

2025 GCIC ACADEMIC SYMPOSIUM

OPEN TO HIGH SCHOOL
DUAL CREDIT, UNIVERSITY
AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STUDENTS!

SUBVERTING GREED: LIVING NOT ON BUT IN COMMUNION WITH EARTH

FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2025
9 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.
ICB & LRC 131

COM | College of the Mainland®

G.C.I.C.
GULF COAST INTERCOLLEGIATE CONSORTIUM

WELCOME

to College of the Mainland's Eleventh Gulf Coast Intercollegiate Consortium Academic Symposium 2025!

Our theme this year is "Subverting Greed: Living Not on but in Communion with Earth."

When we are brought up to equate "good living," "living well," or "living to our potential" with material gains if not material wealth, it becomes impossible to see life as anything other than a race for accumulation or even excess. Greed, avarice, and materialism are difficult to ward off when we are conditioned to consume, hoard, and profit.

Counter to living this way means living in symbiosis and reciprocity. To live in symbiosis and reciprocity means to exist in communion or to live with rather than off of or from.

Human ingenuity is at once a part of the problem and solution here. We humans imagine worlds and will the knowledge necessary to manifest imagination into existence. Human ingenuity is greedy in its insatiability. We have a difficult time being content when our imagination is unencumbered. How do we then corral a dream? Can we dream of symbiotic and reciprocal futures? Can human dreams imagine equilibrium or a middle way that is neither complacent nor exploitive?

While greed is a natural human trait that preserves the self above all else, how do we learn to preserve in more sustainable, just ways? How do we learn to expand the borders of "we" to involve all humans and non-humans? All things both living and not but still a part of our ecologies? How do we learn to revere this opportunity to live on earth while treasuring the treasures living here yields?

This year's theme, "Subverting Greed: Living Not on but in Communion with Earth," asks us to pause and take stock of where we are in the world right now. What have we accomplished as a people? What have we accomplished as a nation? Of what are we

proud? What is undignified? To what do we feel entitled and why?

This year's theme asks that we interrogate one of our most human assumptions: What does it mean to be greedy? How do we "subvert" it? What does it mean to live "in communion"? What does it mean to live "with" Earth rather than on it?

The theme is broad and lends itself to cross-disciplinary examination, which is the driving force of our academic symposium. Today's student scholar presenters promise to surprise us with their take on the theme. We invite you to peruse the presentation schedule and select sessions that best suit your interests; when in sessions, we ask you to engage actively with student presenters during Q&A. The aim is for them to grow as scholars during this experience and for their work to enrich the day's conversation.

Our hope for this symposium is that it serves multiple goals including enhancing students' communication skills, facilitating networking across disciplines and colleges, and helping students build self-confidence and feel ownership of their work.

Enjoy yourself and thank you for supporting student scholarship.

Sincerely,

Professors Dalel Serda and Gwendolynn Barbee-Yow

GCIC Academic Symposium Co-Chairs

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

8:30 – 9:20 a.m. Registration, Coffee, and Breakfast Bites ICB Lobby

9:20 – 9:30 a.m. Welcome Remarks in all session rooms: Please report to session rooms by 9:20 am.

A SESSIONS: 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. **Session A1: Artificial Intelligence in Relation to Earth and Humanity** ICB 203

Artificial Intelligence

Carlos Munguia Galvez, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

Ethical Uses of AI

Tristan Martinez, Phoenix Martinez, Bryan Alvarez, Houston Community College – Central | Advisor: Nicolas Rangel

The Energy Problem in the Wake of Artificial Intelligence

Johnathan Shirley, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. **Session A2: Understanding Mental Health** ICB 204

Environmental Harmony: Healing Through the Spaces We Create

Mi'rana Joseph, Alvin Community College | Advisor: Amy Acord

The Psychology of Greed: Understanding and Mitigating Its Effects

Onyinyechi Okonkwo, Houston Community College – Stafford Campus | Advisor: Robin Reagler

Societal Misunderstandings of Mental Health Disorders

Maci Allen, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Monique Suarez

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. **Session A3: Cultural Analysis** ICB 206

Entitlement: Analyzing Donald Trump Through Audre Lorde's Mythical Norm

Ydalia Curiel, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

The Ethics in "How I Met Your Mother"

