



Kentucky Honors Roundtable

Hosted by Northern Kentucky University and Thomas More University

Welcome to KHR Spring 2026!

On behalf of KHR and everyone in the Northern Kentucky University Honors College, welcome NKU and Highland Heights for the spring Kentucky Honors Roundtable. We have an excellent program of oral and poster presentations. Special thanks to the student volunteers from NKU and Thomas More for their time and energy throughout the event, and good luck to the presenters as they share their work! We hope you all enjoy your time at KHR this spring!

Northern Kentucky University Honors College

Abdou Ndoye, Acting Dean
Jen Cellio, Associate Dean
David Kime, Assistant Director
Michele Adams, Assistant Director
Casey Kuhajda, Assistant Director
Ace Morgan, Work Study

Thomas More University James Graham Brown Scholars Program

Cate Sherron, Director
Adam Stier, Assistant Director

Tara Tuttle, KHR President

Location

Northern Kentucky University is in Highland Heights, KY at the intersection of I-275, I-471, and US 27. Parking for KHR is in the Kenton Drive Parking Garage at NKU near the Student Union. Parking vouchers will be provided.

Kenton Drive Parking Garage at NKU:

<https://tinyurl.com/NKUGooglemaps>

<https://tinyurl.com/NKUApplemaps>

Conference at a Glance-- all times are Eastern

Friday, February 20th

Parking in the Kenton Drive Parking Garage. Parking vouchers will be provided.

- 5:30 pm Check-in, Votruba Student Union Ballroom lobby (directly across the street from the parking garage)
- 6:00 pm Welcome, Votruba Student Union Ballroom A
- 6:15 pm Dinner (Italian Buffet), Votruba Student Union Ballroom A
- 7:15 pm "Name that Tune" Game, Votruba Student Union Ballroom A
- 8:30 pm Wrap up and Depart NKU

Saturday, February 21st

All Saturday Activities are in the combined Health Innovations Center and Founders Hall building within sight of the parking garage and Student Union

- 8:30 am Check in, Health Innovations Center Lobby (1st Floor).
- 9:00 am Oral Presentations Session One in 205, 215, 259, 261, 297 Health Innovation Center/Founders Hall
- 10:10 am Oral Presentations Session Two in 205, 215, 259, 261, 270, 297 Health Innovation Center/Founders Hall
- 11:20 am Poster Presentation, Health Innovations Center 2nd Floor Landing
Information Tables: NCHC Partners in the Parks and NKU Graduate Programs
- 12:20 pm Student Lunch (Taco Bar), 102/104 Health Innovation Center
Faculty/Staff Lunch and Meeting, 221 Health Innovation Center
- 1:30 pm Oral Presentations Session Three in 205, 215, 259, 261, 297 Health Innovation Center/Founders Hall
- 2:30 pm Depart NKU

Session Information and General Notes

Oral Presentations

Oral presentations sessions will run one hour each and are organized thematically.

- Presenters in sessions containing three presentations will speak back-to-back for 15 minutes each and entertain audience questions for the final 15 minutes.
- Presenters in sessions containing two presentations will also speak back-to-back for 15 minutes and entertain audience questions for 15 minutes, though

During the Q and A period, all presenters should return to the front of the room. Members of the audience may ask questions to any and/or all of the presenters.

Presenters will not be able to use their own laptops in the conference rooms. Instead, they should store slides, video, images, notes, and/or audio/visual aids on a USB storage drive or an online server.

In addition, presenters should plan and arrive to their conference room at least 5 minutes before the start of their presentation to prepare. All rooms have WIFI access, and presentation computers have ethernet access; however, using a USB drive is the smoothest and most efficient method of uploading and opening presentations.

Moderators will be assigned to each of the sessions to introduce the speakers, keep time, and help to troubleshoot any audio/visual setup issues. If a moderator fails to appear for given session, an administrator, faculty member, or staff member should act in their place.

Poster Presentations

Students presenting their work during the poster session will be able to set up their posters on easels any time after 8:00 AM on Saturday morning.

Photography and Video

Photography and video may be taken of the KHR banquet and conference. By participating and being present during the event, you give the Kentucky Honors Roundtable the right to use photographs or video/audio recordings taken of you during the event for educational or promotional purposes.

If you do not wish to appear in photographs or be recorded, please avoid areas with photography occurring or contact KHR president Tara Tuttle (tara.tuttle@uky.edu).

The full content of your presentation or poster will not be shared.

Oral Presentations Session One: 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

HE/FH 205

“A ‘Green’ Reaction Method of 2,2’-Bipyridine Through Phosphorus Extrusion”

Ally Palumbo, Eastern Kentucky University

Phosphorus extrusion is the process of removing the phosphorus ion from a molecule specifically a phosphonium salt. Currently many phosphorus extrusion methods are harsh for the environment because they require the addition of strong acids, strong bases, oxidation reagents, or heating the reaction to extremely high temperatures. This project used mild phosphorus extrusion conditions to synthesize 2,2’-bipyridine from diphenyldi(2-pyridyl)phosphonium bromide ([Dipyphos]Br). The main goal is to increase bipy yield while decreasing waste which will in turn be better for the environment. These conditions can be manipulated to increase bipy yield: Lewis acid, nucleophile, temperature, reaction time, reaction solvent, and phosphonium salt to Lewis acid and nucleophile ratio. This project specifically focused on the Lewis acid and comparing the bipy concentrations produced by different cobalt (II) salts. Cobalt (II) chloride had the highest average concentration followed by cobalt (II) sulfate, cobalt (II) acetate, cobalt (II) carbonate, and cobalt (II) tetrafluoroborate respectively.

“Investigating the Long-Term Thermal Stability of Tetraarylphosphonium Ionic Liquids”

Katie Webb, Eastern Kentucky University

Ionic liquids, substances that are liquid below 100°C with no discernible vapor pressure, have become popular in recent years for their ability to be “designer” solvents due to the endless cation and anion combinations. Phosphonium ionic liquids (PILs) are known to have high thermal stabilities which lend themselves to applications such as lubricants and thermal transfer fluids. A novel tetraaryl phosphonium cation (dubbed [Mopyphos]⁺) and two substituted methyl derivatives were investigated. All were combined with the bis(trifluoromethylsulfonyl)imide (Tf₂N⁻) anion. Short-term analysis indicated that these PILs are extremely thermally stable above 300°C. Long-term thermal stability was investigated via isothermal gravimetric analysis. The results provide a value that represents the temperature at which 1% of the PIL has degraded after ten hours (T_{0.01}/10hr). T_{0.01}/10hr values for PILs are lower than short-term decomposition temperatures by 50-100°C. This analysis indicates that the methyl derivatives were less long-term thermally stable than [Mopyphos]Tf₂N and that the position of the methyl group affected the long-term thermal stability.

