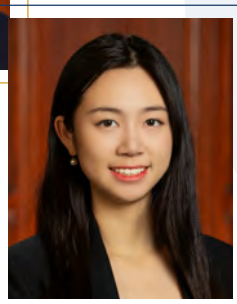
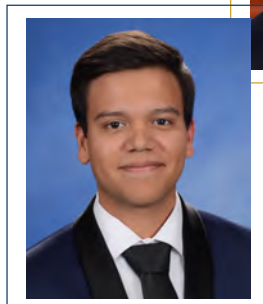
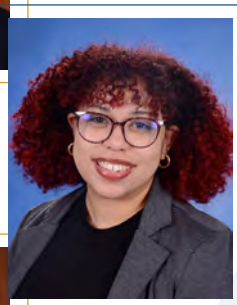
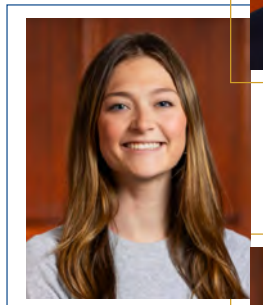
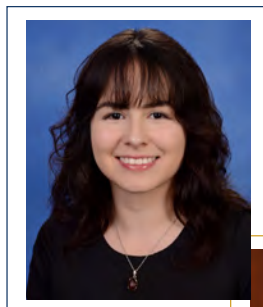




UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

ARTS & LETTERS



2025

SENIOR THESIS PROJECTS

Study everything. Do anything.SM

**Lily Barth**

Hometown: Concord, Vermont

- Majors: English (Concentration in Creative Writing) and Japanese
- Advisor: Dionne Bremyer

These Roads Lead Nowhere

A novella in short stories and vignettes, *These Roads Lead Nowhere* explores themes of isolation, environment, generational trauma, and systemic poverty and the voices of those who live it. These snapshots serve as a collection of overexposed polaroids that depict the struggles of my home region, grounded in my real-life experiences as a 17-year-old crematorium superintendent. Told through the voice of an unnamed teenage girl living in Vermont's rural Northeast Kingdom, *These Roads Lead Nowhere* is moving, visceral, witty, and chock-full of black humor.



**Natalie Bock**

Hometown: Barrington, Illinois

- Major: Political Science
- Minors: Chinese and Data Science
- Advisor: David Campbell

It's My Party and I'll Buy What I Want To: How Party Identification Influences Consumer Perceptions and Preferences

My thesis examines how political party identification influences consumers' attitudes toward products and evaluates the implications of affective polarization. To determine if party labels are assigned to consumer goods, I collected survey data and interviewed people about their perceptions of 14 different brands and products. The results showed that Democrats and Republicans, especially those with strong partisanship, attach party affiliations to companies. In justifying these connections, respondents demonstrated affective polarization and used partisan stereotypes. The results on whether these perceptions influenced purchasing behavior varied; however, the findings show that the impacts of affective polarization extend to consumption.



**Eamon Passey**

Hometown: Fairfax, Virginia

- Majors: Political Science and Global Affairs
- Minor: Chinese
- Advisor: Victoria Tin-bor Hui

Language Imperialism: The Decline of Linguistic Diversity in Hong Kong

This paper examines Cantonese vulnerability in post-handover Hong Kong through a linguistic death framework, challenging quantitative analyses that underestimate its precarious position. Through qualitative interviews with Hong Kong residents, it reveals the sociopolitical and economic factors influencing language choices as China's influence intensifies under "One Country, Two Systems," shifting the linguistic landscape toward Mandarin. Comparing with Yunnan province's linguistic unification processes, this study suggests Cantonese faces potential critical endangerment within generations. The research contributes to discourse on language preservation in politically transitional contexts, demonstrating how linguistic shifts parallel broader sociopolitical transformations.



**Jamie Reintjes**

Hometown: Prairie Village, Kansas

- Major: International Economics
(Concentration in Chinese)
- Advisors: Lakshmi Iyer and
Victoria Barone

Rising Fentanyl-Related Deaths and their Impact on U.S. Sentiment toward China

Combining qualitative sentiment analysis and topic modeling with more traditional econometric regression analysis, I sought to quantitatively analyze the causal impacts fentanyl-related mortality had on the rising anti-Chinese sentiment in the news media. Informed by China's primary role in fentanyl production, I sought to analyze these effects on the public's broader awareness of the subject. However, there appeared to be a null effect that fentanyl mortality had on fentanyl- and China-related articles.



**Ellie Sullivan**

Hometown: Redondo Beach,
California

- Majors: Chinese and Anthropology
- Advisor: Eric Haanstad

Coffee Culture and the City: A Comparative Study of Dublin and Los Angeles

Drawing on interviews conducted with baristas and cafe customers as well as personal experience methods, this study explores how coffee culture is caught up in webs of meaning in Dublin and Los Angeles. Despite their different histories, geographies, and demographics, this study finds that in both cities, coffee's meaning and usage oscillate between a series of binaries, which include speeding up and slowing down, globalization and localization, exportation and exploitation, inclusion and exclusion, and the individual and the social. Analysis of these binaries and comparison with other cities reveal coffee culture's role in creating meaning and identity.



**Xiyun Wu**

Hometown: Shenzhen, Guangdong,
China

- Major: Art History
- Supplementary Major:
Asian Studies
- Minor: Japanese
- Advisor: Elyse Speaks, Tarryn Chun

Performing Ruins: Bodies and Materials in the Works of Zhang Huan

My thesis explores the works of Chinese artist Zhang Huan through the lenses of corporeality and materiality. My first chapter focuses on Zhang's performances, wherein his body performs a site of ruins through the senses. My second chapter shifts to Zhang's ash paintings, specifically examining how he uses ash — a waste material imbued with spiritual significance — to rupture the painted bodies. Both bodies of work transform bodies into sites of woundings that engage with multiple layers of ruination.



**Christian Yerelekian**

Hometown: Calabasas, California

- Majors: Chinese and Political Science
- Minor: Constitutional Studies
- Advisor: Victoria Tin-bor Hui

Compromise or Conviction?: The Catholic Church's Path Forward in China

This thesis examines how the Catholic Church should navigate its relationship with China in light of the 2018 provisional agreement with the Chinese Communist Party on bishop appointments. It situates the agreement within a broader historical context, from early missions by the Nestorians and Matteo Ricci to present-day challenges under China's restrictive religious policies and surveillance apparatus. By analyzing past strategies and current political realities, the paper assesses whether cautious accommodation or a more assertive stance offers the most faithful and effective path forward for the Church's mission in China.

