



ABSTRACTS

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Wednesday, May 20, 2026
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
William W. Philip Hall (WPH)
UW Tacoma

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

- 9:00 a.m.....Meet and Greet/Coffee/Social
- 9:30 a.m.....Conference Opens and Keynote
Keynote Speaker: Dr. Ahmad Ezzeddine, PhD, UW Vice Provost for Global Affairs, UW Seattle
- 10:40 -11:40 a.m.....[Health & Human Rights](#)
- 11:40 – 12:25 p.m.....[Global Civic Engagement](#)
- 12:25 –1:30 p.m.Lunch and Poster Session
- 1:30 –1:40 p.m. Afternoon Session Opening Speaker
Dr. Andrew Harris, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, UW Tacoma
- 1:40- – 2:30 p.m.[Innovation Across Borders](#)
- 2:30 – 3:30 p.m.[Climate Change and the Environment](#)
- 3:30 – 3:40 p.m.Break
- 3:45 – 5:00 p.m.[Media and Technology](#)

Health & Human Rights

10:40 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.

Title: Beyond State Lines: Mapping Justice for the Rohingya

Presenter: Lauren P. Peters | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Michael Forman, PhD

Abstract: This paper examines the Rohingya crisis as more than a humanitarian emergency, arguing that it exposes a deeper flaw in how justice and human rights are structured in the modern international system. At its core, the project asks: why has the Rohingya crisis continued despite years of global attention and intervention? What happens when the state, rather than protecting rights, is the one violating them? What would it look like to think about justice and rights outside of state membership, especially for people who are stateless?

To answer these questions, the paper takes a political theory approach, drawing primarily on Hannah Arendt's concept of the "right to have rights" and Nancy Fraser's framework of distribution, recognition, and representation. Using this framework, it analyzes both the historical conditions that produced Rohingya statelessness and the international community's response at the national, regional, and global levels.

The paper argues that the persistence of the crisis is not simply a failure of intervention, but a structural problem. Existing responses, such as humanitarian aid, legal accountability through international courts, and diplomatic pressure, focus largely on distribution and recognition. While these efforts are important, they remain limited because they operate within a system that ties rights to state membership. As a result, the Rohingya are assisted, named, and even defended, but not meaningfully included.

By reframing the crisis through Fraser's concept of representation, the paper shows that the central injustice is political exclusion. The Rohingya are not only denied resources and recognition, but are excluded from the very structures that determine who counts as a subject of justice in the first place. This lack of representation helps explain both the endurance of the crisis and the limitations of current solutions.

In response, the paper calls for a reimagining of justice beyond the Westphalian state. It suggests that meaningful protection of human rights requires new forms of political membership and representation that are not dependent on nationality. Ultimately, the Rohingya

case reveals that without rethinking who has the right to have rights, efforts to address statelessness will remain incomplete.

Title: “Our Life is a Movie”: The Portrayal of Iraqi Intergenerational Trauma in Mohamed Al-Daradji’s Films

Presenter: Jannat Musawi | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Vern Harner, PhD

Abstract: This presentation will examine the representation of Iraqi generational trauma in film. Particularly, it will focus on films directed by Mohamed Al-Daradji, an Iraqi director who creates films focusing on political issues in Iraq and how they impact individuals and interpersonal relationships. This is an important topic because Iraq has gone through various political and social challenges throughout history, and in a way, it still is. Those events have caused trauma among its citizens, and this trauma can be transmitted down to younger generations through epigenetics, parenting styles, and systemic injustices. Furthermore, trauma has been associated with “loss of language” and silence; thus, many cultures that experience trauma tend not to discuss it or try to heal from it. Therefore, films can be a powerful mode of processing the traumatic events and the traumatic cycles that were passed down through generations. This topic is great for this year’s themes of the Western Regional Honors Council since it analyzes the global issue of generational trauma and focuses on a country outside of the United States to do so. Therefore, this research will analyze this global issue and possibly how the findings may apply to other populations around the globe.

