

2021 McGregor projects for students

| Faculty Name | Dept. | Project Title | Project Abstract |
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| 1. Alford, Kristen | Social Work | Evaluating a long-term filter distribution project in Liberia | This project is the culmination of a 5-year project with the CWI, Sawyer, and the Last Well. The large project provided clean drinking water to the entire country of Liberia by installing wells and providing water filters. Our role at Calvin is to analyze and disseminate the results of the data collected by Sawyer and the Last Well regarding the filter distribution arm of the project. Since this is the final year, it is particularly important that we finalize the peer-reviewed journal submissions and report back to Sawyer and the Last Well. The student working with the public health/social work side of the project will be responsible for assisting in the research and writing of the peer-reviewed papers, presenting the results back to our partners, and working with other team members from geography and statistics. |
| 2. Bjelland, Mark | Geology, Geography, & Environmental Studies | The Post-Industrial City and What Was Left Behind | Reimagined, remediated, and redeveloped former industrial lands are now synonymous with thriving mixed-use riverfront neighborhoods in Chicago's West Loop and South Loop, Detroit's Riverfront, Milwaukee's Beerline B, Minneapolis's North Loop and Mill District, and Portland's Pearl District. Places of physical labor have been transformed into spaces where a new class of knowledge workers live, work, and play. Meanwhile, vacant, abandoned industrial sites languish in cities such as Flint, Michigan. This project argues that inner-city industrial districts offer a valuable lens through which to view key socio-ecological transformations in cities and in our wider society. The transition to post-industrial cities reflect a growing emphasis on urban livability and sustainability but also comes at a cost. We will document that which is left behind including the lost manufacturing jobs, historic architecture, and toxic residues. These post-industrial transformations involve land-use changes that require environmental cleanups and often significant public investment. Finally, the demographics of these new post-industrial districts tend to highlight the demographic polarization and rising economic inequality in cities. |
| 3. Byma, Elizabeth | Nursing | Using Arts & Humanities to Enhance Baccalaureate Nursing Education | In their accreditation standards for baccalaureate nursing programs, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) notes that liberal education is needed for the development of intellectual and innovative capacities for current and emergent generalist nursing practice. Liberal education includes both the sciences and the arts (fine arts, performing arts and humanities [literature and theology]). Other than the nursing major coursework, some aspects of liberal education are provided as discrete parts of the full educational curriculum. However, the rich and diverse perspectives and knowledge embedded in the arts and humanities should also be integrated throughout the nursing curriculum. Unfortunately, upper-level baccalaureate nursing education is very content heavy, making it difficult to include arts and humanities in nursing coursework as well. The proposed project is an extension of an interim class that I taught on pain, where I used arts and humanities content to enhance the pain curriculum. A review of research has shown that while liberal education is valued by the nursing profession, it is primarily relegated to core classes, and not included in upper-level nursing curriculum. There is limited research examining interventions to introduce liberal education content into baccalaureate nursing curriculum. Therefore, I propose a project to examine literature, fine art and performing art content in relation to important nursing topics. These activities would support the development of a book which would include description and application of works of literature, art, and theater to important nursing topics. |
| 4. den Dulk, Kevin and Van Horn, Jason | Political Science and Geography, and Environmental Studies | Restorative Justice for Returning Citizens: A Mapping Project | <p>Men and women returning from prison have a range of immediate and long-term needs, from employment to housing. But the information about service providers who are friendly to returning citizens is often fragmented and difficult to find. The Henry Institute, in partnership with Calvin's Geography Department and with support from the Michigan Department of Corrections, is addressing that problem by mapping services at a county level in the state of Michigan.</p> <p>So far we have gathered data on a half-dozen counties in the state of Michigan. The map is publicly available in beta form at http://gis.calvin.edu/rc. Families, service providers, parole officers, government agencies, and returning citizens themselves are already actively using it. To our knowledge, the map is the first of its kind in Michigan, and perhaps nationwide.</p> <p>The project is ongoing as we expand the map to new counties and use the underlying data on providers to identify and explain service deserts. We hope to cover most of the state of Michigan within a few years, largely with the help of a cadre of student researchers who gather data on services, help engage potential map users, and refine the map interface.</p> |
| 5. Du Mez, Kristin | History | Live, Laugh, Love: A Cultural History of White Christian Womanhood | A cultural history of white Christian womanhood, Live Laugh Love examines how religious consumer culture has promoted idealized conceptions of beauty, femininity, and domesticity over the past half century. Although frequently dismissed as insignificant or trite, sources like inspirational fiction, contemporary Christian music, multilevel marketing companies, Instagram influencers, and Hallmark movies are rooted in a conservative religious worldview and shape the values of millions of white women. Touted as empowering, this religious culture requires the performance of feminine vulnerability, obscures structural inequalities, and privileges conceptions of white innocence, thereby reinforcing conservative political ideologies. By taking seriously the products of a gendered religious culture, this project brings humanities research to bear on questions of political economy and explores connections between religious and secular cultures of consumption and political ideals. |