“Sticky Situation: An Investigation into the Applicability of Charcoal Coated Tape in Fire Debris Analysis”

Grace Boyer, Eastern Kentucky University

In the recovery of ignitable liquids (IL), passive headspace concentration using activated charcoal strips (ACS) is the standard method. Activated charcoal powder (ACP) is a less expensive alternative to ACS but is more difficult to use due to its powder form. This research quantitatively evaluates the use of adhesive tapes as a solid vehicle for the ACP and cost-effective replacement of ACS in the process. The tapes should retain an adequate amount of charcoal for the duration of a headspace extraction and exhibit minimal interference. Tapes were tested for their loading capabilities, persistence of ACP, and interference on the GC-MS after an extraction. The collection was quantified using a standard mixture. While several tapes show promising results as a cost-effective alternative to activated charcoal strips, technical challenges remain. Ultimately, these findings may inform future revisions of fire debris analysis protocols or spur additional development of alternative collection substrates.

HE/FH 215

“Beyond the Bars: Examining Mental Health, Treatment and Recidivism During Reentry”

Grace Shupe, Eastern Kentucky University

This paper examines the relationship between mental health distress and criminal recidivism across three crime types (violent, drug related, and property/other), examining whether mental health treatment moderates this relationship. Using quantitative secondary data analysis and logistic regression models, this study evaluates whether mental health distress predicts reoffending and whether treatment influences that relationship. The findings in this study show that mental health distress is a significant predictor of all three offense types. Participants were 162 percent, 173 percent, and 226 percent more likely to commit violent, drug-related and property/other crimes during reentry. No significant moderating effect of mental health treatment emerged. These results suggest that reentry programs should prioritize continuous, high-quality care and pair treatment with housing, employment, and social support. Overall, mental health distress is a strong predictor of early recidivism, and treatment access while incarcerated alone is insufficient to reduce reoffending during reentry.

“Does Athletic Identity or Self-Efficacy Mediate the Relationship Between an Athlete’s Food Attitude After an Injury?”

Lydia Reichley, Bellarmine University

Injury is a common aspect of athletic participation, often resulting in not only physical setbacks but also significant psychological consequences. Among these, injury-related anxiety has been increasingly recognized as a factor that can influence athletes’ mental health and behavioral responses during recovery. One area that has gained attention is the relationship between injury anxiety and disordered eating attitudes. When athletes are sidelined by injury, the disruption to their training routines, changes in body composition, and loss of perceived control can trigger negative eating behaviors aimed at maintaining an athletic physique.

“Healing or Criminalizing: A Sociological Study of Addiction Management in Modern Communities”

Anthony Jones, Somerset Community College

This research investigates the central sociological question: How do societies choose between punitive and rehabilitative approaches to addiction, and what social factors shape those choices? This question is critical in the modern era, as addiction rates continue to rise while communities remain divided over whether individuals suffering from substance use disorders should be met with punishment or offered treatment. Historically, addiction has been viewed through a moral lens, leading to criminalization and mass incarceration, particularly targeting vulnerable and marginalized populations. However, emerging scientific evidence and public health research demonstrate that addiction is a chronic medical condition influenced by neurobiology, trauma, and social inequality, demanding a compassionate, treatment-centered response.

HE/FH 259

“Ravishing, Rakes, Regency, Oh My!: A Survey of the Romance Genre and Its Detractors”

Isabella Smith, University of Louisville

Within the past decade, we’ve seen media based on romance novels, such as *Bridgerton* and *Heated Rivalry*, gain extreme popularity with the general audience, amassing viewership of more than three-hundred-million minutes watched each. However, despite its popularity, the genre has acquired a reputation of being “trashy”, poorly-written, and even pornographic; many readers regard their enjoyment of the novels as embarrassing and refer to them as a “guilty pleasure” - though this has changed since the boom of “book-influencers”. Thus, in

this presentation I aim to evaluate and engage with the common critiques leveraged against the genre from a range of disciplines such as feminist scholars, historians, and literary critics. In turn, I will also highlight defenses made on behalf of romance by readers, writers, and more.

“Readers’ Theatre in Modern Day”

Libby Oliver, Morehead State University

Readers’ theatre is the idea of an audio-only production, stemming from radio plays. Readers’ theatre is meant to be performed with only voices and an audience. Through my research with Dr. Krummrich, we have produced an entire readers theatre production entitled Alma Orphans and are currently moving ahead with converting a stage play into readers theatre. Last semester we used a cast of entirely honors students, and I conducted weekly individual rehearsals and two group rehearsals leading up to the performance date. We focused on the idea of character building, vocal differentiation, and understanding the difference between readers' theatre and traditional theatre. The audience did not quite understand what readers' theatre meant, and we have used that feedback to determine that an element of audience participation will be added for the next performance.

“The Leap Through Reality: The Connections Between Quantum Leap’s Tropes Within Natural Science”

Annamarie Seamans, Eastern Kentucky University

Quantum Leap aired in 1989 and became known for the show's tropes of time travel and switching consciousness. Many scientists have developed theories that allow time travel to be possible in the natural world but become improbable due to causality. However, if causality is no longer maintained, there are models of time travel that become more likely. Similarly, the science behind memory does not have clear research. Many systems within the brain play a role in the formation of memory. The writers of Quantum Leap were not intending to portray accurate science when creating the show and the concepts and ideas demonstrated in the show would be not possible within the laws of science. However, even with the ideas not being possible within the laws of science, meaningful theories of physics and biological systems can be considered in light of the show without much incongruity.

HE/FH 261

“‘See Something, Say Something’: The Effect of Bystanders and Public Posting on Campus Crime Reporting”

Makiah Hollinden, Eastern Kentucky University

The purpose of our study is to see if bystanders reacting versus not reacting and the placement versus no placement of a public sign about crime in the area affect the intent to report the crime, perceived police effectiveness, trust in authority, personal responsibility felt to report the crime, perception of crime frequency on campus, and perceived seriousness of the crime. We hypothesize that if bystanders do not respond to the crime scenario, then participants will be more likely to intend to report the crime; and that if there is a public post about crime reporting, then participants will be more likely to intend to report the crime. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of four conditions. They will then read a crime scenario of a property crime and answer questions on a likert scale from 1-5 over the dependent variables listed above.

“From 2024-2025: How Strategic Leadership Transformed a Student Organization”

Sireen Khader, University of Louisville,

Rachael Cole, University of Louisville

The Undergraduate Research Club (URC) promotes undergraduate research across all disciplines at the University of Louisville by sharing opportunities, hosting educational meetings, and supporting students in publication and presentation efforts. Over the span of one year, URC has grown from meetings that draw seven students to now an organization with almost 100 attendees. URC launched the first UofL Mentorship Program in 2025, the semiannual program Research 101, and several other resources to connect students to open laboratory positions in fields ranging from anthropology to mathematics. Our work highlights practical strategies for scaling student organizations while preserving their core values, emphasizing that meaningful growth is driven by people, consistency, and shared purpose rather than size alone. Ultimately, this work reflects on how student-led initiatives can mature into lasting institutions that support academic development, leadership, and collaborative research culture.