Three of Al-Daradji’s films will be analyzed: Ahlaam (2005); War, Love, God, & Madness (2008), and Son of Babylon (2009). To analyze the films, a psychological criticism approach to content analysis will be used, wherein the characters are treated as simulated humans with their own psychological dimensions (Ryan & Lenos, 2020). The presentation will also use an interdisciplinary approach to examine the interdependencies in various systems, including political, social, cultural, and economic systems. The project may produce recommendations about the use of film to heal from generational trauma and process traumatic political events among communities that experienced them.

Title: Reducing the Leading Cause of Maternal Mortality Globally: Maternal Hemorrhaging

Presenter: Elizabeth (Lizzy) Riffel | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Tawanda Chivese, PhD

Abstract: Maternal mortality is a greatly preventable global health problem directly impacting women of childbearing ages, defined as ages between 15-49 years old. The leading cause of maternal mortality within high-, middle-, and low- income countries is due to maternal hemorrhage. Maternal hemorrhage characterizes abdominal bleeding from the genital tract that is over 500ml's following cesarean and vaginal births. This project aims to analyze primary and secondary articles to find solutions to reduce maternal hemorrhaging on a global scale. Solutions such as alterations to healthcare systems, medical interventions, attentivity to timely treatment, and changes to skilled birth professional training can reduce this maternal mortality on a global scale. All possibilities pose promise in high-, middle-, and low-income communities worldwide, especially important within low-income countries disproportionately struggling with persistently high maternal mortality rates globally. By reducing maternal hemorrhage rates, it will directly influence global health equity in a positive manner, emphasizing equitable care for women residing in lower income communities. It will further improve women's health outcomes and strengthen family units globally. To effectively strengthen community awareness and education of maternal mortality caused by hemorrhaging, we can empower women to seek adequate and timely care, ultimately supporting sustainable reductions in preventable maternal deaths globally.

Title: **Female Foeticide in India: Human Rights Implications and Approaches**

Presenter: Sabina Gupta | Faculty Adviser: Babafemi Akinrinade, LLM, JSD, Western Washington University

Abstract: Female foeticide in India is a human rights issue that has cultural, social, and economic factors that influence the likelihood of a family seeking a sex-selective abortion. Son preference, gender roles and gender inequality are fundamentally woven into the social framework of many communities in India. Economic insecurity through resource allocation, the practice of dowry, and other financial considerations also contribute to the prevalence of sex-selective abortions. Female foeticide is recognized as contributing to many human rights violations such as the right to life and human trafficking. International and national legislation have created a path to continue advocating for human rights of girls and women across the country. Initiatives and campaigns that work to shift cultural beliefs and eradicate the devaluation of girls and women is needed to continue providing a multifaceted approach to solve the issue of female foeticide.

Working within local communities to shift perspectives from devaluing girls and women and including men in this process will allow girls to have greater access to resources that would otherwise be prioritized for boy children. There are many more human rights violations and subsequent legislation, initiatives and campaigns that intricately tackle female foeticide in India.

Continued discussion and research must be done to adequately respond to the root causes of female foeticide.

Global Civic Engagement

Title: **Fascism and Purity Culture: The Demonization of Christianity**

Presenter: David Esguerra | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Ben Meiches, PhD

Abstract: Fascism and religious ideology have a complicated and contradicting history. While Christianity does not go hand in hand with fascism, many fascist movements co-opt Christian beliefs in their movements. Creating a puritanical vision of their group using religious rhetoric to legitimize their power. Purity culture is most evidently defined as a movement in Christian religion based on sexual abstinence until marriage. Fascism is a far-right authoritarian movement, developed on bureaucratic control, exalting nationalism over the individual right. Fascism historically through the Nazi movement of the 1940s can be analyzed as misconstruing religious beliefs and ideologies and assimilating it into its control such as Christian fascism. Analyzing fascist regimes through a historical lens and how the manipulation of religious ideologies are at the forefront of fascist persecution, more specifically related to ideas such as purity culture. Connecting that with a modern discourse around the concept of purity culture and how it can be seen as a religious control over individual autonomy and feed into hateful ideologies mostly associated with far-leaning ideologies such as fascism under the guise of religious acceptance and freedom through the discussion of fascist culture and the demonization of non-confirmative values.

