personhood. St. Thomas Aquinas asserts not only that God is personal, but that He possesses personhood more completely than we do. Throughout Scripture, God expresses His thirst to be friends with us. God desires that Aristotle's three attributes of friendship be present in our relationship with Him. In response to God's desire for friendship with us, it is our duty to treat God as a friend by sharing ourselves with Him honestly and vulnerably. When we pray, we must not hold anything back, thinking that it is too insignificant or ugly for Him.

Thesis: Friendship with God: A Catholic Defense of Pursuing a Personal Relationship with Our Creator

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Travis Dziad
Second Panelist: Dr. Daniel Shields
Third Panelist: Mr. Eugene Hamilton

Ethan Boord

Spies Can Lie: Reconciling Scholastic Thought with Political Reality

Wednesday, February 5, 2:00 PM Augur 113

Few Catholics would question the traditional condemnation of lying as always and everywhere sinful. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. This has been the consistent teaching of the Christian west. This sentiment, while honorable, has been found unworkable by statesmen, both civil and ecclesiastical, who are duty-bound to acquire or protect secret information in order to fulfill the moral law. The only way to do so is by lies and deception. The lawgiver must be the lawbreaker. This is plainly untenable. I will reconcile mankind's political experience with scholastic moral thought by carefully analyzing the act of lying in the Thomistic and Franciscan traditions.

Thesis: Spies, Lies, and Treason: A Catholic Defense of Mendacious Espionage

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos
Second Panelist: Dr. Scott Olsson
Third Panelist: Dr. Travis Dziad

Veronica Britt

"By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them": How External Forms of Decorum Can Lead to Moderation and Virtue in the Soul

Wednesday, February 5, 10:45 AM — Orchard

Is the well-mannered man the admired one? Is he admired in his efforts to open the door for the lady, to hold his dining utensil properly, or to address his elders respectfully? Or, as seems to be more often the case, are his actions ridiculed as rigid, archaic, and perhaps prudish?

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville distinguishes between an aristocratic approach to manners—one that overemphasizes the importance of external forms—and a democratic one, which perceives outward ceremonies and rituals as things that obscure truth and undermine authenticity. As a result, democratic manners, while crude and unrefined, possess a charming hospitality and warmth while the beauty and poise of aristocratic manners often "hide very base hearts" underneath (Tocqueville). Can these seemingly opposed extremes be reconciled? In my oration, I will be drawing on various literary examples of these extremes to show that decorum can be understood analogously to Aristotle's definition of virtue. Acting with proper decorum restrains our passions, habituates us to prudence, and disposes us to living a moral life.

Thesis: Do Manners Matter? A Literary Exploration of the Importance of a Forgotten Custom

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Virginia Arbery
Second Panelist: Dr. Stephen Hill
Third Panelist: Mr. Eugene Hamilton

Dominic Brown

The Incommunicable Person: A White Stone and a New Name

Wednesday, February 5, 8:15 AM Augur 114

What makes one person different from another? Are our unique qualities a temporary limitation to be done away with in the next life? Having begun with the firm foundation of Thomistic philosophy, St. John Paul II explored new avenues within the philosophy of the human person, especially concerning subjectivity and self-determination. The person can be uniquely discovered in his proper act: the exercise of free will grounded in understanding and consciousness. In this oration I will discuss John Paul's thought with reference to Aquinas and a sprinkle of Ratzinger, C. S. Lewis, and John Crosby, arguing that the human person is the most unique (i.e. incommunicable) kind of bodily creature, that incommunicability is a perfection, and that man is irreducible to nature plus individuation. In doing so, I will touch on topics such as nature, personal subjectivity, intellect and will, self-determination, and conscience.

Thesis: Ineffable Personhood

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Daniel Shields
Second Panelist: Dr. Stanley Grove
Third Panelist: Dr. Henry Zepeda

Maria Camardo

"Oh, Charles!": An Exploration of Caroline Ingalls as the Authentic, Unoppressed Feminine

Wednesday, February 5, 4:30 PM — Orchard

Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House series, long a staple of the American storybook shelf, has a uniquely formative value rooted in its promotion of virtue to the American children for whom the series was written. Through the medium of story and the specific adventures of one family in one cabin in one Wisconsin forest (the setting of the first book in the series), Wilder presents an identity and a lifestyle grounded in virtue for the children of an entire country. Pa's gun, Pa's stories, and Pa's fiddle tunes dominate the books, but this oration endeavors to present Caroline (Ma) Ingalls as a worthy example of virtuous living through the full embrace of her feminine nature. Though she is known to only utter a few phrases throughout the series, Ma is neither timid nor oppressed, but rather the embodiment of de Tocqueville's American woman. Where Wilder's books are centered on one cabin, this oration will center on one woman and her impact on, and formation of, not only her family but also the readers who come in contact with her character's indomitable strength.

Thesis: Little House, Big Lessons: An Explication of Laura Ingalls Wilder's Education of the American Citizen

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Stanley Grove
Second Panelist: Dr. Henry Zepeda
Third Panelist: Dr. Scott Olsson

Helen Carstens

"*Though We Are Many, We Are One Body in Christ*": *The Individual's Role in the Liturgy*

Friday, February 7, 3:15 PM — Augur 114

The liturgy is the center of a Christian's spiritual life. It is our coming into contact with God through the sacrifice of His Son, and it is imperative in guiding us towards our heavenly home. Since the liturgy is deeply important to each Christian, we often have the tendency to make it about ourselves. This tendency leads us towards the erroneous idea that the liturgy can be adapted to suit our likes, dislikes, or feelings on certain matters. Since the liturgy is the worship of the universal Church, it is therefore designed to benefit all. This is not to say that our personal and unique emotions are eliminated in the liturgy; rather, they are subjected and adapted to those of Christ, for we participate in the liturgy as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. In this oration, I will illustrate the role of the individual (and all his wants, desires, and emotions) in the corporate celebration of the Eucharist. I will show the importance of understanding what it means to be part of the Mystical Body and how the unity inherent in this Body is key to our existence as Christians.