Alexis Frias, San Jacinto College | Advisor: Cody Pogue

Finding a Place in the Environment: The Emotional Burden of Mixed-Race Heritage in Langston Hughes's "Cross"

Sloan Landry, Brazosport College | Advisor: Carrie Pritchett

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. **Session A4: National Politics** ICB 227

Culture, Celebration, and Communion with the Earth: Art and Festivities as Healing Mechanisms in Medellín, Colombia

Ashleigh Lawrence, Brazosport College | Advisor: Carrie Pritchett

The Federal Effect on State Policymaking

Kloey Roe, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

The Cost of Not Knowing

Zahara Brakes, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. **Session A5: Language and Identity** ICB 228

The Silencing of the Chicana/o Language

Melanie Zarate, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

Spoken Soul: The Cultural Significance of African American English

Daveon Peters, Houston Community College – Northline | Advisor: Carolyn Cross

Latinos in Education: Spanish Speaking Latina vs a Non-Spanish Speaking Latina in a Predominantly White Elementary School

Jacqueline Lopez and Alazae Martinez, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. **Session A6: Cultural & Philosophical Relationships with Our Environment** ICB 303

Vines of Vitality: Abroad in Guadeloupe

Daven Bofil, Houston Community College Honors – Central Campus | Advisor: Nicolas Rangel

Personal Environmental Initiative

Trinity McCleary, San Jacinto College | Advisor: Cody Pogue

Identity Takes Place: Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" in Nayarit, Mexico

Denisse Gonzalez, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. **Session A7: Public and/or Private Profit** ICB 304

Profit, Avarice, and Prison Abolition

Jack McHaney, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

Examining the Impact of Private Equity

Abdurrahman Meguader, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Siromi Wijesinghe

	<p>Creation of the Greenback as U.S. Money by President Abraham Lincoln Janis Richards, San Jacinto College, North Campus, Honors Program Advisor: Cody Pogue</p>	
9:20 – 10:30 a.m.	<p>Session A8: Preserving Home Heritage..... ICB 306</p> <p>Memory Keepers: The Lasting Legacy of Cultural Erasure and Identity in <i>The Last Karankawas</i> by Kimberly Garza Caitlin McKnight, University of Houston – Victoria Advisor: Dalel Serda</p> <p>My Country and My People Pablo Garcia Vaquiz, Houston Community College Southeast Advisor: Toni Holland</p> <p>The Great Indian Divide of 1947: Told by Two Generations Anisah Khan, University of Houston Advisor: Auritro Majumder</p>	
9:20 – 10:30 a.m.	<p>Session A9: The Sociology and Psychology of Human Needs and Impulses ICB 318</p> <p>Creating A New Mindset Tievoli Carson, Houston Community College – Eastside Advisor: Toni Holland</p> <p>The Science of Concerts: How Live Music Affects Your Body and Mind Manuel Briceno Carvajal, Houston Community College – Central Campus Advisor: Nicolas Rangel</p> <p>The Painkiller for Human Fear Johan Munoz Lopez, Houston Community College Advisor: Toni Holland</p>	
9:20 – 10:30 a.m.	<p>Session A10: College of the Mainland's Creative Writers NONJURIED SESSION..... ICB 319</p> <p>Moderators: Lisa Frase and Courtney Pugh Student Writers: Destiny Tobey, Dustin Cooley, Ashley Tompkins, Brianna King, Calvin Higgenbotham, Courtney Crow, Oscar Galindo, River Dickman, Vincent Ybarra, Maximillian Ybarra, Cody Myers, Juvoni Lozano, Randy Acevedo</p>	
B SESSIONS: 10:40 to 11:40 a.m.		
10:40 – 11:40 a.m.	<p>Session B1: Rethinking Science Application..... ICB 203</p> <p>Currents of Greed: The Deep Wounds We Inflict on Our Oceans and Ourselves Erika Morales, College of the Mainland Independent Scholar</p> <p>Bleach: The Dancer Who Doesn't Get Off the Floor Amaria Thompson, College of the Mainland Advisor: James Mubiru</p> <p>Redefining Petroleum Engineering: Toward Sustainable Resource Extraction Auburn Carvell, Houston Community College Central Campus Advisor: Nicolas Rangel</p>	
10:40 – 11:40 a.m.	<p>Session B2: The Politics of Existing ICB 204</p> <p>Is Democracy Failing Us? Angelica Villadei, College of the Mainland/Clear Creek High School Advisor: Will Bryerton</p> <p>Greed and the Coexistence Challenge Julissa Reyes, Houston Community College Advisor: Toni Holland</p> <p>Can Democracy Survive? A Philosophical Investigation into Tocqueville and Mill's Theories of Cultural Cohesion in View of Immigration from Authoritarian States Axli Deritzia Alvarez, San Jacinto College – North Advisor: Cody Pogue</p>	
10:40 – 11:40 a.m.	<p>Session B3: The Self and Education ICB 206</p> <p>Education Beyond Profit and Competition Jaylin Trujillo, Houston Community College Advisor: Toni Holland</p> <p>Robot Children: Examining the Impact Internet Access Has on Adolescents' Socio-emotional Skill Development Azia Miranda, College of the Mainland Advisor: Independent Scholar</p> <p>Learn How to Achieve Successful Learning Gloria Chavez, Houston Community College – Northline Advisor: Carolyn Cross</p>	
10:40 – 11:40 a.m.	<p>Session B4: U.S. Impact on Climate Change..... ICB 227</p> <p>Dioxin and Deforestation: A Decade of Agent Orange and Its Effect on the Environment and Health of Vietnam Hannah LaCost, College of the Mainland Advisor: Courtney Pugh</p> <p>Greed Builds Humanity Gina Gomez, Houston Community College – Southeast Advisor: Toni Holland</p> <p>The Greed of Empire: U.S. Militarism and Environmental Devastation Jillian LeMaire, Sam Houston State University Advisor: Dalel Serda</p>	
10:40 – 11:40 a.m.	<p>Session B5: Animal Rights Justice..... ICB 228</p> <p>Exploitation of Animals Lilibeth Gonzalez-Gomez and Melanie Dominguez, Houston Community College Central Advisor: Nicolas Rangel</p> <p>Dominion Over the Earth: A study on Colonial America's Fishing Industry Brynna Malley, Galveston College Advisor: Debra Ramsey</p>	