By looking in between the lines into the weaponization of religion for politics, further insight can be gathered and recognized about the warning signs of rising authoritarianism. If we can recognize the signs, we can take action upon them. By evaluating historical and contemporary patterns of fascism to learn from patterns of fascism and its ideologies to better understand and make movements to disarm the movements from becoming hateful and destructive.

Title: Mara Has Three Jobs in San Juan, Puerto Rico: Reflections of Colonialism & Tropicalization

Presenter: Shayla M. Serrano | Faculty Adviser: Dr. Ariana Ochoa Camacho

Abstract: The consequences of colonization continue to shape the lived experiences of Latin American women, particularly in Puerto Rico, the largest and oldest colony in the world. This paper analyzes *Mara Has Three Jobs in San Juan, Puerto Rico*, a short film by Puertorriqueña director Ana M. Verde, and its commentary on the harmful effects of gentrification, tourism, and colonial legacies on Puerto Rico's culture and people, particularly women. Mara, the protagonist, navigates the continued colonization and commodification of ancestral lands and bodies, the weight of familial obligations, and economic survival. She must decide if she will surrender her way of life, or if she will resist and defend her homeland. The film analysis connects varied academic sources to topics of colonization, tropicalization, fetishization, and the exploitation of Latina bodies and their labor. It further explores the complexities of Latin American identities and the experiences of Indigenous ancestors to further display the parallels between past and present. Although fictional, the film reflects the struggles of the Puerto Rican people both among the diaspora and within the island. This analysis argues that colonial institutions continue to permeate labor, culture, identity, survival, and economics, all through the lens of a diasporic Puertorriqueña author.

Title: American Firearm Trafficking

Presenter: Benjamin Bradley | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Ben Meiches, PhD

Abstract: Firearms are incredibly intertwined with American history, but the American firearm industry has expanded far beyond a level that our founding fathers would have ever predicted. American firearms are not only trafficked within the country to circumvent states with strict firearm laws. But they are also trafficked to various nations around the world causing massive amounts of destabilization and death. Even though there have been great strides made by US legislators, firearm trafficking persists despite those efforts. Traffickers buy firearms through reliable methods which takes advantage of well-known blind spots within federal firearm regulation—such as straw purchasing, unlicensed dealing, and theft from FFLs. Next, they are trafficked through established routes along interstate highway systems; the weapons typically start in states with weak firearm regulation, and they are transported to states with strict firearm laws where the weapons are sold for a massive profit. Within the US these trafficked firearms carry far more danger than a legally purchased firearm, since they are recovered at crime scenes quicker than the national average; But, in Haiti and Mexico the situation is far different. Firearms trafficked outside of the US supply Transnational Criminal Organizations with a deadly arsenal to

compete against the national government. As a result, normal life within these countries is heavily destabilized by the presence of armed gangs and cartels. There is a dire need to cut the consistent flow of weapons sourced to American FFLs to reduce the harm caused by American made firearms across the globe. But in the current political environment; the federal government has diverted resources away from federal authorities combatting firearm traffickers. To counteract this action and still effectively reduce trafficked firearms, states within the US need to implement laws which regulate the purchase of firearms within their jurisdiction. While also improving local law enforcement's ability to inspect and enforce laws on FFLs committing violations.

Innovation Across Borders

Title: Leadership Strategies, Employee Engagement, and Organizational Resilience: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Global Crises

Presenters: Moira Kelley | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Marion Eberly, PhD

Abstract: The paper looks at how leadership strategies impact employee engagement and organizational resilience during global crises, using the COVID-19 pandemic as a primary example. It focuses on the question, how do leadership behaviors influence employee engagement, and how does that engagement help organizations stay resilient during periods of uncertainty? To explore this, the paper draws on research from organizational psychology, management, healthcare leadership, and cross-cultural studies, along with real-world examples from healthcare organizations, Zoom, and manufacturing companies.