“MAKING IT MORE: Building a Circle of Service Through Thomas More University’s Compassion Pantry”

Emma Linkugel, Thomas More University,

Freddie Caldwell, Thomas More University

Thomas More University’s student-led “Compassion Pantry” is a space in the main academic building that provides food items, school supplies, and hygiene products for students and staff members. The Compassion Pantry was founded in 2021 to address the needs of underserved students during the COVID-19 pandemic and was revived in 2023 by a group of students in the James Graham Brown Scholars Program. Since then, the Compassion Pantry has continued to grow with the support of several local organizations and companies. Focus has shifted to hygiene products, as Thomas More University now offers meal plans for traditional students. Current projects include increasing student awareness of services offered, improving storage options, and creating care packages for students during school breaks. In addition, senior leaders are mentoring the next generation of student leaders. This presentation highlights the Compassion Pantry’s effective team dynamic, engagement efforts, and future directions.

HE/FH 297

“On Earth as It Is in Heaven: The Synthesis of Christian Belief and Socialist Theory in Western Europe”

Yesh Singayao, Lindsey Wilson University

This paper examines how some Christian and socialist groups came to influence each other in Europe as a result of rapid economic changes and social revolutions that occurred over the course of the late 17th century, to the late 20th century. The paper starts with a brief examination of the revolutionary religious utopianism of pre socialist and early socialist figures, such as Gerrard Winstanley who founded the Digger movement in England, and the, “New Christianity,” of Henri de Saint Simon. The paper then goes into the development of Christian socialist movements in Britain, France, and Germany that occurred in response to the rapid commercialization and industrialization of the continent. Finally the paper focuses on the development of a Christian-Marxist dialogue, pioneered by theologians such as Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and Helmut Gollwitzer, in response to the militant nationalism and imperialism that permeated in the aftermath of WWI and the Cold War. This paper seeks to examine why European clergymen and laymen alike sought to find a synthesis between Christian theology and Socialist theory.

“Stone, Power, and Sacrifice: How the Great Wall Reveals the Mind of an Empire”

Labindra Dhama, Morehead State University

The Great Wall of China is far more than a static barrier. This presentation corrects the common misconception, revealing it as a dynamic and complex architectural project whose meaning has evolved through history. Initially a political tool, it transformed into a symbol of national pride and global endurance, as recognized by its UNESCO designation. Using UNESCO research, we will trace the Wall's expansion across dynasties and examine the ingenious architectural innovations, such as "sticky rice mortar," that made this colossal construction possible. Through visual documentation, the presentation will also highlight the human endeavor behind the structure, offering a deeper understanding of its full aesthetic, historical, and philosophical significance for all of humanity.

“AI & Colonialism: Analyzing the Subservient Spy Machine”

Alador Ace Morgan, Northern Kentucky University

Generative Artificial Intelligence, once a science-fiction figment, is now a common, daily presence in our lives. Every website has a virtual helper, every social media has a friendly chatbot, every digital program has an assistant. Even the news wraps itself up in AI-generated bullet points and a cute, concise bow. Everything knows you. Everything wants to help you before you even have the chance to ask. We are in a digital age, and we have never progressed faster. But what has progress always cost us? Ages ago, the price of Western expansion was genocide. Today, we are still paying it.

On a smaller scale, Artificial Intelligence does not take a literal fist to the common folk. Instead, it is an enigmatic thinking machine bleeding into every corner of our society in very different ways. In healthcare, AI has produced immensely successful, life-saving breakthroughs. In education, no teacher or student can decide if it helps or harms. Behind closed doors, dozens of people fall in love with their version of ChatGPT, spiral into hysterics in what is called the “AI psychosis” phenomenon, worship AI as the newfound god in cases of Anthony Levandowski’s Way of the Future Church. In war, AI is programmed in drones to locate and eliminate the enemy.

Even the way we discuss AI is a source of debate; should we consider the possibility of a manufactured person? How similar is our treatment of chatbots to that of enslaved Black people? Do we owe AI as much respect as a hammer, a service animal, or a human person? Is an ethical sexbot possible—or should it be? Why do we even want AI?

Modern AI is arguably the most versatile, controversial invention of this digital age, and the ways it is deliberately placed to affect our lives is critically concerning.

This presentation is an analysis of how Generative AI fits into modern data colonialism, the rhetoric we use when discussing AI, how AI is utilized by government, how the AI psychosis phenomenon stems from this, and why it matters.

Oral Presentations Session Two: 10:10 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.

HE/FH 205

“An Interdisciplinary, Interinstitutional Investigation of Sustainable Agriculture in The Justice Challenge”

Ally Black, University of Louisville,

Ofelia Mattingly, University of Louisville,

Karlee Crowe, Eastern Kentucky University

In this presentation, we share our year-long interdisciplinary investigation of sustainable agriculture, one of the grand challenges confronting society. In considering this topic, we

employed a three-pronged exploratory lens—What is sustainable agriculture?, Why do we need sustainable agriculture?, and How might we achieve sustainable agriculture? Alongside honors students from across the nation, we grappled with this wicked problem, deepening our knowledge as well as enhancing our teamwork, leadership, and activism skills. Our conversion centers on the many components of and related to sustainable agriculture and the ways in which systems thinking can propel possible solutions.

“Red Fox Social Hierarchies: Exploration of Sex-Linked Dominance”

Katie Cox, Northern Kentucky University

David Mech, renowned wolf ecologist and canid behavioralist, coined the term “alpha wolf” to explain the social structure of canids. In this traditional way of thinking, later disproven by Mech himself, canids are seen to have a strict hierarchy with a male serving as the leader of the pack. The term “alpha” became increasingly popular which has created a misconception of canid behavior. Red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), are an incredibly adaptable, widespread canid. Knowledge on their behavior is crucial for monitoring environmental health. This research examines dominance behaviors in seven red foxes (2 females, 5 males) by analyzing behavioral and vocal interactions among the foxes. I utilized my observations and literature resources to better understand the complexity of canid behavior.

HE/FH 270

“Level Up: How Video Games Can Be Beneficial and Spark Creative Imagination in Players”

Makendra Phipps, Eastern Kentucky University

Since the 2010s, video games have rapidly evolved across platforms, from early systems like Atari to modern consoles such as Nintendo Switch 2. Games have become popular due to their engaging nature, goal-driven rewards, and stress relief. While concerns exist about addiction and potential for violent behavior, research shows that video games can improve cognitive skills, intellectual capacity, collaborative learning, creativity, soft skills, mental health, and relationships. I have started the development of Cosmic Scurry to showcase these positive benefits.

“On Levinson’s Musical Expressiveness: A New Framework”

Rachel Cole, University of Louisville

I will argue Jerrold Levinson’s appearance theory of musical expressiveness fails both internally, and in its ability to capture the processes of lived musical expression. While Levinson’s model situates musical expressiveness in perceptual resemblance to human emotion, it overlooks the causal mechanisms and human agents that generate expressive meaning. I propose three revised desiderata that any adequate theory of musical expressiveness must meet, generality, ambiguity, and causal explanation, and, by grounding expressiveness in these revised criteria, I reposition philosophical aesthetics within an interdisciplinary framework that bridges music theory, philosophical analysis, and human agency.