	Don't Pay, Spay, and Save a Stray Sandra Pena, Houston Community College – Northline Advisor: Carolyn Cross	
10:40 – 11:40 a.m.	Session B6: Analyzing Art to Better Understand Humans and Being	ICB 303
	Challenges of Translating Epic of Gilgamesh Mykola Garazhankin, Houston Community College – Central Honors Advisor: Nicolas Range	
	Mononoke & Philosophy: Morality Amid Interspecies Conflict Victoria Martinez, University of Houston – Clear Lake Advisor: Stacey Burleson	
	"The Quality O' Th' Climate:" Ecological Relationships in Shakespeare Madison Howell, University of Houston Independent Scholar	
10:40 – 11:40 a.m.	Session B7: Corporate Greed and Consumerism	ICB 304
	To Live with Greed or Earth? Julio Pineda, Houston Community College Advisor: Toni Holland	
	Ugly Side of Humanity Erick Gutierrez, Houston Community College – Eastside Advisor: Toni Holland	
	The Psychology Behind Consumerism: How Marketing Fuels Greed Hamdah Binte Faisal, Houston Community College Central Advisor: Nicolas Rangel	
10:40 – 11:40 a.m.	Session B8: The Impact of Climate Shifts	ICB 306
	Learning from Wildfires Bryant Castro, Houston Community College Advisor: Toni Holland	
	Impact of Hurricanes and Rise of Temperature Abstract Madison Williams and Kayleigh Mims, Houston Community College Advisor: Nicolas Rangel	
	Natural Disasters: Earthquakes Samantha Turrubiarres, Houston Community College – Southeast Advisor: Toni Holland	
10:40 – 11:40 a.m.	Session B9: Rethinking Earth's Depletion	ICB 318
	Co-Existing with Nature: How Nature Becomes a Way of Life Emily Garcia, Ruby Flores, and Landon Lockett, College of the Mainland Independent Scholars	
	When Greed Corrupts Nature's Blessings Katherine Chores-Carmona and Nadia Gotcher, Alvin Community College Advisor: Amy Acord	
	Salvaging Our Planet: A Study of Water Leonidas Contreras, Odyssey Academy Independent Scholar	
C SESSIONS: 11:50 a.m. to 12:50 p.m.		
11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m.	Session C1: Ethically Humanizing Environmental Sciences	ICB 203
	Ecofeminism: Greed, Patriarchy, and Environmental Destruction Isabella Boettcher, College of the Mainland Advisor: Dalel Serda	
	Sacred Land: Wisdom and Perspective Through the Eyes of the Indigenous Savannah White, Santa Fe High School Independent Scholar	
	Unearthing the Past, Shaping Our Future: How Geoarchaeological Findings in Central and South America Can Help Us Rethink Human-Environmental Relationships Nova Dowdell, University of Texas at Austin Independent Scholar	
11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m.	Session C2: The Ethics and Culture of Reciprocity	ICB 204
	Roots: Living in Harmony with Nature Based on Indigenous Traditions and Knowledge Alicia Carrizales, Houston Community College Advisor: Toni Holland	
	Living in Communion with Earth Jazzmine Gutierrez, Houston Community College Advisor: Toni Holland	
	Breaking the Chains of Greed for a Sustainable Future Saifullah Saqib, Houston Community College Eastside Advisor: Toni Holland	
11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m.	Session C3: Futuring STEM	ICB 206
	STEM Education: Yes, It Can Be Done at Low Cost Jayda Ramirez, College of the Mainland Advisor: James Mubiru	
	Innovating Care Delivery: Advancing Nursing Practice in Healthcare Gabriela Velasco Zuñiga, Houston Community College Advisor: Toni Holland	
	Computer Science and the Future Ian Garcia, Houston Community College – Southeast Advisor: Toni Holland	
11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m.	Session C4: Human Complexity in Art	ICB 227
	"That Ain't You, Chiron": Unsustainable Male Gender Ideals in Barry Jenkin's <i>Moonlight</i> Ruben Capetillo, Lee College Advisor: Brianne Dayley	