The research shows that leadership behaviors such as clear communication, empathy, and employee empowerment play a key role in keeping employees engaged during crises. Psychological safety and trust come up consistently as important factors that connect leadership to employee engagement and overall organizational outcomes. When employees feel supported and trust their leaders, they are more likely to stay engaged and adapt during challenging situations. While leadership approaches can vary across cultures, these people centered strategies are effective across different contexts.

This paper also introduces a conceptual model that shows how leadership influences organizational resilience through trust, psychological safety, and employee engagement. Based on these findings, it suggests that organizations should focus more on developing leaders who prioritize communication, emotional intelligence, and adaptability. It also highlights the importance of creating systems that support employee involvement and consistent

communication. Overall, the paper argues that strong leadership is a key part of building resilience, especially during times of crisis.

Title: Central Bank Independence: Implications in a Global Macroeconomic Environment

Presenters: Frederick Langley | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Katie Baird, PhD

Abstract: In my paper, I explore the history and macroeconomic theory of central banking, culminating in the widespread global adoption of independent central banks managing disparate currency zones. I discuss the functioning of this global system, including related problems, and critiques of central bank independence on the basis of empirical efficacy and democratic legitimacy. Following this, I build a mathematical model of a theoretical two-country world economy, designed to capture U.S. - China economic dynamics, in order to interrogate the question of what might happen if the United States central bank (the Federal Reserve) were to partially lose independence, bringing it more under the auspices and political priorities of the executive branch. In doing so, I utilize cutting edge theoretical assumptions and modeling techniques from the field of theoretical macroeconomics. My model results reveal some counterintuitive results; the trade and financial connections between the United States and China, as well as the idiosyncratic preferences of their respective central banks, amplify the economic turbulence that would result from such a policy shift. Additionally, the presence of anticipation channels causes the policy shift to have effects before it even officially comes to pass; participants in the economy change their plans in preparation for the coming future. This creates first an economic contraction, followed by a surge in inflation. Interestingly, both effects are highly constrained if we assume the possibility of cooperation between the two national central banks; it is their contradictory strategic behavior that drives much of the disturbance sans cooperation. From a policy perspective, this suggests that, in a global environment, removing central bank independence comes with a number of short-run and long-run costs, unless the discretionary abilities of monetary policymakers are constrained by other means (such as collaboration).

Title: Russian Kinetic Grey Zone Warfare against NATO and Its Implications for Global Hostilities

Presenters: Christian Desira | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Scott Radnitz, PhD

Abstract: Since the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation has embarked on a heightened campaign of Kinetic Grey-Zone operations against NATO member states in

response to their support of Ukraine. Instances of mysterious explosions in places of military or civic significance, drones closing airspace above airports, attempted assassinations, and acts of terror have accelerated dramatically in NATO member countries since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Incidents like these are the substance of Grey Zone warfare, defined as the employment of coercive actions by one power against another through covert, deniable, or ambiguous means and outcomes. Random events of a disruptive or destructive nature have and continue to occur, but without any official correlation to one another. Kinetic Grey Zone Warfare specifically are those which cause physical harm or destruction. These incidents have co-occurred with blatant rhetoric and military provocations by Russia against the security of NATO allies. While the intentions and motivations behind these operations are, by nature, difficult to surmise, analysts have identified key themes behind these kinetic grey-zone provocations and attacks. Often duplicating moves right out of Soviet KGB playbooks, the evidence points to an effort to coerce and destabilize NATO, deter aid efforts to Ukraine, redirect policy, and sow fear and confusion within the governments and populations of alliance members. Unfortunately, operations like these have not remained confined to tensions between Russia and NATO, and I will explore how international actors have been implementing similar actions on an increasing scale

My presentation will begin by defining what Grey-Zone Warfare really means, what it looks like, and how it can be used by powers as a subliminal or informal means of coercion. I will then explore my project, beginning with a historical assessment of similar covert measures employed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War to achieve similar ends. Following this is an examination of why and how Russian security strategy pivoted back to the grey zone. Next, I'll detail what means have been found or suspected to be employed by Russia, why they use them, and what Russia's goals are from these operations. I will demonstrate some of the evidence linking the Russian state to these more covert operations, along with corresponding overt signals. Finally, I'll explore how actors from around the world have employed similar grey-zone measures in other recent conflicts, particularly in the Middle East and Asia.

