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Heslet Scholar Awardee

Student Presenter: **Trevor Reynolds**

Mentor: **Danielle Muller**

**Los Angeles City College**

The Living Document of a Dying Moment: The Visual Manifestation of a Photographer’s Imminent Mortality in the Photograph.

Through the visual representation of impending mortality in their work, five photographers nearing death establish the inevitable interconnection between artist and subject.

Abstract

As a theoretical concept, death is ubiquitous in the creation of photography. Through the photograph, the subject becomes object, a static artifact immortalizing the death of a particular fragment of time. The photographer’s creative logic subjectively immobilizes a fleeting moment in its decisive instant. As the photographer approaches his/her own demise, do the travails over mortality shape their technique towards capturing a moment, visually corroborating the interconnection between artist and subject? The examination of five photographers, with diverse backgrounds and manners of death from one another, establish that while death may be a solitary, unique experience, it is also a universal one. Critical analysis of the last three years of work by Diane Arbus, Imogen Cunningham, Robert Mapplethrope, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, and Francesca Woodman suggest the same: the artists’ conscious and/or subconscious awareness of their impending death is increasingly seen as both a symbol in and subject of their photographs.

Methodology

Familiarizing myself with the clinical aspects of the experience of dying and death, I extended my research to investigate the theory of representation in photography. After developing a solid understanding of the two, I analyzed the background and work of five photographers and juxtaposed the findings against the established research.

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Heslet Scholar Finalist

Student Presenter: **Collin Brown**

Mentors: **Marie Arcidiacono & David Zimny**

**Los Medanos College**

The Tunisian Paradox: One country's success at fusing Western and Islamic ideals

An analysis of Tunisia’s surprising post Arab Spring political stability.

Abstract

From the Crusades to the Charlie Hebdo massacre, violence between Islamic and Western Civilizations has persisted. Yet, close analysis of Tunisia’s political restructuring since the Arab Spring gives hope that Western and Islamic ideals can co-exist. While Tunisia’s constitution incorporates Shar’ia Law, women continue to be allowed to vote, drive and attend school. A more representative republic has developed, allowing Islamic and secular parties to share power. These questions emerged: What factors have forged Tunisia’s success in combining these two seemingly conflicting ideologies? How can the United States apply this to advance Middle East policy? To start, Tunisia’s longtime emphasis on education created a populace more inclined toward progressive ideals. Ironically, the extreme repression of Islam by the previous secular regime has moderated today’s dominant Muslim party, Enhadda. Finally, minimal Western political interference made democracy palatable by allowing Tunisians to choose it themselves. The United States should take note of this Tunisian paradox.

Methodology

Samuel Huntington’s Civilizational Theory, Shadi Hamid’s Moderation Theory, and Robert Dahl’s Democratization Theory framed my analysis. These theoretical foundations and comprehensive research into Tunisia’s history and political developments led me to determine the root causes of Tunisia’s success. My recommendations for co-existence between the Western and Islamic ideals reflect this holistic synthesis.

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Heslet Scholar Finalist

**Student Presenter: Rachel King**

**Mentor: Senya Lubisich**

**Citrus College**

The Weight of Her Heart: Wu Zetian in Perspective

An examination of historian bias regarding Wu Zetian, the concubine who became the sole female Emperor of China, and its effect on contemporary views of women in positions of power.

Abstract

From Joan of Arc to Fusako Shigenobu, women are alternately vilified or venerated by those who tell their stories and, subsequently, those who listen. Modern historians build on the initial documentation of past historians; consequently, their works are imprinted with the same biases that can be found in the originals, creating a recycling of ancient cultures that continues to color modern decisions. Is our opinion of powerful women still dictated by long-dead scribes? Or have we cleared our judgement of their cultural obstructions? My analysis focuses on Wu Zetian, the sole female Emperor of China. By tracing the religious, socioeconomic and political nuances of the time, I argue that historical documentation on her reign was predetermined by the presiding culture and not rooted in her actions, person, or leadership. The threads of these documents can be found entwined with opinion on contemporary female politicians, continuing to alter modern perception.