“Teacher Perceptions of School Leadership: Trust, Fairness, and Support as Predictors of Student Achievement”

Trever Smith, Eastern Kentucky University

This quantitative study examined the relationship between staff–leadership working conditions and student achievement in Kentucky high schools using 2023–2024 Impact Kentucky Survey data. It focused on correlations between teacher perceptions of trust, fairness, and principal support and performance on the Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA). Teachers generally reported favorable working conditions, though trust and leadership perceptions were weaker areas. Statewide analyses showed only weak, nonsignificant

correlations between leadership conditions and achievement. A subsample of five schools produced more extreme but still nonsignificant results, highlighting the instability of small samples. Findings suggest that leadership practices shape school climate but do not demonstrate direct, measurable effects on standardized achievement. Leadership may influence outcomes indirectly through teacher morale, collaboration, and instructional quality. Implications include strengthening trust, transparency, and fairness in school leadership and expanding principal professional learning. Future research should analyze comparable data across states and use longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to detect indirect or long-term effects.

HE/FH 215

“Risks of Allograft Rejection: A Literature Review of Biological and Demographic Factors Contributing to Organ Transplant Failure”

Ashelyn Lay, Bluegrass Community and Technical College,

Kaylyn Riddle, Bluegrass Community and Technical College

Organ transplantation, also known as allotransplantation, is the process by which an organ or tissue is transplanted from one individual to another of the same species but a different genotype. Despite rapid advancements in biomedical sciences, organ transplantation remains one of the most significant medical achievements of the 20th century. While generally regarded as a safe and effective treatment of poor or non-functional organs, there remains a continued risk of rejection in transplant recipients. Allograft rejection occurs when the recipient's immune system fails to integrate the donor tissue into the body and attacks it, damaging or destroying the transplanted tissue through immune response and leading to transplant failure. Treatments of the rejection event have remained stagnant for the last 20 years and involve immunosuppressant medications, antibody therapies, and removal of the harmful antibodies in the blood through plasmapheresis. In rare cases, the rejection is severe enough to require removal of the affected tissue and a replacement donor organ transplanted. In this literature review, various scientific and medical databases were accessed and published articles on the topic of organ transplant rejection were retrieved and evaluated to determine if there are quantifiable factors in the population of allograft recipients who experienced rejection. Biological and demographic data were organized, cross-referenced and synthesized into a statistical analysis to provide a comprehensive collation of current knowledge and ascertain need of further research into gaps in the current consensus.

“Equity in Action: Using Research to Improve Skin Cancer Screening Access”

Makenna Roush, Spalding University

This presentation highlights my experience as a clinical research intern in Norton's ARISE (Advancing Research through Innovation, Sustainability, and Equity) program, an internship designed to introduce college students to research while emphasizing health equity. My work included a literature review spanning Z-codes and a data analysis examining social determinants of health in dermatology, with a focus on skin cancer screenings. The results revealed significant disparities, including that 74.7% of individuals aged 18-29 and 84.2% of Black respondents reported never being examined by a health professional for signs of skin cancer. These findings suggest that reduced access to skin cancer screenings may contribute to later-stage diagnoses and poorer outcomes. Beyond just the data, this research has sparked conversations among Norton leadership about expanding skin cancer screenings through mobile health vans to better reach underserved communities.

HE/FH 259

“Letter from Birmingham Jail’: A Rhetorical Analysis of King’s Psychology & Use of Extremism”
Abigail Vanderheyden, Lindsey Wilson University

While completing a close reading of Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” there are many noticeable rhetorical devices. To exemplify, pathos and ethos are exceptionally present. King was a pastor himself, and while he was wrongly imprisoned during the civil rights movement, he wrote back to many white moderate clergymen. In this Letter, he depicts many injustices that black people were forced to endure, including but not limited to many moral disservices. While doing so, MLK utilizes pathos, as he urges the clergymen to have empathy. Moreover, King writes the letter regarding his authority and credibility as a Christian pastor. Therein, King delves into the idea that the clergymen referred to him as an extremist. He returns this statement, claiming that many religious figures were extremists for noble virtues, highlighting a dual positive connotation of extremism. When looking into the psychology of extremism and rhetoric, it becomes evident that King’s letter is highly persuasive. The combination of English and Psychology is one that is rare, yet it facilitates pathways to many key crossroads.

“Analysis of Vocabulary Frequencies in Media Depicting Rural Kentucky”

Blake Bratcher, University of Kentucky,
Kelsey Helton, University of Kentucky

Using analysis of keywords in media presentations of rural Kentucky, our research demonstrates the shaping of public perception of the region fostered by repeated deployment of key themes and stereotypes and the consequences of these media messages upon the communities there.

“Anonymity and Social Pressure: A Sociological Analysis of Lolcows on Kiwi Farms”

Ru Smith, Eastern Kentucky University

This research assesses the website KiwiFarms using a mixed-methods approach, including content analysis and descriptive statistics, to determine whether demographic factors, such as weight, disability, and sexuality, influence an individual’s susceptibility to online trolling for others’ entertainment. The study found that most disproportionately targeted group was found to be overweight females. Meanwhile, Kiwi Farms users were predominantly male, aged 18-24, and from the United States. The study’s results indicate that the expressions of anomie on KiwiFarms are predominantly disciplinary, suggesting that KiwiFarms users mainly focus their criticism on rule violations rather than targeting individuals based on demographic or physical traits. The findings further demonstrate that anonymity online has been shown to exacerbate hate speech and vitriol, and the culture of KiwiFarms demonstrates how a reference group of like-minded users normalized hostile communication norms within this digital setting.

HE/FH 261

“Beads of Courage Program: A Visual Journey of Strength for Pediatric Patients in the Face of Chronic Illness”

Emily Hall, University of Kentucky

Children facing the debilitating reality of a chronic illness find difficulties in developing healthy coping mechanisms to handle their diagnoses. One non-profit program, Beads of Courage, works to help pediatric patients understand and cope with their conditions through a playful, visual representation of their health journeys involving beads. This presentation aims to show the impact of non-traditional therapeutic approaches in helping people in the pediatric chronic illness community and adjacent communities develop healthy coping mechanisms in the face of adversity.

“Suena Como Nosotros: A Spanish-English Storybook for Growing Voices”

Stephanie Czajka, Bellarmine University

A children's book that incorporates several speech-sound intervention techniques clinically proven to improve articulation, such as integrated phonological awareness and contextual utilization approaches, is written in both English and Spanish to support bilingual Spanish-English speaking children with speech-sound disorders.

“Are You There, Judy?: A Critical Content Analysis of Judy Blume’s Representation of Female Puberty”

Audrey Gilbert, Bellarmine University

Judy Blume's novels were revolutionary at the time of publication. Her work explored the adolescent experience and pushed the bounds of content in young adult novels. Through a critical content analysis, this study examines the representation of female puberty in four Judy Blume novels.