Climate and the Environment

Title: Indigenous Resistance and Survivance: Ecology of Relationships in Decolonization and Climate Change

Presenter: Meg Skeehan | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Danica Miller, PhD

Abstract: Indigenous resistance is a radical rejection of contemporary colonialism, focused on the refusal of the dispossession of both Indigenous bodies and land. The goal can no longer be "cultural resurgence as a mechanism for inclusion"; there must be a place-based resistance to the

“destructive logics” of the settler-colonial state (Simpson, 2017). Indigenous resistance is unique; it calls for strengthening indigenous relativism and challenges how sovereignty can be achieved through interconnected movements. American Indian existence has always been a place of historical resistance, such as Pontiac’s Rebellion in 1763, Wounded Knee in 1890 and 1973, and countless other moments of resistance against the federal dispossession of land, and political and social genocide of American Indians. Breaking up intertribal connections and social bonds was and continues to be essential to land and cultural dispossession, allowing the fascism of settler-colonialism to remain normalized by settlers on native land. There is a broader movement to reject settler colonialism and the inherent violence it brings through capitalism, heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and anti-Blackness, which is being witnessed globally (Simpson, 2017). Climate change and environmental extraction activities cannot be understood without considering the political and social structures in which they are embedded, examining how factors such as inequality, access to resources, and development policies affect both the environment and people’s lives. Environmental and social change are interconnected with capitalism, rather than separate from it, and critically examine how capitalist logic affects ecosystems, human relationships, and subjectivity. Unlike Western science, which often separates humans from nature, Indigenous epistemologies see humans as part of a connected cosmic order and transmit knowledge through stories, ceremonies, and practical skills such as plant classification and sustainable agriculture. These are movements centered on rebellion and co-resistance, working towards a “radical alternative present” of refusing colonial ways of knowing and power (Simpson, 2017).

Title: **Bogotá's Clean Water Crisis: A New Approach to Pollution Control**

Presenter: Allen Michielsen | Faculty Adviser: Weichao Yuwen, PhD, RN

Abstract: Access to clean water is a basic human right and the foundation of public health, economic stability, and environmental sustainability. It is one of the fundamental Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015. The United Nations created 17 (SDGs) as a global call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. Among them, SDG #6—Clean Water and Sanitation—stands as one of the most fundamental. SDG #6 promotes universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation, improved water quality, greater efficiency in water use, and the protection of vital ecosystems.

Colombia is a massive country, comparable in size to France, Spain, and Portugal combined. Its landscape is split by the northern Andes and sits within the Pacific Ring of Fire, featuring approximately 15 active volcanoes and rare tropical glaciers. Additionally, the nation

encompasses portions of two of South America's largest river basins. Bogota is modern, high-altitude city founded by Spanish conquistadors in 1538. While Colombia is rich in water resources, Bogotá's urban and industrial growth over the past several centuries has placed immense pressure on the Bogotá River basin. Decades of untreated wastewater, industrial discharge, and agricultural runoff have severely degraded Colombia's water quality and threatened its rich biodiversity. This environmental crisis poses significant health risks that transcend national borders; pollutants from major Colombian river systems flow directly into neighboring Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, and Ecuador. Furthermore, this contamination extends into the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Caribbean Sea, impacting the broader regional ecosystem. Beyond traditional government and nonprofit efforts, private sector organizations have also stepped forward. Asocolflores, the Colombian Association of Flower Exporters, demonstrates how industry can be part of the solution. Through its Florverde Sustainable Flowers certification and water stewardship initiatives, member farms are adopting efficient irrigation systems, recycling water, and reducing agrochemical runoff. By embedding sustainability into business practices, Asocolflores shows that economic success and environmental responsibility can advance together—driving measurable progress toward SDG #6 in the Bogotá region.