Thesis: It's Not about You: The Role of Emotion in the Liturgy

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Holmes
Second Panelist: Dr. Scott Olsson
Third Panelist: Dr. Stanley Grove

Sean Cartier

"Be Angry, and Sin Not": How You Should Be Angry

Wednesday, February 5, 3:15 PM Augur 113

Looking for helpful tips and tricks to live your life? Looking for a proper response to the whirlwind of emotions that threaten to rage and boil? Looking for a way to give your sluggish and slow-spirited side a slight boost? Well, look no further! Come and take a closer look at how the Creator, who made us in His image, responds to anger. With insight from great thinkers like St. Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, Lucius Seneca, and more, this easy-to-listen-to oration features helpful tips and tricks to live angrily. With thoughts from saints and Greeks alike, the practical world of anger will be illuminated through scriptural and philosophical analysis. This oration primarily focuses on the how-you-should of anger as a natural consequence of the why-you-should.

Thesis: Christian Anger: Why You Should Be Angry

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos
Second Panelist: Mr. Eugene Hamilton
Third Panelist: Dr. Henry Zepeda

Luca Castronova

The Incomprehensible Horror of Divine Love

Friday, February 7, 8:15 AM Augur 114

What, *really*, does it mean to be a victim of God's love? St. Thérèse of Lisieux ends her autobiography with a prayer for this victimhood, recognizing that we did not consent to nor deserve our creation, much less our redemption on the Cross. This assent seems a little deed—what else from the Little Flower?—but, in truth, to come to terms with the gratuity of being requires not merely a reorientation of the spiritual life but a wholesale metaphysical upheaval. Amid this holy turmoil, what better guide than the raging atheistic existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre, who, beyond simply intuiting existential contingency, deeply penetrated its consequences. As such, this oration will, taking Sartre as its point of departure, come to a comprehensive and wholly Catholic understanding of ontological victimhood, and, having cast God's being in a new light, show that its incomprehensible horror and ineffable beauty might be much closer than they appear.

Thesis: Sublation through a History of Philosophy

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Daniel Shields
Second Panelist: Dr. Virginia Arbery
Third Panelist: Dr. Adam Cooper

Luke Christopherson

Living in a False Reality: A Literary Analysis of Self-Deception

Wednesday, February 5, 2:00 PM Orchard

Following the path of Raskolnikov's life in *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, this oration sets out to recognize the use of different realities within the novel. It will dive into different aspects of living in a reality based in the truth and living one based in the false. Through the use of deception, the construction of your own world where you are your own god is somewhat accessible. For Raskolnikov, he creates a reality where his existence as a god is justified. However, drawing on literary critics such as Vyacheslav Ivanov, this oration will address how the proclamation as a god is merely an illusion, and that the truth will inevitably reveal itself. This oration will also address the practical realm using Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* to display how easy it is to live in a false reality filled with deception.

Thesis: How Self-Proclaiming One as God Is a Form of Self-Gratification

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Tiffany Schubert
Second Panelist: Dr. Glenn Arbery
Third Panelist: Dr. Daniel Shields

Anne Cocker

"Accept Suffering and Redeem Yourself by It": The Susceptibility of Suffering to Divine Grace in Crime and Punishment

Wednesday, February 5, 3:15 PM — Augur 114

Christ said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The struggle to take up one's cross is a central theme in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel, *Crime and Punishment*. The struggle is perpetuated by Raskolnikov's theory of the "extraordinary" man which limits suffering to its definition as an "experience of evil." In contrast, Sonya Marmeladov and her faith encourage Raskolnikov to "accept suffering and redeem yourself by it."

John Paul II's apostolic letter *Salvifici Doloris* helps explain why the nature of suffering is no longer limited to an "experience of evil" but expands so that "to suffer means to become particularly susceptible, particularly open to the working of the salvific powers of God, offered to humanity through Christ." The final conversion of Raskolnikov will evidence this claim and show that by accepting suffering one is filled with a hope for future happiness that spills over into the present.

Thesis: "The Gospel Paradox of Strength and Weakness": Embracing the Suffering Inherent in Punishment as a Source of Happiness

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Scott Olsson
Second Panelist: Dr. Tiffany Schubert
Third Panelist: Dr. Michael Bolin

Edward Collins

"I Sound My Barbaric Yawp over the Roofs of the World": Whitman and the Genesis of American Poetry

Thursday, February 6, 3:15 PM Augur 114

In 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville published his *Democracy in America*, following his travels in the new United States. One of his many takeaways was that "the Americans have no poets." If the likes of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar Allan Poe, and Ralph Waldo Emerson do not qualify as American poets, who does? Emerson writes extensively about the literary and poetic problem facing America, and he concludes similarly to Tocqueville, giving the qualifications that make a democratic American poet: relying on the self, unifying wherever possible, returning the American reader to connection with reality, and identifying the vividness and symbolism of the reader's life. In 1855, Walt Whitman entered the stage with his work *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman attempts to give America its much needed poetic voice with his poetry, exuding the virtues laid out in Emerson's writing. Investigating Emerson's writings, Whitman's poetry, and a few poems from the age following Whitman's, from the poets William Carlos Williams, Sylvia Plath, and Allen Ginsberg, this oration will attempt to show Whitman's revolutionary work and his pervading influence in American poetry.

Thesis: The Good Gray Poet: An Exploration of the Nature of the American Poet

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Glenn Arbery
Second Panelist: Dr. Adam Cooper
Third Panelist: Dr. Travis Dziad

Joseph Collins

The Spirit of Adventure as a Foil to Modern Rationalism

Wednesday, February 5, 8:15 AM Augur 113

Owing to the specialization of the modern age, western society has lost its passion to know in the fullest sense of the word. Our observances are now strictly investigated mechanically and scientifically. In *Don Quixote*, Miguel Cervantes both created a new art form, the novel, and used the spirit of adventure to combat the modern age. In my oration, I will show how this spirit of adventure combats modern rationalism by delving into a view of life that realizes the full importance of mystery and complexity. The experiences of Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit*, Samwise Gamgee in *The Lord of the Rings*, and Odysseus in the *Odyssey* provide a road map for readers to follow in order to cultivate a way of knowing that counters the rationalism of the modern age.

