

FSEM Research Paper/Project Prize Competition – Academic Year 2025-26

1st Place

"What is Disturbance and How Do Varying Types of Media Portray It?"

Travis Romero – FSEM 100 *Folk Art in the Americas*

(Dr. Natalia da Silva – CAS – Department of Creative Arts)

Folk Art itself is derived from outsider art, a term formerly used to describe art made by those in insane asylums. While those roots may be outdated, Folk Artists are still known to keep away from the spotlight. Most of them do not even consider themselves artists and try their best to separate themselves from the label. Reminiscent of these fascinating individuals, their artwork, like the *Terracotta Toddler*, is inherently unconventional. It shares many components with artists such as Alyne Harris, Carl Knickerbocker, and Mario Messa. If their intentions are innocent, why are pieces such as the *Terracotta Toddler* so disturbing? If not for the mystery surrounding them and their origins, why must they pull such an unnerving sentiment out from within oneself?

2nd Place

"Trans Feminine Creatives: Trans Women Within the Arts"

Valerie Davis – FSEM 100 *Women in Business*

(Dr. Meg Young – SOBA – Department of Management)

Whether it be in the music you listen to daily, a videogame either you or someone you know holds dear, or a model you have seen on the cover of a magazine, there is a chance that the woman behind the art is talented, successful, and transgender. The more representation given to those who are transgender, the more the idea of someone transitioning becomes normal to those who do not already deem it so. Even though it may be a small step towards a much longer road of self-education on the topic, it is certainly a spark that can lead society to a more understanding and accepting future. Not only does this representation serve the purpose of helping those who are less tolerant than others, but it also helps those who may not know why they feel so wrong. The first step down the road of transitioning is being knowledgeable that you can transition as well as being in an environment where that is possible.

3rd Place

"War Films, Asian History, and Violence"

Dionna Wrather - FSEM 100 *Asian History and War Movies*

(Dr. Leander Seah – CAS – Department of History)

While war movies are useful for understanding the theme of violence in Asian history, there are nevertheless limitations, especially when compared with written sources, including books and articles. War films' strengths often reside in their visuals. Historically accurate weaponry helps immerse the viewer in the culture and time during the conflict. Being able to witness the devastation of war also immerses the viewer and resonates with people. The fixed runtime of films allows readers to process historical events far easier than a heavily detailed written recollection of a conflict. But, as a result, films must often prioritize other elements over complete accuracy, such as viewer engagement and budget. Personal beliefs and other decisions from higher ups also play a role in diluting Asian history in film, consequently there is a representation problem both within Asian films and the industry. Even though these war films have no trouble showcasing violence, "Asian history" is too broad a term and there are many other genres which do a better job teaching about violence.

FSEM Research Paper/Project Prize Competition –Academic Year 2024-25.

1st Place

“Cover Crops and Pollinators”

Emiley Tupper – FSEM 100 *The Secret Life of Bees*

(Dr. Sarah Cramer – CAS – Department of Environmental Science and Studies)

To have a successful farm, a farmer must be in touch with nature itself. Not only should the farmer be aware of the seasons and the weather patterns, but the farmer must also be in touch with the local fauna and understand how they can benefit the farm. One-third of the food that is produced by farmers is dependent on bees. There are several things that farmers do that both directly and indirectly keep pollinators around the farm. An example of directly keeping pollinators on a farm would be having beehives on property, whether it be from commercial beekeepers, local beekeepers, and hobbyists. Perhaps a farmer may even have their own apiary. However, a common practice that several farmers partake in which may indirectly bring pollinators to a farm is known as cover-cropping. Though the practice of cover-cropping may not seem to have any direct relationship with pollinators according to farmers, there is an extensive list of benefits that it may bring to pollinators. Not only do cover crops benefit pollinators, but having pollinators around due to cover crops may also bring benefits to the farm as well. With this, it can be concluded that there is a mutually beneficial relationship between the practice of cover-cropping, and pollinators.

2nd Place

“Tolerance and Acceptance – Cultural Dissonance”

Ari Richardson – FSEM 100 *Women in Business*

(Dr. Meg Young – SOBA – Department of Management)

Many Americans struggle with tolerance and acceptance. A survey by the Cato Institute found that 71% of Americans think political correctness has stifled vital conversations that society needs to have, while the other 28% feel that it has been more effective in helping people avoid causing offense. Understanding a culture does not necessarily mean that one has to participate in the culture. No utopia will ever exist in which every single person has the same set of ideals. We can agree though on particular moral values like honesty, kindness and respect. Allow yourself to be uncomfortable with the principles you do not necessarily believe in or agree with: see the value in the differences that people have, yet the similarities that we share. It is essential to realize that each individual person is responsible for how they respond to cultural differences. Possessing empathy for others can allow us to create an inclusive environment, where cultural dissonance can evolve into cultural appreciation even with differences that we possess. Learning to navigate cultural dissonance within multicultural societies both professionally and socially can serve as a catalyst for increasing inclusivity globally.