HE/FH 297

“Harriet Hosmer: Inspirational Woman Sculptor”

Savannah Victoria Parrish, Bellarmine University

"Harriet Hosmer was an American woman sculptor who studied in Rome, Italy, from 1853 to 1860. Hosmer led her own cohort of women artists and inspired other artists in Rome. Hosmer's sculptures and the controversies surrounding them exemplify her experiences as a career woman of her time. Hosmer made sculptures of women who defied the will of men, both mythical and historical. Hosmer's sculptures show how she felt restricted in the world, particularly in the field of sculpture as a woman and how like the figures of her sculptures she found freedom in stone, where she could tell the stories of other inspirational women. Hosmer is an inspirational figure to the presenter, Savannah Parrish. Parrish researched Hosmer, thinking back on Hosmer's own documented weeks of painstakingly researching for her sculptures. As Hosmer sculpted stories of inspirational women, this thesis is telling Hosmer's inspirational story."

“Lady Gaga and a Marxist Feminist Interpretation of Sex Work in Western Society”

Emma Couch, Lindsey Wilson University

The discourse surrounding sex work in western society and, specifically, its effect on female sex workers is neverending, both in academic and non-scholarly spaces. This discourse comes with limitations, however, such as it being dominated by scholars and, therefore, less accessible to those less versed in academic prose. While pop culture is rich with discussions on sex work, this research project focuses specifically on a Marxist feminist analysis of Lady Gaga's song "Government Hooker," released in 2011 and the accompanying D-RAY COLSON fan-made music video on YouTube. This project seeks to expand beyond existing limitations in the literature and to move beyond the question of whether sex work is harmful or beneficial to women in western society. Regardless of whether sex work is a source of oppression for women or a way for women to reclaim power from the system, sex work is an inherently capitalistic exchange of the body, and Gaga's "Government Hooker" is an excellent example of this concept.

“The Luxury of Her Lace: A Study of Harriet Tubman’s Most Iconic Accessory”

Stacy Faraci, Bluegrass Community and Technical College

Harriet Tubman is a name synonymous with the Underground Railroad, abolitionism and freedom. Hers is a name recognized by Americans and others the world over for her harrowing stories of valiantly freeing slaves. Few photos exist of her, and a commonly missed

item that travels through nearly every photo of her are the white lace pieces that she wears. Lace is something overlooked by society, a delicate creation that isn't thought of as anything more than a decoration for feminine articles of clothing, doilies or tablecloths. Despite being something that has been easily overlooked in society, the story of lace is one steeped in luxury, classism and women's history. Looking at the dichotomy of Tubman's provinciality alongside the extreme luxury of her lace, we can see a much more complex person than we knew before.

Poster Presentations: 11:20 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.
Health Innovations Center 2nd Floor Landing

“Beyond the Price Tag: How Tariffs Shape Supply Chains, Pricing Strategy, and Consumer Behavior”

Jacob Haas, Eastern Kentucky University

This poster presents an interdisciplinary analysis of how Walmart, Nike, and Apple responded to tariff-driven disruptions between 2018 and 2025. Using primary data from corporate 10-K filings and secondary economic literature, the project examines how firms coordinated supply chain restructuring, pricing decisions, and marketing communication to offset trade-policy volatility. Findings show that companies with strong cross-functional integration were better equipped to protect profitability and maintain consumer trust. Walmart relied on sourcing diversification and value messaging, Nike balanced production shifts with increased brand-focused marketing, and Apple combined global manufacturing realignment with innovation-centered communication. The poster visualizes comparative corporate responses and demonstrates how strategic alignment across business functions supports organizational resilience in an era of global trade uncertainty.

“Black American Sign Language: A Linguistic Byproduct of Racism, Oralism, and Segregation in the US South”

Corinne Campbell, Eastern Kentucky University

There have always been different constructions of equality. Some were egalitarian while others have been class-based. In addition to classes, some societies have another group that was even lower: slaves. For enslaved Africans in the US, they were brought to America in the triangular trade to be bought and sold. They were stripped of culture, religion, and language and were not educated. However, with the ratification of the 13th amendment, slaves were freed. Reconstruction followed, as well as rapid development by the Northern government of public services, one of which was public schools for Black students. However, schools were segregated between white and Black, including schools for the Deaf. Because of segregation in the US South, two dialects of American Sign Language (ASL) emerged, ASL and Black ASL (BASL). This racial separation preserved Deaf culture and language when both were being oppressed and erased in favor of oralism.

“Breaking the Stigma: The Law and Supreme Court Cases Behind Gender Discrimination Legislation”

Camille Ogden, Bellarmine University

The Civil Rights Movement and Women's Rights Movement make similar arguments but both fail to address women of color. This is seen through organizations like the National Organization for Women. Pauli Murray is an example as she left the organization because of their refusal to address women of color. Murray also addressed the issues within the Civil Rights movement and criticized it for focusing on men. Ruth Bader Ginsburg also spoke on gender discrimination and argued many cases in front of the Supreme Court using the Fourteenth Amendment. We can see the intersection of law with race and gender through the

Civil Rights Act of 1964 with the adage of the word “sex”. As race and gender law were making parallel arguments they were not being discussed together by civil rights and women’s rights activists as seen through court cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Reed v. Reed*.

“Double Lenses: Understanding ADHD–Autism Comorbidity Across Gender and Pathways to Intervention”

Grace Peak, Eastern Kentucky University

Each year, the number of people diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) rises. This increase is due to the abundance of research done on each disorder. With more information available, many adults and children are receiving comorbid diagnoses, meaning diagnosed with both disorders at the same time. Research has also shown that ADHD and ASD are spectrums, with symptoms that vary in frequency and severity and affect each person differently. A large portion of existing research on each diagnosis has been conducted on males. Because these studies focused on males, many females are misdiagnosed with the wrong condition, as they are compared to male-based symptom profiles. Even so, research continues growing, helping to improve diagnosis and treatment for males and females. Since each disorder is a spectrum, there is significant overlap in symptoms and treatment, including occupational, speech, physical, and behavior-based therapies.

“Excluded Appalachia: Exploring the History of Racially Restrictive Covenants in Eastern Kentucky”

Taylor Fultz, Morehead State University

Before the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, community development was drastically impacted by the practice of restricting housing opportunities for people of color. In deeds of conveyance, racially restrictive terms limited who could purchase the property. The impact on cultural division, especially in rural Appalachia, is reflected by racial demographics unable to settle in these communities. In collaboration with Frontier Housing, research was conducted in the Rowan County courthouse to find deeds that included racially restrictive covenants and reference them with plot maps. The project aimed to understand how these covenants shaped the communities in Rowan County. Findings showed Rowan County has a history of multiple properties that carried racially restrictive covenants. Understanding when and where these covenants shaped settlement patterns allows for a deeper appreciation of the cultural and demographic landscapes of Appalachia, offering insight essential for reconciling past injustices with present aspirations for community cohesion.

“Exploration of a Relationship Between the Activities of TRAIL and 4'-trifluoromethoxychalcone”

Abby Ernst, Bellarmine University

Cancer is the overgrowth of dysregulated or mutated cells that affects 1 in 3 Americans.