Thesis: There and Back Again: How Adventure Stories Demonstrate a Proper Way to Read Literature

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Glenn Arbery
Second Panelist: Dr. Jeremy Holmes
Third Panelist: Mr. Eugene Hamilton

Ryan Craver

"To Live and Die in Dixie": The Need for Preserving the American South

Thursday, February 6, 8:15 AM — Augur 113

This project examines the ongoing erasure of the history and culture of the American South. While relegated to a footnote labeled "slavery and treason," the South is as integral to the American identity as any other part of the country. It has suffered a slander campaign for the past century and a half. This dismissing of a region and its history is part of a larger trend. As far back as Homer, peoples have always viewed themselves as possessing a distinctness that belonged to them alone, but today, this distinctive pride has been forgotten, and in the case of the American South—and America itself—openly attacked and worn down. Examining the writings of Southern novelist William Faulkner, we can see that the three-pronged attack on the South as a unique cultural region stems from industrialism, individualism, and deracination. In his works, the proper antidote to these blights is piety to tradition, family, and land. Faulkner advocates for a reorientation of the South to resist its cultural erasure, as such devastation would spell the loss of an integral part of America. However, despite everything, the American South is perhaps the last bastion against the spiritual annihilation of America's national uniqueness.

Thesis: Out of the Olden Time: Genealogical Thinking and the Problem of the Past

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Glenn Arbery
Second Panelist: Dr. Virginia Arbery
Third Panelist: Dr. James Tonkowich

Hope Crawford-Guarnera

Health Leads to Holiness

Wednesday, February 5, 4:30 PM Augur 114

Do you have a difficult time staying awake in your classes, following the discussion, remembering what the reading was about, or expressing your thoughts as you wish you could? Do you find yourself being moody and constantly getting tangled in your thoughts? Have you ever questioned yourself: How is it that I pour all my effort into my intellectual and spiritual life and yet I feel unhappy? Is this really what "the best version of myself" is supposed to be at a place like Wyoming Catholic College?

The purpose of my oration is to emphasize the importance of your physical health and its role in your complete perfection and happiness. Through the lens of Aristotelian and Thomistic anthropology, modern science, and Wyoming Catholic College's *Philosophical Vision Statement*, I will explain how taking care of your physical well-being through nutrition and exercise benefits your intellectual and spiritual life. By taking our physical lives, seriously we can inspire holiness in the world.

Thesis: "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano"

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Daniel Shields
Second Panelist: Dr. Tom Zimmer
Third Panelist: Dr. Stephen Hill

Joseph D'Antonio

Are the Orthodox Churches Schismatic?

Thursday, February 6, 10:45 AM Orchard

Most Roman Catholics' familiarity with the Orthodox Churches is limited, especially in their relations with the Roman Catholic Church. Their knowledge generally gravitates towards the understanding that they are in schism, and in some unfortunate cases towards the belief that they are heretical. While this may seem to be the correct and only understanding of these Eastern Churches, the subject is not so straightforward as it appears. Upon further examination into the Eastern Orthodox Churches, numerous details arise which raise questions. For example, the Orthodox Churches have a seemingly indistinguishable Liturgy from the Eastern Catholic Churches, they share many common saints with Catholicism, and they maintain apostolic succession. These points together culminate in raising the question, "Are the Orthodox Churches schismatic?"

Thesis: A Study in Schism: The Place of the Orthodox Churches

Thesis Advisor: Fr. David Anderson
Second Panelist: Dr. Jeremy Holmes
Third Panelist: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos

Jerome Daly

Why Pornography Is Not Revealing Enough

Thursday, February 6, 9:30 AM Augur 114

Pope John Paul II states: "There is no dignity when the human dimension is eliminated from the person. In short, the problem with pornography is not that it shows too much of the person, but that it shows far too little." Pornography, though it might appear to show the human sexual act, actually distorts it by removing the personal, relational, and unitive aspects of sex. Instead of recognizing sexuality as a gift of love between persons—meant to be both procreative and unitive—pornography isolates sexual pleasure from the beauty of truly human love, reducing human beings to mere objects for utilitarian use.

Thesis: The Escape from Intimacy: Why Mill Deletes His Search History

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Travis Dziad
Second Panelist: Dr. Jeremy Holmes
Third Panelist: Dr. Scott Olsson

Anna Daskiewicz

The Spark of Curiosity: A Defense of Modern Art in Churches

Wednesday, February 5, 2:00 PM Augur 114

Is modern art's presence in Catholic churches really all that bad? There are many churches we encounter that would encourage us to say yes. For example, the church with unimaginative lattices pegged to a blank white wall or the church with only a couple banners to draw your eye. I am, of course, referring to the banner with an insipid bunch of grapes accompanied by another banner exhibiting a spiritless basket of loaves and the predictable pile of fish. Despite the prolific examples I could cite, modern art is not completely vacuous. In this oration, I will use the Vatican II document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and John Paul II's "Letter to Artists" to open to the everyday churchgoer a different approach to modern art in churches.

Thesis: Signs and Symbols: Modern Art as Sacred Art

Thesis Advisor: Dr. James Tonkowich
Second Panelist: Dr. Stanley Grove
Third Panelist: Dr. Virginia Arbery

Mary DeSilva

Reborn in Hope: An Examination of the Numinous in Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Ilych

Thursday, February 6, 9:30 AM Augur 113

Ivan Ilych's life was nothing but ordinary. He got a job, married, and had children because that is what people do. The only good missing from his mediocre existence was love, but Ivan did not realize this until he was faced with his own mortality. After a fatal accident, Ivan cursed the pain from his illness in anger and despair as an *It*. This *It* encompasses every physical pain Ivan endures on his death bed and manifests itself outside of his soul as a dark shadow that overpowers his mind and body. German theologian Rudolf Otto would describe Ivan's *It* as a *numinous* revelation. The *numinous*, which is a physical manifestation of a spiritual experience, is what anthropomorphized this *It*. By coming face to face with the reality of his death, Ivan is forced to recognize that this darkness outside of himself is really what was inside him all along. By living a life of convention, he neglected his responsibility toward his family. With the invitation of this *numinous It*, Ivan is able to examine his life and how he lived it, and he is offered the chance to be reborn as the man he should have been for his family.