3rd Place –

“Desolation Island and Naval Society”

Alysandra Thigpen, FSEM 100 *The Early American Navy*

(Dr. Kimberly Reiter – CAS – Department of History)

Desolation Island by Patrick O’Brian informs readers about naval life in the age of sail through its themes of the *Leopard-Chesapeake* Affair, diseases like gaol-fever and scurvy, and the presence of women on ships. Ship reputations were taken seriously in maritime and naval society, and some sailors were willing to die rather than be associated with such a ship as the *Leopard*. Additionally, we learn that disease on ships was catastrophic and could kill a whole crew in a matter of days. Eating well-balanced diets and living as clean a lifestyle as possible was extremely important to prevent disease. The novel also gives insights into the role of women at sea. On shore, women were crucial to the well-being and health of the family while their husbands were away. At sea, women served no beneficial role in ship life and were disrespected instead. This book thus characterizes true naval life at sea through these major themes, and individuals desiring to learn about and experience naval society both on board and ashore should embark on a journey with Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin to Desolation Island.

FSEM Research Paper/Project Prize Competition – Academic Year 2023-24

1st Place

“The Value of Materialistic Possessions and Wisdom: A Cultural Comparison”

Jake Catha – FSEM 100 *The Search for Wisdom*
(Dr. Carmen Palmer – CAS – Religious Studies)

People throughout time have hunted to the ends of the earth to find and define wisdom. While there are innumerable amounts of proposed paths to this fabled insight, a few of these philosophical adventurers have gained particular followings and fame, a small portion of which are Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. The particular focus of this paper is one of the simultaneously deep yet narrow divisions in these roads to wisdom, that of the value of earthly possessions and money. For example, Islam promotes monetary gain, but not economic stagnation, while Christianity has dedicated sects of ascetics, set upon achieving closeness to God through the forsaking of possessions, and even further, Buddhism promotes a “Middle Way” that proposes the best path is through equality of both. This paper looks to draw some of the many similarities and differences among these main religions, with hopes to draw further attention to the aforementioned paradoxical divides that both separate and unify humanity’s many ideas.

2nd Place - Tie

“Balancing Authenticity and Adaption: Differences in the Portrayal and Preparation of Chinese and Korean Food for an American Audience”

Phoenix Medley – FSEM 100 *East Asian Food and Society*
(Dr. Rachel Core – CAS – Sociology)

The United States is often referred to as a melting pot of various cultures, cuisines and customs. Melting pot perhaps may be a more apt of a term than we realize, as many immigrant groups entering the US are forced to adapt and assimilate to the majority White culture in order to succeed economically and socially. Oftentimes, this has been in finding a niche in service—whether that be food, laundry, nailcare or cleaning—and creating a community that allows for immigrants of that group to have more stable opportunities for economic growth. By examining the history of Chinese and Korean immigration into the United States, we may be able to recognize the differences in how they prepare and portray their food to American audiences in restaurants and cookbooks. Are the differences significant and what impact do they have on how Korean and Chinese immigrants have managed to cement their culinary impact in America?

2nd Place – Tie

“Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy for Agoraphobia”

Atalia Hopkinson – FSEM 100 *Virtual Reality in Business and Society*
(Dr. William Sause – SOBA – Business Systems and Analytics)

This research paper explores the use of Virtual Reality (VR), specifically Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy (VRET) to help effectively in the treatment of agoraphobia. VRET has been used for the treatment of mental disorders and phobias including agoraphobia for many years and VR technologies have vastly improved variety and accessibility of treatments for patients all over the world. During an extensive examination of reviewed literature, certain limitations were revealed. To address those constraints, a solution was rendered using the Mozilla Hubs application which has features to overcome the barriers in obtaining effective treatment. In this present research, patients diagnosed with agoraphobia will 1) respond to a survey that serves as a guide for the therapist to know which level of exposure would best be suited for them and 2) create a personalized character to enter and engage in a created 360-degree virtual environment with phobic stimuli that are controlled, immersive, multi-user and multi-platform friendly. This study reviews past research, proposes a solution, creates a virtual simulated environment and contributes to the continued evolution of using VRET applications for the treatment of agoraphobia.

FSEM Research Paper/Project Prize Competition – Academic Year 2022-23

1st Place

“The Desert Monks’ Path to Wisdom from Ascetic Monasticism in Early Christianity”

Gigi Kinyalocots - FSEM 100 *The Search for Wisdom*

(Dr. Carmen Palmer – CAS – Religious Studies)

The Life of Anthony, depicted by Athanasius of Alexandria, explores Anthony’s monastic way of life, and specifically the solitude of so. His time in the desert eventually brings him a great deal of wisdom and inner peace. Likewise, the life of Paul of Thebes was depicted in a writing by Saint Jerome called *The Life of Saint Paul the First Hermit*. Both Anthony and Paul immersed themselves in the ways of ascetic monasticism, living extremely disciplined and isolated lives of meditation. The fathers and mothers of the desert, all given the titles of being saints and well known as being wise individuals, possess specific characteristics, as well as ways of living, that directly correlate to their wisdom. Throughout this writing, it will be explained specifically how their asceticism as desert monks greatly contributed to their gain of wisdom. The ascetic acts of these men, and the saints of the desert in general, will be precisely linked to specific wisdom instructions seen in the Bible in order to show why they are considered to have wisdom; therefore proving that their wisdom is true and from God, and that isolationism contributed to that fact.