Chalcones are natural products with many possible derivatives, such as 4'-trifluoromethoxychalcone (4TF) developed in Dr. Krzysiak’s lab, which show anti-cancer properties on cancer cell lines. Tumor Necrosis Factor-Related Apoptosis-Inducing Ligand (TRAIL) is a tumor surveillance cytokine that acts on two receptor types: death receptors and decoy receptors. One way cancer cells can become resistant to TRAIL is by upregulating decoy receptors and/or downregulating death receptors. In this study, MTS assays evaluated the potential relationship between TRAIL and 4TF that sensitizes A549 cells to TRAIL. The collected data showed A549 is resistant to TRAIL alone, and when treated in combination with 4TF, improves the response to the chalcone derivative. This supports the anti-proliferative properties, and further research is exploring death receptor upregulation as the potential mechanism of this relationship through Western blot analysis.

“From the Glory Days to Paradise Falls to the Land of the Dead: Color as a Universal Language in Pixar’s The Incredibles, Up, and Coco”

Olivia Sharpe, Bellarmine University

From my earliest encounters with cinema to my current academic pursuits, animation, particularly the rich catalog of Pixar, has consistently captured my imagination. These films serve as a powerful testament to the boundless capabilities of artistic talent and innovation. To dismiss animated films as merely “bright and flashy” overlooks the masterful and intricate artistry of color and light employed by numerous studios. Often, color is used not as a mere visual aesthetic but as a sophisticated tool for enhancing emotional resonance. This thesis takes a deep dive into the color design of three pivotal Pixar films—The Incredibles (2004), Up (2009), and Coco (2017)—to demonstrate how color functions as a sophisticated narrative device.

“Good Intentions Gone Wrong: The Hidden Consequences of Benevolent Sexism for Women Seeking Justice”

Mia Thomas, Eastern Kentucky University

Sexism and gender-stereotypes have long impacted societal and criminal justice system responses to victims of violent crime. Scholarly research has demonstrated that sexism is complex and takes varying forms (i.e., ambivalent, hostile, institutional, internalized and more). Of particular interest here is benevolent sexism, which is broadly defined as holding attitudes towards women that are seemingly positive, but which ultimately increase the patronization of women and reinforce their subordination. Within this investigation, I analyze how high-profile cases of violence against women are delegitimized in the broader society, hypothesizing that the presence of benevolent sexism undermines the perception of legitimacy of survivors’ stories and fosters barriers for women seeking justice in the criminal justice system. It is my hope that an analysis of this topic will contribute to a greater understanding of the extent and persistence of benevolent sexism within our society and therefore create a foundation to mitigate its impact.

“Is mitoNEET the answer? Investigating metabolic dysfunction and disease”

Morgan Bonno, University of Louisville,

Mia Hardy, University of Louisville

Many chronic diseases that disproportionately impact our healthcare system (including type 2 diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, and certain cancers) are associated with disruptions in cellular energy production. Despite this link, the biological mechanisms underlying metabolic dysfunction remain poorly understood. Our research focuses on mitoNEET, a mitochondrial protein thought to contribute to cellular energy production and overall cellular health. To investigate its role, we compared key cellular properties in cells lacking mitoNEET to those in normal cells. Ongoing studies also examine how the absence of mitoNEET affects cells under nutrient-deprived conditions that challenge normal energy production. Understanding how mitoNEET influences cellular metabolism may provide insight into fundamental processes that contribute to disease development and progression.

“MyrmecoPortraiture: Using Macro Photography to Reframe Public Perceptions of Ants and Insect Life NOW LIVE IN LOUISVILLE!”

Josiah Kilburn, Morehead State University

Myrmecoportraiture is a one-of-a-kind Insect photography museum exhibit that was designed by an honors student and is now being displayed at the Kentucky Science Center in Louisville. It’s public-facing approach of interactive exhibition items, fine-art macro photography, and passion for ants provides an example of science communication that focuses on telling the

stories of ants. Come visit this poster to see more about the exhibit and hear some sounds and smell smells that ants make, and learn about the exhibit and how you can see it for yourself. (signed insect prints available)

“Neurodivergence in Law: Incarceration vs. Rehabilitation”

Brody J. Schimmel, Bluegrass Community and Technical College

Modern criminal justice systems are largely built on the assumption that individuals act with full intent and rational control. However, this framework becomes problematic when criminal behavior is influenced by neurological or neurodevelopmental impairments that affect impulse regulation, judgment, and emotional control. This poster examines the overrepresentation of neurodivergent individuals within prison populations, with a focus on disorders such as ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and traumatic brain injury. By analyzing the role of the prefrontal cortex in decision-making and self-regulation, the project evaluates whether incarceration effectively addresses neurologically driven behavior. It compares incarceration with rehabilitation-based approaches that emphasize treatment, behavioral therapy, and structured support. Ultimately, this research argues that rehabilitation offers a more ethical, cost-effective, and socially beneficial response to neurodivergent offenders, while better aligning legal accountability with contemporary neuroscience.

“The Best Two Minutes in Sports: Does Human Trafficking in Kentucky Correlate to the Kentucky Derby?”

Addison Caravona, Eastern Kentucky University

Human trafficking affects thousands of people worldwide every year. During large sporting events, this can become an issue as the line between consenting sex work and trafficking becomes blurred. The difficulty of quantifying human trafficking combined with the legality of sex work creates a predicament where measuring human trafficking statistics over a smaller period of time becomes incredibly difficult. The Kentucky Derby brings in thousands of patrons every year, which produces unique challenges for law enforcement and advocacy groups to manage and prevent trafficking over the course of the Derby weekend. This poster investigates human trafficking in Kentucky and whether or not it is impacted by the Kentucky Derby.

“The Lasting Impact of ACEs on Emotional Expression and Nurture in Adulthood”

Addy Kallembach, Spalding University

My poster is based on a research paper assessing the impact of adverse childhood experiences on emotional expression and nurture in adulthood. I used a qualitative research approach to let my participants' experiences speak for the data, rather than relying on broad statistics. Using literature regarding nature vs. nurture in childhood development and relationship success in later life, my paper showed how a lack of nurture and emotional expression in childhood impacts an individual's experiences with these aspects in adulthood. My poster will showcase the initial findings from the research I conducted with an emphasis on the words of the participants. In addition to the poster, I will also display an art piece signifying the harsh relationship between growing up with a lack of nurture and how that impacts one's ability to parent as an adult. The art piece supplements the research by illuminating the impact of nature and nurture from an emotional standpoint.

“The Light Microscope: A Multifaceted Instrument”

Grace Brown, Spalding University

Light microscopy is a cornerstone of modern medical technology and research. My poster aims to present the light microscope as not only a tool but an instrument which can be fine-tuned for a plethora of purposes, each uniquely helpful to an area of science. In this poster I will

present six different types of light microscopy (bright field illumination, dark field illumination, phase contrast, polarized light microscopy, Normanski differential interference, and fluorescence microscopy) and their contributions to science, specifically to medical science. This poster will be focused on why there is a need for so many different types of imaging with light microscopes as opposed to just bright field, or, what we think of as a “typical” microscope image. I learned this information from a specialized course in light microscopy where I was able to perform imaging using each of the types listed above and see for myself their innate advantages.