Thesis: Family Happiness: Becoming Your True Self Through Tolstoy's *Numinous It*

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Virginia Arbery
Second Panelist: Dr. Tiffany Schubert
Third Panelist: Dr. Adam Cooper

Elizabeth Eckel

"*Love One Another, Even as I Have Loved You*": *The Innocent Guide as the Remedy for the Errant Conscience*

Thursday, February 6, 8:15 AM — Orchard

The question of whether and when a conscience is binding is a controversial and possibly troubling one. It seems that a person with a malformed conscience is caught in a dangerous and perhaps inescapable situation. How do we remedy this? I propose the necessity of external guides to our consciences, who participate in an incarnational reality by innocently revealing the Divine Law. By looking at the troubled consciences of Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter* and Rodion Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, I will use literature to reveal how the transgressor can be brought to true penitence by an external guide, who leads him away from individualistic and isolated theories into the communal and relational realities of Divine Law and Divine Love.

Thesis: "*De Profundis Clamavi Ad Te Domine*": The Salvific Role of Moral Suffering in the Conscience as Explored by Dostoevsky and Hawthorne

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Adam Cooper
Second Panelist: Dr. Travis Dziad
Third Panelist: Dr. Stanley Grove

Mattea Hagestad

A Philosophical Exploration of Objects in the Digital Space

Wednesday, February 5, 4:30 PM Augur 113

Imagine you are playing a pet simulator game and adopt a cat. The game gives a multidimensional simulation of pet ownership. Temporally, one watches the cat grow. Almost physically, one can interact with a convincing representation which reacts to player stimuli. Sonically, one can listen to it purr. Virtual cats will even suffer if neglected or left unfed. These dimensions further simulate the non-digital experience. Simply by way of appearance, the pet simulator fulfills what makes the cat seem like a cat. For, the cat *looks* like a cat, *sounds* like a cat, and *acts* like a cat. To appropriate the old saying, what looks like a cat, walks like a cat, and meows like a cat, is a cat. However, most people would not confuse the virtual pet with an actual pet. They recognize the absence of true physicality. Yet, they perceive more than merely an image representing a cat, unlike, say, a picture. This raises the question, what sort of thing is a digital cat?

Thesis: Unwritten Terms and Conditions of Digital Technology

Thesis Advisor: Mr. Eugene Hamilton
Second Panelist: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos
Third Panelist: Dr. Jeremy Holmes

Grace Hamilton

The Artist and His Humanity: The Tension Between Beauty and Morality in the Arts

Friday, February 7, 4:30 PM Augur 114

The term "fine arts" stems from the Latin word *finis*, which means end or goal. Applied to the "arts," the word "fine" indicates that their end lies in themselves. According to Jacques Maritain, the artist, because he is responsible for the perfection of his work, ultimately serves beauty. The definition of beauty from Thomas Aquinas, that the beautiful is "that which when seen, pleases" suggests that for a work of art to have an end in itself, it must be beautiful. Does this mean that any message or moral contained in the art would become a detour towards another end, the formation of man? Does this mean that all artists, writers, or poets must cut themselves off from any moral teaching they wish to instill in their art in order to maintain this "end in itself"? If this is true, what does this mean for poets and artists like Dante, Hopkins, or Fra Angelico, whose work is assertively moral in nature? This oration will pursue these questions and ultimately find a place for morality alongside beauty in the world of the fine arts, allowing for the artist to be not simply an artist, but also a human being.

Thesis: Kindling the Holy Flame: The Responsibility of the Artist to Enriching Man's Soul

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Tiffany Schubert
Second Panelist: Dr. Glenn Arbery
Third Panelist: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos

Benjamin Haywood

Love, Laugh, Live: Shakespeare's Revelation of the Beauty of Man's Irrationality

Thursday, February 6, 10:45 AM Augur 114

Erotic love exists in two worlds. It drives both the idyll of comedy and the bleakness of tragedy. Through the works *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare presents both such worlds and resolves the apparent tension between them. Shakespeare reveals a great joke at the heart of human nature: Man is a buffoon acting out divinity. Once confronted with this reality, man is able to laugh at himself and, in doing so, is freed to love. This ability to laugh, far from being the result of a preexisting comedic vision, instead makes that comic vision possible.

Thesis: Love, Laugh, Live: Shakespeare and the Resolution of Erotic Tragedy

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Stephen Hill
Second Panelist: Dr. Adam Cooper
Third Panelist: Dr. Tiffany Schubert

Hayley Heidt

Angel or Animatron: The Simplification of Man in Scientific Materialism and Cartesian Dualism

Thursday, February 6, 8:15 AM Augur 114

I think, therefore I am. The entirety of man's existence is self-evidently spiritual. The soul, life, and consequently the entire material world, is nothing other than a highly complex machine. Like a driver in a car, the mind operates the body. René Descartes started a movement in thought: not a movement that better revealed the mysterious nature of man, but one that dissected it under a microscope. Do the mechanisms and parts explain everything? What is sentience? Consciousness? Subjective experience? Is Descartes lacking or is he saying too much about man? Is the mind immaterial? Could man have structurally evolved to be intelligent? This oration will seek to understand the tension between the scientific and the spiritual understanding of man, through the lens of neurology, biology, and the Aristotelian definition of the soul.

Thesis: Angel or Animal: The Danger of Reductionism in Hobbes' and Descartes' Definition of Man

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Daniel Shields
Second Panelist: Dr. Henry Zepeda
Third Panelist: Dr. Scott Olsson

Ellen Hesselbrock

Beyond Doctrine: A Guide to Using Art as a Tool for Salvation

Thursday, February 6, 2:00 PM Orchard

God calls each of us to one day arrive at the gates of Heaven. While on earth, we ought to educate ourselves about the end we seek to attain. In our attempts to understand this great theological mystery, we often come upon the roadblock of feeling as though there is only so much we can learn. After closely studying Catholic doctrine and accounts of the saints, what is left? In this oration I will be discussing the vital role played by art for the further development of man's understanding of Heaven. Art, encompassing literature, poetry, and visual art, beside doctrine as a sturdy foundation, acts as a means for developing an intimate knowledge of Heaven and its nature. Through analysis of the works of James S.Taylor and of philosopher Jacques Maritain, we will discover how art speaks to the soul and leads man towards salvation.