Greed and the Demise of Our Planet

Ashley Tompkins, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Gwendolynn Barbee-Yow

Breaking the Hegemonic Mythical Norm: Intersectionality and Identity in Aurora Guerrero's

Mosquita y Mari

Shakuntala Bhowmick, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. Session C5: Living Well..... ICB 228

The Function of Diet in Healthy Living

Temiloluwa Lewis, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

Self-Expression and Connecting to Family Heritage Through Cooking

Karolina Quezada, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Professor Mubiru

Clean Your Room: Minimalism and a Memoir of Hoarding

Layla Leeah, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. Session C6: Changing Perspectives ICB 303

Finding Peace

Maximillian Ybarra, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Lisa Frase

Finding Value in Balance, Not Excess

Ashley Ruiz, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

The Unsatisfying Cycle of Greed

Dezeray Calvillo, Houston Community College – Eastside | Advisor: Toni Holland

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. Session C7: Faith in Math and Science..... ICB 304

Harmonic Sustainability: The Mathematics of Energy-Efficient Computing

Elaine Nguyen, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Jason Duvall

The Disinfectant “Fabuloso” is a Scam

Jennifer Warfield, College of the Mainland | Advisor: James Mubiru

Transport of Perfluorooctanoic Acid in Covalent Organic Frameworks

Dione Ebong M., Rice University Climate and Sustainability REU Summer Program and Houston Community College | PI: Tafadzwa Mutepaire; Mentor: Thomas P Senftle | Advisor: Robin Reagler

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. Session C8: Sacrifices We Make For and With Family..... ICB 306

Empowering Families Through Breast Cancer: Understanding the Dynamic Impact on Fathers, Mothers and Adolescents

Alyssa S. Garcia, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

Sacrifices of the Self: Histories of First-Generation Arab Immigrant Mothers

Marwa Hamdan, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

Salt of the Earth: The Forgotten Chicana Feminist Film of the 1950s

Alexa Guzman, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. Session C9: COM's Literary Journal: *The Badelynge Review* | NONJURIED SESSION..... ICB 318

Moderator: Gwendolynn Barbee-Yow

Student Panelists: Randy Acevedo, Kendra Aguirre, Charles Clemons, Maddy Nichols, Annalicia Salazar, and Cora Shirey.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. Session C10: The Local Community in Communion ICB 319

Disparity in Access: The Impact of Library Availability in Houston Independent School District

Maddy Snow, Lone Star College CyFair | Advisor: Aurora Lugo

Sickle Cell Club Membership Helps Students Develop Skills and Provides Social Support

Amaria Thompson, College of the Mainland | Advisor: James Mubiru

The Children are for Sale: Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Underage Sex Trafficking in Houston

Belen Leal, Lone Star College-Kingwood | Advisor: Mari L. Nicholson-Preuss

12:50 p.m.