“Tir Gan Teanga, Tir Gan Anam: Language Death and Rebirth in the Face of Oppression”
Alexandria Groves, University of Louisville

“Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam” is an Irish Gaelic proverb that translates to “a nation without a language is a nation without a soul.” This short but powerful saying speaks to the intimate bond between language and identity, as the death of a language marks not just the loss of words, but the silencing of memory, tradition, and worldview. Across the contexts of indigenous language revival in New Zealand, Ireland, and Scotland, a pattern emerged: language revival thrives where communities are empowered to reclaim their narratives and where language is lived, not just learned. After decades of language oppression, successful revival can only emerge through a cyclical relationship between top-down policies and bottom-up movements.

“Unlocking Access: Investigating the Implementation of European Accessibility Standards in European Museums”

Katie Hendrix, Eastern Kentucky University

This project presents a comparative analysis of mobility access for visitors with physical limitations at four of Europe’s most prominent art museums: the Prado (Madrid), the Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam), the Louvre (Paris), and the Vatican Museums (Rome). All are subject to the European Standard of the built environment (EN 17210) as well as to their national laws concerning accessibility that all EU countries must follow. Because these museums were not originally designed with accessibility in mind, these historic buildings are now implementing innovative approaches for mobility access. Investigative visits to the four museums demonstrate close to optimal fulfillment of accessibility standards. Results indicate that the Prado, the Rijksmuseum, and the Vatican showed the highest adherence to European accessibility standards, whereas the Louvre, despite being the most popular art museum in the world, met the fewest.

“UofL Leads Advancements in Clinical and Engineering Research Through Technology”

Saumya Sikhwal, University of Louisville,

Sireen Khader, University of Louisville

The Cardinal Edge is the sole peer-reviewed undergraduate research journal at the University of Louisville (UofL). The Spotlight Cohort showcases interdisciplinary innovation through manuscripts authored by undergraduate students under the guidance of UofL faculty.

Through a structured interview and writing process, students produce high-quality scholarly works published in the journal and online ThinkIR university library. Featured studies include mechanobiology-based investigations into treatment resistance in glioblastoma multiforme, analyses of the public health and regulatory implications of e-cigarette use, explorations of artificial intelligence applications in modern engineering research, and neuroplasticity-driven interventions in speech-language pathology and music therapy. Collectively, these projects demonstrate how technological advancements—from machine learning algorithms to biomechanical modeling—can enhance diagnostic accuracy, therapeutic strategies, and

policy development, underscoring the importance of early research engagement and interprofessional collaboration.

“Using the Flexon Approach to RNAi for Analysis of Gene Function in Male Gonadal Development in *C. elegans*”

Andrew Spalding, Bellarmine University

“Visualizing Ekphrasis”

Lexi McCoy, Morehead State University

The goal of my research has been to further explore the concept of ekphrasis and reach beyond its limits. Although ekphrasis is a literary device, the order in which the art and the literature are made can be reversed. Art and literature both inspire each other. The creation of art inspired by literature is called reverse ekphrasis. This series of artwork is inspired by a collection of 4 plays written by Philip Krummrich. Along with research on reverse ekphrasis, there were research efforts put into the formatting of each play into one cohesive form. Each play was a chance at creating a reverse ekphrastic artwork that was inspired by the stories involved in each. The main artwork titled "4 Plays" envelopes the concept of ekphrasis and theatre created by the Ancient Greeks.

“You Hit Your Head, What Comes Next? How can Speech Language Pathologists Assist in Traumatic Brain Injury Recovery?”

Laynie Wollam, Eastern Kentucky University

Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs) are complex injuries caused by an impact or penetrating wound to the head that affects brain functioning. TBIs can result in a number of different symptoms and impairments, including social and cognitive communication disorders. Because every patient will experience different symptoms, and have different priorities for their recovery, treatment can be difficult. This project seeks to find out how Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) can use individualized patient centered care to assist in treatment and recovery post TBIs. Initial research suggests that by using techniques such as motivational interviewing, the SLP can create a treatment plan that is specific to the patient and focuses on their symptoms and goals.

Oral Presentations Session Three: 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

HE/FH 205

“Can the Implementation of ‘The Pause’ Decrease Death Anxiety and Poor Mental Health in Practicing Nurses?”

Lilli Meyer, Bellarmine University

This thesis examines death anxiety among nurses and its impact on mental health, patient care, and personal well-being. Repeated exposure to patient death places nurses at increased risk for impaired mental health, work-related rumination, and strain-based conflicts that extend outside of work. High levels of death anxiety can negatively affect multiple aspects of nursing, including nurse-patient relationships, engagement at work, and quality of care. This thesis introduces "The Pause" as a potential intervention. "The Pause" is a brief, secular, structured moment of silence following a patient's death that promotes emotional processing, compassion, and closure while also reducing grief and distress. The goal of this thesis is to evaluate whether the implementation of "The Pause" can reduce death anxiety and improve mental health outcomes for practicing nurses, ultimately benefiting both nurses and patients.

“Implication of Leisure on Veterinary Mental Health Outcomes”

Kevin Garuccio, Bellarmine University

Poor mental health is a serious cause for concern in the veterinarian population, where suicide rates are double that of the dental and medical professions and four times that of the general population. Studies have previously investigated how factors inside the workplace of vets impact their mental health, but there hasn't been much research exploring the additional factors found outside of work that could provide valuable insights into this crisis. This survey-based project delves into how veterinarians spend their leisure time outside of work and how the activities they choose may have implications on their mental health outcomes.

HE/FH 215

“In Sickness and In Health”

Zachary Hite, Lindsey Wilson University

This paper is a recollection of the events that took place in Eyam from 1665-1666.

Background will be given on the village of Eyam, as well as the time period and the disease that ravaged through the village. Then I will acknowledge the support from other communities as well as address the effectiveness of the approach and methods Eyam took to mitigate the spread of disease. Then, I will proceed to compare the epidemic of the time to the more recent pandemics of the Spanish Flu and COVID-19 viruses. Then I will give an overview of themes we can learn from the villagers of Eyam and their sacrifice.

“Social Drivers of Health: Shifting the Focus of Health Indicators from the Biological Code to the Zip Code”

Jenna Barlage, Eastern Kentucky University

This study examined how healthcare facilities in Kentucky and Ohio are adapting to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) 2024 mandate requiring collection and reporting of Social Drivers of Health (SDOH) data. Using a literature review and interviews with administrators overseeing SDOH screening, documentation, and reporting, the research assessed whether expanded data collection has been limited by financial, technological, and organizational barriers. Findings showed that many facilities have increased screenings, revealing early trends such as high rates of food insecurity and housing challenges. Administrators reported responding through partnerships with community organizations, referral networks, and enhanced care coordination. However, they highlighted ongoing obstacles, including limited closed-loop referral systems, community resource shortages, staff capacity issues, and increasing numbers of patients screening positive for SDOH needs. Overall, the study found that although the mandate increased SDOH data capacity, significant structural challenges currently hinder the translation of this information into effective interventions.