Title: The Political Economy of The Global Beauty Industry: How Regulatory Gaps Sustain Environmental and Public Health Risks

Presenter: Jeannette Patric | Faculty Adviser: Pierre Ly, PhD, University of Puget Sound

Abstract: The idea that cosmetic products sold to consumers with the message that they will provide self-improvement when these are the same products that pose a threat to their health due to toxic chemical use is a direct contradiction that demands regulatory reform. Regulating a massive global industry often driven by profit is not a simple feat. However, in this senior thesis, I argue that current regulations in the cosmetics industry fall short in protecting consumers and the environment from exposure to toxic chemicals. This research draws on knowledge from disciplines including policy, economics, public health, human rights, and sustainability. The US is the largest consumer of beauty care, but remains stunningly behind in regulation, having banned 11 chemical ingredients nationally, compared to the EU, which has banned 1,328 from use in cosmetic formulations. Exposure to these toxic ingredients in our everyday products has been linked to developmental delays, fertility disruption, birth defects, and hormone imbalances, while also contributing to the issue of microplastic bioaccumulation in our environment. Moreover, there is a greater characterization of harmful chemicals in products marketed to communities of color, and women of color have higher levels of beauty product-related environmental chemicals in their bodies, independent of socioeconomic status. This

clear disparity reflects the demand for change at the state and national levels, paired with third-party certifications that verify brands' safety and sustainability claims.

Title: Endemic Collision: At the Intersection of Reactionary Socio-Political Behaviors, Climate Tipping Points, And Vector Borne Disease

Presenter: Hailey J.Y. Sato | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Anna Groat-Carmona, PhD

Abstract: The 21st century has seen a series of unprecedented global tragedies, resulting in rampant destabilization of established accessibility infrastructure and changes in social behaviors related to perceived resource accessibility. Concurrently, outbreaks of vector-borne diseases have advanced in size and death toll. Declining environmental biophysical conditions and global shifts towards distrust in supply chains and public services intersect resulting in an emerging public health crisis. Climate change has redistributed geographic ranges of endemic areas for persistent vector-borne diseases, disrupting boundaries that limit outbreak risks, making a global threat out of historically localized diseases. This is compounded by regional resource management behaviors, such as still personal water storage, and exacerbated by an influx of public distrust in accessibility to food and water under authoritarian policies. This study addresses the effect of reactionary resource hoarding behaviors on the spread of vector-borne disease as a result of destabilized socio-political states in global case studies, emphasizing urban communities. Interdisciplinary discussions of the multifaceted influencing VBD spread conditions offer holistic predictive models, prioritizing the integration of lived experiences. Vector-borne diseases represent a global health crisis, facilitated by biophysical, socio-economic, and educational factors. A combination of polycentric initiatives are necessary to address unsustainable urbanization, uncontrolled carbon emissions, exploitative resource management, reduced public infrastructural trust, and health education inequality to prevent future and present epidemics.

Media and Technology

Title: Copyright and GenAI: An Analysis of International Copyright in a New Age

Presenter: Eamon Challinor | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Chris Demaske, PhD