Complimentary Lunch | LRC 131 Auditorium

1:00 p.m.

Keynote Talks and Q & A: | LRC 131 Auditorium

1:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

“The Karankawa of Coastal Texas”

Amelia White, History Specialist at The Bryan Museum in Galveston, Texas

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

“Tell Me Where You’re From and I’ll Tell You Who You Are: Uplifting Identities and Places from the Margins”

Dr. Kimberly Garza, author of critically acclaimed novel, *The Last Karankawas*

Dr. Garza’s talk and complimentary copies of *The Last Karankawas* for juried student presenters were graciously funded by College of the Mainland’s Hispanic-Serving Institution Title V grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education.

2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Audience and Speakers Q & A

2:15 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Awards, Photos, and Wrap-Up | LRC 131 Auditorium

STUDENT PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

In order of scheduled presentation; please see the presentation schedule above.

NOTE: These abstracts have been lightly edited to preserve students' intellectual property and authenticity. When necessary, abstracts were shortened to the required maximum of 300 words.

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. | Session A1 ICB 203: Artificial Intelligence in Relation to Earth and Humanity

Artificial Intelligence

Carlos Munguia Galvez, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

AI is one of the most important tools that our generation has because it makes life easier because it is a process that includes learning, reasoning, problem solving, perception, and language understanding. All these tasks are performed by machines that are a simulation of human intelligence. There is two main AI that are very common: narrow AI which was created for the specific task of facial recognition or internet search. For example, going to Google and searching anything online. The other is general AI, this aims to perform any intellectual task that a human being can do. It tries to mimic and to do the same job a human does. Even though AI is a great tool it can also be bad to be so dependent on technology because this will diminish our skills to think and over time humans will be replaced by machines that can perform the jobs better than a person. There are also errors and glitches and other bugs that can damage these machines, and they will need to be maintained because they were created to make human life more comfortable and not to replace us because machines are made of wires, metals, and plastic; they are created by humans. It is not the other way around that human beings are being created by these machines.

Ethical Uses of AI

Tristan Martinez, Phoenix Martinez, Bryan Alvarez, Houston Community College – Central | Advisor: Nicolas Rangel

In a world where technology is used daily by millions of people around the globe, we must understand the ethical and unethical uses of this technology. As students evolve after generations, we are subjected to using technology for things like study guides or quizzes to practice before a big test and often do not fully grasp the ways technology can be used for unethical reasoning. AI should be used as a tool and not something that does majority of our work for lazy purposes, as we dive into the world of technology, we as a group researched the ways that AI can be good and bad. Our group has researched different outcomes in the world of technology and discovered different biases and algorithms that AI uses to uncover different answers and accesses different information. Some AI is not biased as different forms of AI is wired to show more information that is useful to other students who need certain information for school and not extra information that gives them unnecessary words that confuse them in their research of choice. Overall, our group has studied different websites centered around AI and the pros and cons of their wording for research.

The Energy Problem in the Wake of Artificial Intelligence

Johnathan Shirley, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

As companies like X, Google, Microsoft, and IBM compete in a race to make the most commercially viable A.I., they also blight our power grid with energy sinks known as data centers. For example, Elon Musk has recently finished the development of a data center in Memphis, Tennessee, which he uses to train his A.I. named Grok 3. The complex contains a massive supercomputer which utilizes the computing power of 100,000 Nvidia H100 GPUs running at full power for a total energy draw of 70 megawatts, enough to power a small city, all for an A.I to generate a casserole recipe for you. Something must be done to fix the wastefulness of these data centers. I believe and I hope to show through my presentation that Quantum Computers may pave the way forward by providing a more environmentally friendly and sustainable computational tool. Recent reports coming out of the U.S. Department of Energy project that by 2028 data centers will account for 12% of the country's total energy consumption. While the blame for such high energy consumption can be put on the many companies currently investing in and developing A.I., the cause of such a huge uptick in energy consumption can be explained by the limitations of the modern electric computer. As it currently stands, the modern electric computer cannot get much better, as the transistors that dictate the efficiency and computational limits of the electric computer are potentially reaching a minimum possible size. This requires that we look for ways to innovate computing to mitigate the ecological damage that corporate greed does to our environment. Quantum Computers are that innovation.