Methodology

For my project, I studied peer-reviewed research on Chinese religion, politics, geography, literature, socioeconomics, and gender-roles of the Sui and Tang dynasties to construct an appropriate context to analyze primary documentation of Wu Zetian. I then utilized these findings to scrutinize contemporary views on modern female politicians.

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Heslet Scholar Finalist

Student Presenter: **Michael Nakada**

Mentor: **Alana Jeydel**

**American River College**

A Paradox of Scandinavian Social Democracy

An assessment on the sustainability of social democracy in relation to the escalating xenophobia in northern Europe.

Abstract

When notable sections of the population wish to eliminate the immigration and integration of foreign nationals in order to preserve a culture ironically built upon tolerance, one must question the social democratic system. Does a social democracy undermine itself when tolerance does not extend to newcomers in its society? Is an economic system even equipped to alleviate racial discrimination? In answering these questions, I scrutinize the archetype of social democracy through a case study of Denmark. The Danish universal welfare state has historically survived because of social trust and public institutions framed around the population’s solidarity and egalitarianism. Antithetical to these ideals, Denmark enforces some of the strictest immigration laws in Europe. My research indicates, however, that immigrants alleviate a different threat to the welfare state: the consequences of a negative birth rate. Thus, I hypothesize that without the effectual integration of foreigners, states cannot sustain a social democracy.

Methodology

I compile data released from Statistics Denmark and the European Social Survey to analyze the impact immigration has had upon the welfare state. I then evaluate integration policies by gauging the education, housing, and employment patterns of immigrants and their descendants along with the violence they face.

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Heslet Scholar Finalist

Student Presenter: **Jody Straight**

Mentor: **Bill Anelli**

**Modesto Junior College**

Conservatism and Fighting Global Warming: An Either/Or?

An examination of the compatibility of 19th and 20th century conservative political philosophy with aggressive climate change mitigation policy.

Abstract

I see three types of conservatives in regards to climate change: the deniers; the minimalists — who accept anthropogenic global warming (AGW) but oppose aggressive mitigation policy; and lastly, the supporters, those who accept AGW and support aggressive mitigation policy. However, many conservatives deny that supporters can be true conservatives. I hope to show that a close reading of some influential 19th and 20th century conservative political philosophy texts reveals that, contrary to many conservatives’ claims, one can be both a true conservative and a supporter. Given the current partisan polarization in congress, both conservative supporters and liberals may benefit from my analysis. Conservatives can support mitigation policy without abandoning their core values; liberals can appeal to conservativism in order to cultivate Republican support. We are amidst a pivotal moment. Given that climate change will worsen, my reexamination can help conservatives stay relevant: minimalists, even deniers, may become supporters.

Methodology

I will apply Andrew Light’s pragmatist approach from The Case for Practical Pluralism (2003) to fifteen primary sources — most notably canonical conservative texts from Burke, Kirk and Hayek, Pew Research polls on climate views and political affiliations, contemporary conservative environmental politicians and organizations, and counter-arguments from non-denial yet unsupportive conservatives.

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Heslet Scholar Finalist

Student Presenter: **Sean Vallor**

Mentor: **Denise Erickson**

**Cañada College**

Nietzsche and Rothko: A Comparative Philosophical and Biographical Exploration

A comparative examination of the lives, works, and philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche and Mark Rothko.

Abstract

The lives of the painter Mark Rothko and the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, when examined in parallel, reveal many insights into their late works. Mark Rothko was influenced greatly by Nietzsche’s “The Birth of Tragedy.” The kindred philosophical spirit shared by the two men, however, runs much more deeply. These men were exiles of cultures that Nietzsche would label as decadent and sick. Rothko would be equally repulsed in his own time by the contemporary culture of America. Each man would be fated to be defined by childhood tragedy, psychic as well as physical displacement, and the search for meaning amid the chaos. Many critics have missed this continuity of philosophical exploration. It is through comparative analysis that we can begin to experience their art with a new perspective.

Methodology

My analysis focused on biographical research, artistic analysis, philosophy, and the relation of formative life experiences to the mature works of both Rothko and Nietzsche. Often the late works of Rothko and Nietzsche have been devalued or even dismissed because they are viewed solely as products of mental illness. By closely examining their biographies in parallel, we can appreciate their late works as an essential and extraordinary period in the continuum of their artistic and philosophic trajectories.

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