Thesis: "Verso l'alto": Man's Transcendence to Heaven through Art

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Holmes
Second Panelist: Dr. Henry Zepeda
Third Panelist: Dr. Stephen Hill

Jacob Landry

Why the Wheel and the Computer Are Different: The Foundation and Effects of Modern Technology

Thursday, February 6, 4:30 PM Augur 113

No one can deny that there are important differences between our current technology and the first technical advancements made by man, such as the wheel and the plow. But what is the nature of these differences, and why should we care about them? What is technology, and is the growing concern with its apparent progress justified? In the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon kicked off the Enlightenment by declaring that the entire work of science must be begun anew. This oration will explore observations about technology's current state in light of the changes which Bacon proposed and explore the consequences of technology's current state.

Thesis: Technology and Humanity: The Baconian Deprivation of Morality from Science

Thesis Advisor: Mr. Eugene Hamilton
Second Panelist: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos
Third Panelist: Dr. Scott Olsson

Lathan Layfield

To Infinity and Beyond: The Profoundly Human Art of Poetry

Thursday, February 6, 2:00 PM Augur 114

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.
> —Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

What is poetry? What is a poet? Poets have stood out like a sore, loudly protesting thumb in the well-oiled machine of sane society long before Shakespeare placed them in the company of madmen and lovers. And yet, Shakespeare claims that somehow the poet apprehends "more than cool reason ever comprehends." What then is the nature of poetic knowledge?

This oration explores the nature of poetry through both a philosophical treatment of the art as well as an up-front experience of examples from throughout its vast collection of works. Poetry is an experiential, intuitive art that deals in concrete particulars. Through his practice of that art, man fulfills his place in the cosmos both as a creative being and as a unity of body and soul, of the finite and the infinite.

Thesis: To Infinity and Beyond: Poetry and Man's Journey to the Divine

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Adam Cooper
Second Panelist: Dr. Virginia Arbery
Third Panelist: Dr. Stanley Grove

Elijah Lee

Meter, I Hardly Even Know Her: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Meter and Poetic Vision

Thursday, February 6, 2:00 PM Augur 113

When one begins to analyze a poem, he dissects its various parts to reinforce or discover a philosophical interpretation. However, this dissection runs contrary to the mode in which the poet operates. T. S. Eliot observes this when he states, "Reading your essay made me feel . . . that I had been a great deal more ingenious than I had been aware of, because the conscious problems with which one is concerned in the actual writing are more those of a quasi-musical nature, in the arrangement of metric and pattern, than of conscious exposition of ideas."

This oration aims to revive the connection between the ultimate purpose of poetry, the poetic vision, and the metrical framework within which the poet operates. The poetic vision will be explored through the contrasting extremes of Aristotle's and Plato's definitions of poetry, ultimately leading to Jacques Maritain's synthesis of the two. Maritain's definition is further refined and enhanced by T. S. Eliot's concept of the three voices of poetry.

Finally, the relationship between poetic vision and meter will be examined through an analysis of "Ozymandias" by Horace Smith and Percy Bysshe Shelley. By comparing these poems, this study will illustrate how meter serves as the structural foundation of poetic vision, demonstrating that poetry is not merely an intellectual exercise but a rhythmic and artistic manifestation of meaning.

Thesis: The Breath of a Life Imparted in Ink

Thesis Advisor: Mr. Eugene Hamilton
Second Panelist: Dr. Travis Dziad
Third Panelist: Dr. Tiffany Schubert

Aidan Luzarraga

The March of Spirit: Hegelian Insights into Greek History

Thursday, February 6, 4:30 PM Orchard

Is the course of history just a series of random outcomes, or can a claim be made that there is a metaphysical reality behind it? This oration will first explore Hegel's understanding of world history, specifically that it is a rational process with the goal of *freedom*. To better comprehend and evaluate Hegel's claims, I will then discuss how his understanding of history is reflected in the writings of the original Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides. Hegel's framework will help elucidate the drastic change of Greek political behavior between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, as well as how the Greek understanding of morality and ethicality crumbled with the rise of philosophers like Socrates.

Thesis: Spirit Revealed: A Study of Hegelian Spirit in Ancient Athens

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Daniel Shields
Second Panelist: Dr. Adam Cooper
Third Panelist: Dr. Virginia Arbery

Frank Magongwa

"The Beautiful Eyes Which Love Had Made into the Snare That Caught Me": The Conflicting Ideas Between Lady Philosophy and Beatrice

Friday, February 7, 9:30 AM Augur 113

"The straight way was lost." What is the straight way? In what way did Dante lose the "straight way"? There are a lot of ways of thinking or trying to answer this question. In the *La Vita Nuova*, Dante is captivated by the most resplendent look and love of Beatrice. This kind of love, which Dante never had courage to express to Beatrice, was leading him on "the straight way," although Beatrice is not the "straight path." But after her death, Dante turned away from her, and switched his mind to a different lady, Lady Philosophy. Beatrice, who is in heaven, takes it as a very serious mistake. But why? After all, we all love Lady Philosophy, and philosophy is the love of wisdom, which is the light of the intellect. This oration speculates through the eyes of Beatrice why it is a serious mistake for Dante to turn to another lady, Lady Philosophy, how Dante turns back to Beatrice, and finally how Beatrice acts as a "Divine Jeep" which drives Dante to Paradise through her gaze in order to see the Face of the Father.

Thesis: "The Gaze" as a spark of Divine Love: An Exploration of Lady Philosophy and Beatrice in Dante's Thought

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Tiffany Schubert
Second Panelist: Dr. Jeremy Holmes
Third Panelist: Dr. Daniel Shields

Marietta Mortensen

"*Who Do You Think You Are?*": *Painful Providence and the Conversational God*

Wednesday, February 5, 9:30 AM — Augur 114

In his discussion of divine providence in the *Compendium*, St. Thomas tells us that God exercises "a special providence" in regard to man, which differs from his providence for any other creature. Thomas goes on to explain that while God directs rocks and orangutans solely through the facts of their nature, he directs man by *carrying on a constant conversation with him*. God speaks man's reality into being and then waits for man's reply to this conversational providence.