2nd Place

“How Historical Tone can Break the Barrier of Historical Learning”

Jackson Frank – FSEM 100 *The Early American Navy*

(Dr. Kimberly Reiter -- CAS – History)

The feeling of history is very difficult to capture through the way of writing and text. While history can be taught and displayed through the words of textbooks or journals, not many who read those can articulate that they know the true atmosphere of the events in being documented. One of the greatest examples of this problem would be the era of winds and sails. With the plentiful mounds of information to venture through for that time period, the possibilities for learning of naval culture are endless. However, capturing what it felt like to be on board one of those frigates in the midst of a battle along the sea is a tumultuous task when all a writer has is their creative thinking in order for their writings to go beyond just another historical text. Patrick O’Brian, the author of the famous *Jack Aubrey* novels, is one of the best examples of how authors can mend their own historical fiction and weave in facts and truths to enhance the experience for the reader. The in-depth epic which the reader is taken upon within the confines of Jack Aubrey’s ship displays many factors which resemble an accurate historical depiction of life at sea; those factors reflect the true aura of nineteenth century naval society in the midst of [Napoleon’s] *The Hundred Days* by how life at sea is portrayed on the ship.

3rd Place

“Virtual Reality: The New Era of Teaching”

Helena Pendergrass – FSEM 100 *Virtual Reality in Business and Society*

(Dr. William Sause – SOBA – Business Systems and Analytics)

Many researchers since the 1990s have been attempting to determine the effect of using virtual reality in education. The same equipment used for entertainment purposes can be equipped by the educational system to provide new and immersive methods to traditional teaching. This present research will conduct an experiment to determine the long-term effects of using virtual reality to teach high school students history lessons where they are immersed into a virtual world to recreate an interactive, historically accurate, lesson-based scene. Using assessments and surveys of the students, this collected data will help to determine which type of lesson, traditional or virtual reality, increases motivation and academic success

FSEM Research Paper/Project Prize Competition – Academic Year 2021-22

1st Place

“Analyzing Media’s Role in Breast Cancer Fundraising”

Haley Stinebrickner – FSEM 100 *Show Me the Money*
(Dr. Dena Hale – SOBA – Professional Sales)

Declining breast cancer mortality rates can be attributed to high-quality prevention, early detections, and more treatment options for all women. The significant medical and cultural advances of this disease are largely related to the role of the media in fundraising as well as support groups and awareness programs. The large role of media in today’s lifestyle is increasingly apparent as it has shown to be vital in many different attributes such as advertising, marketing, communication, information, and success. Thus, the media has greatly benefited the advances of the breast cancer sector, specifically in regard to fundraising. Yet even with the substantial benefits, media also has the ability to be harmful and produce adverse effects. Therefore, it is very important to use a variety of studies and research to analyze media’s role, in both positive and negative ways, in breast cancer fundraising.

2nd Place

“The Use of Both AR and 3D Bioprinting for Organ Transplantation”

Halleluya Berhe – FSEM 100 *Virtual Reality in Business and Society*
(Dr. William Sause – SOBA – Business Systems and Analytics)

Organ transplantation is a necessary step taken when organ failure occurs. To proceed with organ transplantation, one must go through a waitlist and find a matching donor. This paper focuses on assisting with organ transplantation with the help of 3D bioprinting and augmented reality (AR). Recent studies have shown the biomanufacturing of blood vessels and vascular grafts by 3D bioprinting. AR has also been used to promote the importance of blood and organ donation. More specifically, this research focuses on the effectiveness of using 3D bioprinting and AR as alternatives for organ donation and transplantation procedures. While the 3D bioprinter is printing the desired organ, the medical professional can use smart AR glasses and a display tool to navigate through the pre- and post-surgical site.

3rd Place

“The Hebrew Model of Wisdom Theology”

Kylie Overstreet – FSEM 100 *The Search for Wisdom*
(Dr. Carmen Palmer – CAS – Religious Studies)

Within the Hebrew model of what can be considered as wisdom theology, there are many differing presentations as to what wisdom truly ‘is’. The five books in question: Proverbs, Job, Ben Sirach, The Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes differ not only in their method of presentation, but also in their idea of where wisdom comes from, the methods by how one can obtain it, and it is even questioned if true wisdom can actually be obtained. In a wisdom tradition that seems to contradict its own ideas and is unable to agree on much, how are seekers of wisdom supposed to know where to look, and if they should even look at all? In the midst of this conundrum, it may be seen that true ‘Hebrew wisdom’ really is whichever of the many ideas presented one resonates with the most.