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| 6. Koopman, Doug | Political Science | American Religion and Its Contribution to Political Culture | <p>This is essentially a project co-writing with Prof. Koopman and a Wheaton professor colleague the introduction and first two chapters to a co-authored book, already under contract with Cambridge University Press. The book's working title is, descriptively, "Religion, Politics, and Culture in the American Experience. This summer project will be to fill out the introduction and first two chapters, collectively looking both historically and in the present moment the contribution and interplay between how religious pluralism and tolerance, and American political pluralism and tolerance. The introduction sets the current stage, of strong and polarized religious messaging into American politics, and wonders if religion can still contribute to a healthier public square. The first chapter introduces key concepts to the relationship between religion, politics, and culture that are transferable across religions, time, and nations. After discussing the characteristics and measurements of religion -- beliefs, belongings, and behaviors, the chapter examines how they contribute to types of social capital (bonding and bridging, specifically) and how that affects civic participation and conflict management. The second chapter introduces the historical context at the heart of the American experience, including the tension between specific religions fervors and notions of church-state relations. In general, in America the cure for the excesses of religious freedom and speech has been more religious freedom and speech, with mixed consequences. This chapter reviews that history. The book envisions 11 chapters, but these first elements will frame the entire work.</p> |
| 7. Lam, Maria | Business | Can we measure diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices in service of a better world? | <p>Research questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do the current measurements of DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) practices adequately assess what the standard companies must reach to ensure a better work place environment/world? 2. Under what conditions do companies learn from their measures and make improvements on their DEI practices in service of a better world? <p>Many organizations have incorporated DEI initiatives, practices and responses to the demands for social justice in recent years. They develop different measurements to hold decision makers and leaders accountable for equity and inclusiveness. However, many complex issues such as structural injustice cannot be simplified into simple measurements. Many organizations' measurements often fail to provide insights and/or incentives for executives to effectively make long-term changes in the global capitalist system. Sometimes, the measurements are just reactive to the norms of the industry and result in a rise in cynical attitude and behavior from the employees toward DEI practices. "Measure what can be measured, and make measurable what cannot be." -Galileo</p> <p>We will examine companies that have received diversity awards and also organizations in health care industry. We will examine the history of DEI practices and indicate their DEI measurements of chosen organizations. Do these measurements miss the core values, such as health equity, that cannot be easily measured? Do these measurements mislead managers, customers, and stakeholders? Common DEI measures may focus on input such as the composition of employees rather than the process of diversified employees' interactions or the social impact of diversified decision-making. Measures may monetize those apparently numbers rather than seek equity and inclusiveness in the system. Measures may lead the organization to meet certain goals at the expense of long-term systematic changes. Contrarily, measures may initiate conversation, dialogue, and learning among employees. The project will examine how a few corporations or individuals learn from their biases in their measurement systems and resolve to create greater equity and inclusiveness by rectifying their DEI measurements.</p> |
| 8. Lim, Sung Soo | Economics | Optimism and Economic Decisions | <p>Optimism is a potential explanation behind many economic decisions such as financial choices and investment decisions. Optimism may also affect work choices, career choices, retirement choices, and marital choices. Furthermore, the optimistic risk taking of entrepreneurs plays a vital role in the economic dynamism of a capitalistic society. On the other hand, living in impoverished conditions is believed to hinder formation of optimism or aspirational hope which, in turn, impedes social mobility. For instance, the poor may not make future-oriented decisions to improve their wellbeing unless they see a feasibly higher level of wellbeing in the future than their current status. If a goal of economic development is to provide financial resources to the poor in order to encourage future-oriented decisions to improve their wellbeing, then it is imperative to understand the role of optimism. Nevertheless, there is very limited empirical evidence on the role that optimism plays in many important economic decisions especially in the context of developing countries. In this project, a student will conduct a systematic literature review on the related literature. Furthermore, a preliminary empirical research on a specific topic may also be conducted based on the findings of the literature review.</p> |