But if the little circumstances of each day are a personal conversation from God directed to us, why are so many of the things he says *unkind* or *intentionally hurtful*?

This oration will frame the question of God's painfully personal providence in the context of the book of Job and Flannery O'Connor's short story "Revelation." It will explore the experiences of Job and Ruby Turpin, who both challenge this conversational God with the question, "Who do you think you are, that you could do this to me?" And it will reach its answer in the response which God gives to Job, to Ruby, and to us.

Thesis: "God Called to the Man, and Said to Him, 'Where Are You?'": Divine Providence as Conversation

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Holmes
Second Panelist: Dr. Stanley Grove
Third Panelist: Dr. Stephen Hill

Nyra Ortiz

Quit Harvard, Go Sailing: Custom as the Gateway to Compassion in Dana's Two Years Before the Mast

Friday, February 7, 9:30 AM — Augur 114

We all know that compassion literally means "suffering with," but what does that mean practically? Is it enough to sympathize from afar, or must we cast off from our familiar customs and adopt "the habits of the heart" of the poor and wretched?

In 1834, a young man named Richard Henry Dana, Jr., put his formal education on pause and decided to sail around the world as a foremast hand on a merchant brig. At sea, he discovered a new sort of school, wherein he learned the meaning of compassion experientially, not just etymologically. By deliberately conforming to their customs, Dana was able to enter into a shared life with sailors and islanders. Through these experiences, he developed a capacity for efficacious compassion, which would later inform his participation in the active life as a lawyer. This oration presents *Two Years Before the Mast*, Dana's memoir, as a story of custom, compassion, and an experiential education which harmonized with his book-learning to produce a fruitful active life.

Thesis: Custom Is *Captain*: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Custom, Reason, and Law in Democratic Societies

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos
Second Panelist: Dr. Stephen Hill
Third Panelist: Mr. Eugene Hamilton

Cecilia Pautler

Departure from the Divine: Acedia and the Crisis of Modern Man

Wednesday, February 5, 10:45 AM Augur 114

Are you living through an identity crisis? Are you seeking satisfaction in the latest fashion trend, health fad, or a shiny red sports car? You may be facing *acedia*. Acedia, a lack of movement in the soul towards a higher power, causes man to hopelessly yet relentlessly strive for fulfillment in what is fleeting. Acedia may have fallen out of our discourse, but the problem has hardly gone away. This oration will examine the Desert Fathers' understanding of acedia, survey several important manifestations of acedia in our own time, and propose solutions to this great evil.

Thesis: Acedia: An Insight into Modernity

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Scott Olsson
Second Panelist: Dr. Stanley Grove
Third Panelist: Dr. Henry Zepeda

Hayden Raines

From Selfies to Stewardship: Aldo Leopold, Farmers, and the Future of Our National Parks

Friday, February 7, 10:45 AM Orchard

Digital distractions erode our relationship with nature. Drawing on the insights from Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* and its advocacy of a land ethic, along with an exploration of the ultimate example of land stewardship, an extraordinary model for re-awakening our connections with the natural world emerges. National parks are intended as a place of quiet contemplation and restoration but threaten to devolve into just another stage for your selfies and superficial notifications. Leopold's vision of humility, respect, and responsibility can restore the transformative power of wild spaces. It is time to tune out the noise so that we might discover our place as part of a community unlike any other and restore National Parks to places of awe and stewardship, rather than simple recreation.

Thesis: Beyond Just a Backdrop: A Way to Experience National Parks and Creation

Thesis Advisor: Mr. Eugene Hamilton
Second Panelist: Dr. Virginia Arbery
Third Panelist: Dr. Stephen Hill

Clara Ramsay

Does the Free Man Do Whatever He Wants? A Comparison of Aquinas's and Ockham's Views of Free Will

Friday, February 7, 10:45 AM Augur 113

Freedom is most often defined in modernity, either expressly or implicitly, as the unrestrained ability to do as one wishes; according to this understanding, morality, laws, and other obligations are reduced to mere obstacles that hinder man's freedom. Is man really the most free when he relies solely on his will? Does adherence to a code actually inhibit him from achieving his own good? By comparing William of Ockham's description of free will to St. Thomas Aquinas's, I will provide some clarity as to what true freedom is and what implications it has.

Thesis: Who Is the Free Man? A Synthesis and Comparison of Different Philosophies of Free Will

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Henry Zepeda
Second Panelist: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos
Third Panelist: Dr. Daniel Shields

John Renouard

Is Transgenderism the Perfection of Man? An Exploration into the Philosophy Behind Transgender Ideology

Wednesday, February 5, 9:30 AM Augur 113

Transgender ideology disputes reality, changing how we perceive truth. It appears as though it is better, more perfect to create our own reality. Through expressing how we feel, we will be happier and achieve perfection. I will be asking the question, how did people come to question reality in this way? There was a distinct change, from the ancient to the modern, in how humanity perceives and understands the world. The ancient philosophers viewed the world differently than the modern man. They saw perfection as coming about through the disposition of a man. For example, man is able to control his passions through building virtue and by doing so make himself more perfect. Certain philosophies of the enlightenment changed the ancient perception of the world and led towards transgenderism. Looking primarily at the philosophies of Francis Bacon and René Descartes, I will be exploring how the synthesis of their philosophies led to transgenderism.

Thesis: Transgenderism: A Result of Objectifying the World

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Henry Zepeda
Second Panelist: Dr. Tom Zimmer
Third Panelist: Dr. James Tonkowich

August Seeber

Plutarch, Machiavelli, and Why We Study History

Wednesday, February 5, 3:15 PM Orchard

Why do we read history? The common answer is that "those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it." However, this inherently modern conception of history focuses purely on the pragmatic use of history. The classical understanding, exemplified especially by Plutarch, is very different. Rather than existing as a cautionary tale, history serves as example and inspiration. Plutarch wrote his biographies so that people could imitate the virtues and avoid the vices of the great men. How, then, did we get from Plutarch's conception of history to today's pragmatism? This oration will sketch out the classical model and proceed to show how Machiavelli represents the main turn. From his treatment of history emerges the modern reasoning. Through a consideration of these two writers, Plutarch and Machiavelli, we will see the consequences of the new view of history.