“Ticking Away: A Study on How Multiple Sclerosis Patients in the U.S. and Australia Navigate Their Day”

Ella Stahl, Eastern Kentucky University

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is an autoimmune disease that damages the nervous system and affects nearly three million people worldwide. Individuals with MS experience a variety of symptoms, and often spend greater amounts of time managing their illness. This study compares time use patterns of MS patients in the United States and Australia to identify cross-cultural similarities and differences. A quantitative survey design was used to collect time use data and measure satisfaction with daily activities. Results showed broad similarities across countries, with higher satisfaction reported among individuals that engaged more in restorative occupations and less in required occupations. Notable differences emerged between working and non-working participants, suggesting that disease progression and role

expectations shape daily routines. These preliminary findings emphasize the importance of understanding time use of MS populations and highlight the need for larger, more diverse samples to inform occupational therapy strategies that promote balance, independence, and meaningful participation.

HE/FH 259

“Through the Pink Lens: Using Barbie Movies to Explore Complex Themes in Children’s Media”
Alexandria Groves, University of Louisville

Childhood seemed easy with glitter, tiaras, and talking animals. But beneath the sparkle, Barbie movies like Princess Charm School, Thumbelina, and Fairytopia offer a case study of how children's media can address complex concepts. These stories examine class divides, environmental preservation, and disability rights, transforming major social issues into kid-friendly adventures. Through these fairytales they foster empathy, critical thinking, and an understanding of the systems that shape our society. In the end, these movies show how the stories that molded our childhoods also demonstrated the unexpected depth of children's media, proving that important lessons about the real world and its challenges can be imparted through glitter, magic, and song.

“Feminist Divide: Analysis of Public Response to Sabrina Carpenter’s Album Man’s Best Friend”
Lilly Emerton, Northern Kentucky University

This presentation examines the controversy surrounding Sabrina Carpenter's August 2025 album, "Man's Best Friend" and the public backlash that followed its announcement. While many critics labeled the album and its imagery as "anti-feminist" or degrading to women, this project argues that those claims are misdirected. By analyzing audience reactions, Carpenter's artistic history, and themes within her music, this presentation highlights how her work has consistently challenged patriarchal norms rather than reinforced them. The presentation also explores how social media has reshaped feminism into a performative and oversimplified concept, often used to police women's self-expression. Ultimately, this presentation argues the backlash reflects a broader misunderstanding of feminism in online culture, rather than a failure of feminist values within Carpenter's work.

“Smurfs and Nazis: Analyzing Antisemitic Propaganda in Children’s Television”
Fiona Moody, Northern Kentucky University

A critical media analysis of how the 1980's The Smurfs cartoon relates to Nazi ideology and propaganda.

HE/FH 261

“Resurrection in Gold: Kintsugi and the Christian Story of Renewal”
Samantha Kelley, Bellarmine University

This project takes a deep dive into the similarities between “kintsugi” as a metaphor and Christian theology. Kintsugi is a traditional Japanese art form in which artists repair broken ceramics with gold. This process restores the piece’s functionality and gives it a more interesting and beautiful appearance. A similar concept can be seen in Christian theology – redemption through Christ, in which Christ comes to us when we are broken, and turns us into something whole and beautiful.

“The Roman Catholic Women Priest Movement”
Kathryn Bowden, University of Kentucky

This presentation will discuss the contemporary Roman Catholic Women Priest Movement (RCWP). Using oral history interviews to supplement historical studies, my project aims to

record participant motivations and goals for pursuing ordainment despite the significant emotional toll of excommunication.

“The Social Psychology of Group Dynamics in Cults: Exploring the Influence of Leadership and Organizational Structure in the Heaven’s Gate Cult”

Mellanie Douglas, Eastern Kentucky University

Cults are extreme religious or political groups that rely on social and psychological influence to attract followers and maintain loyalty to a charismatic leader. Heaven's Gate is recognized as a historic new age religious and science fiction cult. It was founded in the 1970s by Marshall Herff Applewhite and Bonnie Lou Nettles during the counterculture movement and ended in 1997 with a mass suicide of 39 members. Accounts from within and regarding Heaven's Gate illustrate how leaders reshaped group identity and belief systems in a way that reduced the value of individuals and encouraged group identity. This thesis reviews five tactics used to influence members of Heaven's Gate. Evidence from historical records, scholarly research, and group testimony suggest that these tactics gradually stripped individuality, encouraged conformity, and led to complete acceptance despite extreme outcomes. The discussion connects ideas to modern situations like school and workplace environments.

HE/FH 297

“Adverse Possession as a Political Tool in Ireland”

Lily Wireman, Eastern Kentucky University

The financial crisis in Ireland is rooted in the post-2008 decline in residential construction amid escalating rents. Within this landscape, homeless populations and nomadic ethnic minorities have found a unique tool of political protestation - adverse possession. Traditionally a mechanism for the transference of property, adverse possession in Ireland is governed by the 1957 Statute of Limitations Act and the 1971 Prohibition of Forcible Entry and Occupation Act. Often harshly criticized as outdated and only dubiously legal, these laws have unexpectedly enabled public action groups to bring visibility to housing injustice, garner public support, and prompt community action. Nomadic minority communities, like the Mincéirs, have utilized political squats to challenge sedentary property norms and combat discrimination. More recently, cultural preservation movements began limited squats to promote the conservation of culturally significant sites like 15 Usher’s Island. Ultimately, adverse possession fulfills a versatile political role that uniquely challenges debates surrounding property rights.

“Are We Getting Wiser or More Inhumane?”

Tavonga Tawodzera, Bluegrass Community and Technical College

This presentation examines the growing disconnect between technological advancement and moral responsibility in modern society. While humanity has achieved extraordinary scientific accomplishments such as space exploration, advanced weaponry, and global industrialization persistent social crises including homelessness, profit-driven warfare, and environmental degradation remain unresolved. This project draws on socioeconomic data related to global military spending, housing insecurity, and environmental risk to analyze how resources are prioritized at institutional and governmental levels. The analysis highlights key contradictions, such as increased investment in space and defense technologies alongside under-funded social welfare systems, and environmental responsibility campaigns coexisting with nuclear stockpiles capable of planetary destruction. By integrating ethical theory with contemporary data, this presentation argues that technological intelligence has advanced more rapidly than moral wisdom. The project ultimately questions how progress should be

defined and proposes that true societal advancement requires aligning innovation with ethical accountability, human dignity, and long-term sustainability.

“LGBTQ Prison Experiences, Recidivism, and Beyond These Walls”

Malakhi Barton, Spalding University

The following research offers a focused case analysis of Beyond These Walls, a community-based organization working with LGBTQ individuals directly impacted by the United States incarceration system, with a particular sub-focus on Oregon. Due to the sensitive and politically contested nature of this work, empirical data on recidivism and program outcomes are limited. This project instead examines the foundations and practices of one of the few programs specifically serving this population. Beyond These Walls is known for its advocacy around continued access to hormone replacement therapy, legal documentation support, and reentry services such as housing and material aid. This research argues that maintaining access to gender affirming care during incarceration and reentry is one meaningful way to reduce harm and support long term stability in a system built around control and deprivation. The analysis concludes by calling for wider implementation of similar initiatives and deeper examination of LGBTQ experiences in carceral settings.