Abstract: With the emergence of AI technology, various aspects regarding copyright have seen challenges as policies are reshaped, modified or created as a way of addressing new copyright questions that have formed as a result. In order to create a foundation for an international

rights-based copyright framework, this paper involves a comparative analysis revolving around the individual copyright systems for the United States, European Union and Japan. While other systems exist across various other nations, the scope of this paper focuses on these nations due to the variance in their systems and understanding the balance between creating universal guidelines without relying on uniformity. For the US, AI copyright is typically handled through fair use while court cases have handled individual discrepancies that have emerged, creating precedence for future AI copyright conflicts. As for the EU, AI copyright is handled through specific policies that outline use cases and regulations for AI along with covering all circumstances that would could be considered exceptions. On the other hand, Japan has adopted a lenient policy agenda towards the development of generative AI and handling copyright allowing for specific extenuating circumstances favoring AI developers. Through understanding the intricacies of different copyright system, several propositions are made for how a modified international copyright framework can be developed that respect the original guidelines of the WIPO Treaty in addition to the autonomy of the different copyright systems. At the same time, these proposed international guidelines systematically address handling international copyright across borders where these aforementioned copyright systems vary. Through the findings and propositions in this paper, an understanding about copyright systems across borders and navigating the systematic changes and continuities introduced by an emerging technology in the realm of copyright policy making.

Title: Knowledge as Infrastructure: The Economy of Private Ownership in Digital Academia

Presenter: Cameron Cyprain | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Rachel Endo, PhD, SPHR

Abstract: This thesis examines the governance failures produced by the increasing privatization of digital knowledge infrastructure in higher education. As academic publishing, learning management systems, and research tools consolidate under a small number of private firms, the shared resources that sustain scholarly communication and learning face conditions that resemble Common-Pool Resource dilemmas as described by Elinor Ostrom. The central argument is that academic knowledge production functions as a knowledge commons, and that private control over the platforms supporting it introduces structural governance failures that threaten the sustainability of open scholarship.

The analysis applies Ostrom's Institutional Analysis and Development framework to map the actors, rules, and incentive structures that shape how academic platforms operate. It draws on Ostrom's design principles for sustainable commons institutions to evaluate governance failures in the learning management system market, with particular attention to data collection

practices, vendor accountability, and the erosion of institutional rule-making authority. Robert Axelrod's cooperation theory is used to explain why the current arrangement persists and what conditions would be necessary to change it. Primary interview data collected from a Director of Digital Learning at the University of Washington Tacoma supplements published sources and provides an institutional perspective on vendor dependency, AI integration, and the challenges of building self-hosted alternatives.

The thesis finds that privatized digital knowledge infrastructure systematically violates the governance conditions that Ostrom identifies as essential to commons sustainability. Consolidated vendors concentrate monitoring authority and rule-making power while academic institutions, operating under uneven funding recovery from the 2008 recession, have limited capacity to build or negotiate alternatives. Recent events including the Anthology Inc. bankruptcy and the Amazon Web Services outage of October 2025 illustrate the concrete risks of this dependency.

The paper recommends several interventions. It argues for platform-neutral and adaptable institutional governance frameworks, enforceable vendor accountability mechanisms, and investment in open-source and cooperative infrastructure alternatives. It also proposes a structured work-study or apprenticeship model in which students maintain the digital infrastructure they depend on, connecting community governance principles to practical institutional labor needs. These recommendations are grounded in existing cooperative models including the Public Library of Science, arXiv, and Moodle, and are framed as actionable directions for both institutional practice and future research.

Title: [Reality Beyond Hallyu: The Normalization of the Korean Wave in Japan](#)

Presenter: Joanne Song | Faculty Adviser: Ji-Hyun Ahn, PhD

Abstract: The Korean Wave (Hallyu) is the phenomenon of South Korean popular culture gaining immense popularity worldwide and has become a major case in studying transnational media flow. The growth of Hallyu can be characterized into multiple stages: Hallyu 1.0 driven by Korean dramas (approximately between 1997 and 2007), Hallyu 2.0 expanded through K-pop (mainly 2008 to 2017), and Hallyu 3.0 being fueled by digital platforms (since around 2017). Japan was one of the first countries to be impacted by this wave, especially after the massive success of the K-drama *Winter Sonata* in the early 2000s. But while the Korean Wave is still rapidly growing and expanding in markets like the West, Latin America, and even in some parts of Africa, it seems as if things are now quieting down, or "normalizing" in Japan. In this case, normalization refers to Korean popular culture being integrated into everyday life and no longer