Thesis: Noble Imitation: Poetry and History in the Education of the Statesman

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Glenn Arbery
Second Panelist: Dr. Virginia Arbery
Third Panelist: Dr. Travis Dziad

Benjamin Seeley

Seeking the Good Through the Emotions

Thursday, February 6, 10:45 AM Augur 113

The relation between human emotions and human reason and their partnership in the pursuit of the good is part of the drama of every life. Emotion and reason are integral parts of the human being and neither should be viewed as inherently leading towards evil. Yet the emotions are often subjected to such treatment. This oration will show that not only do the emotions not necessarily lead to sin, but they also aid in the pursuit of the good. Emotions can even act as a guide towards the good without direct involvement of intellect and will, although there must be an intellectual predisposition to the good.

Thesis: Salvation of the Emotions

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Stanley Grove
Second Panelist: Mr. Eugene Hamilton
Third Panelist: Dr. Virginia Arbery

Grace Sherman

Finding Vocation Through Transgression: The Heart's Transformation in The Scarlet Letter

Friday, February 7, 2:00 PM — Augur 114

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne envisions the fallen human condition in a Puritan Adam and Eve, Hester Prynne and Reverend Dimmesdale. The adulterous pair grapple with the consequences of their sin privately in the wilderness and publicly on the scaffold. As a result of the town's imposition of the letter over her heart, as if her sin were the only defining component of the self, their judgment assumes that the self cannot overcome its wayward loves. Hawthorne's novel, on the other hand, suggests that the heart is both a dark cavern and a repository of eternal beauty, an insight he describes in his "Allegory of the Human Heart." In this short piece, he outlines the conflict between light and darkness and between sin and selfhood later depicted in his novel. The conflict, mirrored in the couple's fey child Pearl, resolves with the transformation of the scarlet letter's meaning. By the novel's end, the scarlet letter, laden with a multiplicity of meanings in its various incarnations, becomes a sign of vocation—ushering the heart into union with the eternal beauty reposed within. In this way, an acceptance of transgression, the *felix culpa*, is the only way to self-discovery and redemption.

Thesis: The Discovery of Self in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Virginia Arbery
Second Panelist: Dr. Adam Cooper
Third Panelist: Dr. Michael Bolin

Kolya Sidloski

Why I Am Giving This Oration, and Why It Is Not Being Streamed

Friday, February 7, 2:00 PM — Orchard

At the outset of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine remarks that goods that are not diminished when shared are not possessed as they ought to be unless they are shared. To bring forth the meaning of Augustine's pregnant words, this oration will explore in the Thomistic tradition the meaning of the common good and how one participates in it. In quest for a life actuated by such goods, the case for a communal pattern of life will emerge and the need for a community that is not only instantiated in a specific place and time, but that leverages that very physicality as the only human means for life in the common good. This discussion will reclaim the fundamental meaning of man as "one who is a part," part of a whole unimaginably larger than himself and his share in it. It will reaffirm the personal exclusivity of the traditional modes of sharing against the onslaught of the technologically transcendent new ones. It will strive to recover the forgotten meaning of man as "homo communicans incarnationaliter," raising the person as poet, preacher, and party boy on the funeral pyre of the podcaster for man's true education into ecstasy in the common good.

Thesis: *Ut Unum Sint*: The Need for Community for Life in the Common Good

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Holmes
Second Panelist: Dr. Daniel Shields
Third Panelist: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos

Catherine Stancliffe

"*You Are the Light of the World*": *Why a Disordered Regime Does Not Negate Our Duty to Exercise Christian Citizenship*

Friday, February 7, 3:15 PM — Augur 113

We find ourselves in a world increasingly indifferent or even hostile to Christian social teaching and a corresponding interpretation of society's purpose. The days of Christendom long behind us, we lament the current state of affairs and feel an inclination to cling to the peace and comfort of our immediate circle of fellow Catholics, ignoring our political community. That community is doomed, immoral, and of minimal importance to us, as we await our entrance into the heavenly community to come.

Is this withdrawal from temporal society the Christian response? Would it be better to defy the odds and rebel against corrupt powers to reestablish a morally erect government? Or is there a third position that should be held as the properly Christian one?

I will draw on a wide variety of sources to provide a full exposé of Church thought on this topic, from the New Testament to the Catechism of the Catholic Church and contemporary thinkers. Having explained Christian citizenship, I will address the issue of a disordered regime and analyze the possible responses of the Christian. Ultimately, I will argue for continued civic engagement for the purpose of attaining our final end and assisting others in doing so.

Thesis: "The Greatest of These Is Charity": Retaining Christian Citizenship in a Disordered Regime

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos
Second Panelist: Dr. Daniel Shields
Third Panelist: Dr. Adam Cooper

Anna Tabeling

"O Night More Lovely than the Dawn": A Reconciliation of the Apparent Contradiction Between the Darkness and Certitude of Faith

Friday, February 7, 4:30 PM — Augur 113

Can I be as certain that God loves me as I can that two plus two equals four? Every week I profess "credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem," yet I am unable to construct an argument to prove it to be absolutely unquestionably true that God is both one and three. Does this mean that my faith is invalid?

St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologiae*, explains that faith is an "intellectual habit." Yet, the faith I possess appears to be anything but a habit of the intellect. For though my reason shows that I cannot prove these things, I act as if they are certain. Does this mean that my faith is illegitimate, that it is no more than blind and baseless assertion of will over reason?

In this oration I will explore the apparent paradox between the darkness and certitude of faith. Focusing on the writings of St. John Henry Cardinal Newman and St. John of the Cross, I will inquire into the role of relationship and personal experience in the acquiring of certitude, demonstrating how these serve as a basis for knowledge that is both certain and dark.

Thesis: O Night More Lovely than the Dawn: An Inquiry into Faith and Certitude

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Travis Dziad
Second Panelist: Dr. Daniel Shields
Third Panelist: Dr. Adam Cooper

Grace Tabeling

"Because the Holy Ghost over the Bent World Broods": An Inquiry into the Cooperation of Grace and Nature in Beowulf

Thursday, February 6, 3:15 PM Augur 113

Beowulf is a poem that captures the heart. It seethes with the loss and the longing of man. In *Beowulf*, man is caught in an existence where the natural world is intimately affected by the spiritual realm, a realm filled with power far beyond the potency of man. We, one thousand and more years after the composition of *Beowulf*, have duped ourselves into beholding a world devoid of spiritual power. *Beowulf* and its poet allow no such deceit. In a deliberate inquiry into the cooperation between grace and nature, the poet hurls his reader into the tension uniting the spiritual and natural realms. He reveals man to be in relation with a dimorphic spiritual world where impotency before the demonic means slavery, while cooperation with grace results in transformation. This transformation is shown to be essentially incarnational.

Thesis: The Riven Veil and the Unfettered Man: The Cooperation of Grace and Nature in *Beowulf*

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Stephen Hill
Second Panelist: Dr. Henry Zepeda
Third Panelist: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos

Abraham Tardiff

Embracing the Absurd: How Prostitutes and Giant Cockroaches Illuminate Man's Path to Salvation

Friday, February 7, 9:30 AM — Orchard

Mankind exists in an odd middle ground between beasts and angels. We are not completely rational like angels, but we are not driven entirely by instincts like animals. This odd conjunction of reason and instinct that characterizes human nature is a central tension in the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Franz Kafka. For Kafka's heroes, the absurd nature of our existence was an unceasing cause of suffering, but Dostoevsky miraculously found this absurd reality to be a cause of joy. Although Kafka's works in themselves only bring about despair, Dostoevsky demonstrates that our absurdity, which Kafka reveals so well, is a blessing, because only when we understand the full extent of our fractured being can we freely accept and take joy in God's love.

Thesis: "Saved by the Strength of the Absurd": The Miraculous Beauty of Man's Internal Schism

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Adam Cooper
Second Panelist: Dr. Travis Dziad
Third Panelist: Dr. Virginia Arbery

Brigid Van Hecke

Ends Corrupted by Means: That Schools Should Not Use Grades

Thursday, February 6, 4:30 PM Augur 114

Many assume that grades are a necessary part of education, that students can only be made to learn by the threat of a bad grade or the enticement of a good grade. But is this true? Are grades actually an advantageous addition to education?

Despite their apparent ability to motivate students and their perceived objectivity in communicating student abilities, grades are counterproductive to achieving the ends of education. Through their use as extrinsic rewards and punishments, grades tend to decrease intrinsic motivation and make it harder for students to delight in and pursue the common goods of education.

Thesis: Ends Hindered by Means: On the Effects of Grades in Education

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Jeremy Holmes
Second Panelist: Dr. Stephen Hill
Third Panelist: Dr. Stanley Grove

Matthew Vidimos

"*Heaven Is Where Juliet Is*": *Understanding* Eros *in Shakespeare's* Romeo and Juliet

Friday, February 7, 8:15 AM — Augur 113

In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Lysias confidently claims that love should be devoid of *eros*. According to Lysias, eros, with its unruly power to induce madness, makes a long and happy life impossible. Both Socrates and Shakespeare disagree with Lysias, and both seek to define and defend eros. This oration will use Socrates's definition of eros and his image of the soul as a chariot to understand the role of eros in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*, presents Lysias's hypothetical society completely devoid of eros, ruled instead by familial interests and social status. This society is powerfully contrasted with the paradigmatic eros between Romeo and Juliet. By contrasting Romeo and Juliet's intense eros with the heartless pragmatism of their society, Shakespeare illuminates the true nature of eros. Eros, according to Shakespeare, is more than mere carnal desire that leads to madness and misery. It is something divine. Both Shakespeare and Socrates assert that eros is the desire for unity with the Beautiful. When pursued without reason, eros results in tragedy, but a rationally governed eros is essential for complete love.

Thesis: *Eros* and *Agape*: Shakespeare's Elements of True Love

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Tiffany Schubert
Second Panelist: Dr. Glenn Arbery
Third Panelist: Dr. Jeremy Holmes

Everest Wagner

Should Catholics Dance?

Thursday, February 6, 3:15 PM Orchard

Dancing is fun. Despite being first used in the service of religion and war, it has grown into a very popular pastime that takes on a wide variety of styles. In our culture today, the most popular types of dancing are couples-dances. At first glance, these seem to be harmless activities directed toward healthy socialization, but if one looks deeper, one finds that dancing has been condemned by a plethora of saints, theologians, and others since the time of Christ as a morally corrupt activity. There has been a recent influx of anti-dance sentiment in the past twenty years as more and more Catholics have started attending dances. Why do these critics claim dancing is corrupt, and are they correct? This oration will explore these anti-dance arguments and explain why dancing is a morally acceptable recreation and one in which Catholics can participate.

Thesis: The Morality of Dancing: Why Dance Is a Fitting Recreation for Christians

Thesis Advisor: Dr. James Tonkowich
Second Panelist: Dr. Scott Olsson
Third Panelist: Dr. Michael Bolin

Bren Walsh

Does Truth Really Set Us Free? Exploring the Mysterious Identity of the "Enlightened Person"

Wednesday, February 5, 10:45 AM Augur 113

Modernity suggests that the "enlightened person" is the *revolutionary*. The person who embodies the peak of human excellence, who is thought to possess the deepest comprehension of the cosmos and the meaning of human life, is the person who is best able to assert his individual freedom against the constraints of tradition, objective reality, and even his own human nature. In his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, St. John Paul II identifies this view of enlightenment as "the detachment of human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth."Modernity rightly emphasizes the centrality of "freedom" in human nature—we as rational beings are truly *meant to be free*. Yet, the modern understanding of "freedom" is often taken too far and ultimately eclipses the ancient view of the human as a being whose freedom is inherently related to objective reality and external truth. This oration will explore the concept of the "enlightened person" through a comparative analysis of two disparate images, presented by René Descartes and St. Augustine respectively. By examining their distinct notions of truth, freedom, and human nature, we will identify key characteristics of the "enlightened person"—namely, that such an individual recognizes the essential relationship between human freedom and objective truth and willingly submits himself to this relationship.

Thesis: "No Man Is an Island": René Descartes and St. Augustine on the Nature of Human Enlightenment

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Travis Dziad
Second Panelist: Dr. Pavlos Papadopoulos
Third Panelist: Dr. Michael Bolin

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