being considered foreign or niche. For instance, in Japan, the “Korean look”, or style, has become a daily fashion choice among young women. So, it is not that Korean popular culture has disappeared from Japan but rather it has integrated and become normalized in which Korean content no longer carries as big of an unfamiliar “hype” factor in Japan. By examining how the Korean Wave has shifted from rapid expansion to normalizing within Japan, it reveals the potential conditions that shape the sustainability of transnational cultural flows. This paper argues that the normalization of Hallyu in Japan results from the level of novelty, cultural familiarity, and existing political tensions which illustrates how transnational cultural flows may evolve. To examine this evolution, I will analyze the Japanese audience reception to the main media texts that drove each stage of Hallyu. This includes the popularity surrounding the K-drama Winter Sonata, K-pop groups like Girls’ Generation (SNSD) and KARA, and Korea’s entrance to Japanese mainstream via streaming platforms like Netflix.

Title: [Rules of Engagement: How Video Games Justify State Violence](#)

Presenter: Kevin Michalson | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Joanne Clarke Dillman, PhD

Abstract: We as a population have shifted from primarily experiencing war through passive media such as news and history books to interactive simulations through video games. The Military-Entertainment Complex (MIME-NET) serves as a collaboration between entertainment companies and state defense agencies, and video games have begun serving as tools of soft power, designed to export national ideology and sanitize the reality of state violence for a global audience. My paper analyzes the procedural rhetoric of games to see how their mechanics function to justify military intervention. I analyze how the gameplay of titles forces players to accept foreign policy worldviews. I conduct a comparative analysis of mechanics between Western AAA titles such as Call of Duty and Battlefield and non-Western titles, such as Russia's Syrian Warfare and China's Glorious Mission. I conduct this analysis through three specific rhetorical lenses: Distancing, the dehumanization of enemies via technology; Sanitization, the removal of consequences to create clean war; and Glorification, the gamification of violence through rewards. I have discovered that while the gameplay mechanics are nearly identical across these games, the narrative has been flipped. Games produced in the US depict US forces as fighting terrorists, whereas games produced in opposing countries often frame the US as aiding terrorists. We are entering an era of memory wars in which historical truth is being defined by the nationality of the game studio whose games someone has played. It is manufacturing a generation of youth that consents to specific geopolitical narratives.

Title: **Slopaganda and the Firehose of Falsehood: A Social Media Revolution**

Presenter: Quinn Sukys | Global Honors | Faculty Adviser: Emma Rose, PhD

Abstract: In this paper, I claim that widespread generative AI exploits fundamental vulnerabilities in the current Social Media paradigm, specifically relating to the potential of propaganda created underneath the Firehose of Falsehood model—creating a crisis, and that Revolutionary Development, which addresses core vulnerabilities of the paradigm, will be necessary to remedy the crisis.

These claims are argued primarily through comparative means, with Thomas Kuhn's 1962 essay, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* being the keystone source for understanding paradigm and revolutionary development, a modified term from Revolutionary Science. But many other elements are used to supplement this argument. The crisis itself is justified through a cross-analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of generative AI and the Firehose of Falsehood propaganda model; a model of the Russian propaganda strategy, coined in a paper by the RAND corporation in 2016. This paper refers AI generated propaganda created under this model as 'Slopaganda', a term borrowed from Klinecicz et al and other relevant works in the literature on this topic. Then, a critical analysis of the popular Dead Internet conspiracy theory; a theory that holds that most of the content on the internet is bot-generated for the purposes of mass manipulation, sets stakes for a 'Slopaganda' crisis.

Finally, potential solutions that alter the assumptions of the current generative-AI paradigm are addressed. These proposed solutions are based on Kuhn's essay, and range from large-scale developmental strategies such as altering the funding model of these platforms or their populations, to individual-scale solutions, such as maintaining an openness to new platforms, and a persistent awareness of the potential of propaganda on the internet.