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. | Session A2 ICB 204: Understanding Mental Health

Environmental Harmony: Healing Through the Spaces We Create

Mirana Joseph, Alvin Community College | Advisor: Amy Acord

This project looks at how our surroundings like the space we live in, the people around us, and the atmosphere we create affect our mental health. It focuses on the idea of harmony, which means finding balance between our inner world (how we feel inside) and our outer world (the space and people around us).

When our environment is calm and supportive, it can help us feel better mentally. This project explores ways to create a peaceful atmosphere by organizing our space, building positive relationships, and practicing mindfulness. It also looks at how spending time in nature can improve mental health by helping us feel more grounded and relaxed. The goal of this project is to show that taking care of our environment both inside and outside can play a big role in improving our mental well-being. By creating a balanced, peaceful atmosphere, we can better take care of ourselves and support our mental health.

The Psychology of Greed: Understanding and Mitigating Its Effects

Onyinyechi Okonkwo, Houston Community College - Stafford Campus | Advisor: Robin Reagler

Greed is an intrinsic aspect of human nature, deeply rooted in our psychology and essential for survival. From infancy, humans exhibit behaviors driven by self-interest, reflecting an innate tendency to acquire and protect resources. The brain's reward system reinforces these behaviors, making greed an automatic response rather than a conscious choice. However, while greed is unavoidable, acknowledging it allows us to counteract its negative effects through intentional self-regulation and societal structures that promote ethical decision-making.

This research explores the psychology behind greed, examining how neurological signals and cognitive biases shape our desires for accumulation. By understanding these mechanisms, we can develop strategies to mitigate greed's harmful consequences, fostering a culture of reciprocity and sustainability. The study aligns with the theme "Subverting Greed: Living Not on but in Communion with Earth" by emphasizing that rejecting greed outright is unrealistic; instead, we must consciously recognize and manage it.

As part of this research, I will conduct a survey to assess individuals' perceptions of greed, their willingness to acknowledge it, and their beliefs about its role in their lives. The survey questions will explore self-awareness of greed, societal attitudes toward it, and potential ways to counteract its excesses. This study aims to highlight how self-awareness and deliberate action can transform greed from a destructive force into a manageable trait that supports ethical coexistence.

Societal Misunderstandings of Mental Health Disorders

Maci Allen, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Monique Suarez

Mental health disorders are more common than you think. About 20% of children (1 out of 7 children ages 3 – 17) and 22% of adults in the United States are diagnosed with a mental or behavioral health condition. Society can be considered "greedy" in its treatment of people with mental disorders when it prioritizes a narrow definition of "normal" and excludes individuals who do not fit that mold. Why does this happen? Society has a fear of inconvenience or disruption, rather than actively making space for diverse experiences and providing necessary support for those struggling with mental health issues. Mental health disorders remain one of the most stigmatized health conditions, often misrepresented and misunderstood by society. This project explores societal misconceptions surrounding mental health and how they contribute to stigma, discrimination, and inadequate support for those affected. When we consider mental disorders, we should consider disorders from all categories. While some individuals may struggle with anxiety, others may struggle with disorders like ASD (autism spectrum disorder) or schizophrenia. Either way these disorders can have a mild or severe impact on daily life activities and being able to be active in society. As someone who has a child with autism spectrum disorder, I have been able to have a firsthand insight on how people are quick to judge and even exclude someone because they are "different." Instead of excluding or shaming those with mental health disorders, society should be normalizing educational and training programs to improve

understanding and empathy towards individuals with mental health disorders. Peer support programs and safe spaces can create positive environments, give a sense of belonging and reduce stigma. Through fostering awareness and promoting compassionate approaches, society can work towards a more inclusive understanding of mental health, ultimately subverting the greed that undermines the treatment of those with mental disorders as part of society.

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. | Session A3 ICB 206: Cultural Analysis

Entitlement: Analyzing Donald Trump Through Audre Lorde's Mythical Norm

Ydalia Curiel, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

During an interview at the National Association of Black Journalists convention in Chicago last year, Donald Trump spoke of Kamala Harris regarding her race/ethnicity. During the convention, he said about Harris, "She was always of Indian heritage. She was only promoting Indian heritage. I didn't know she was Black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn Black, and now she wants to be known as Black. So I don't know; is she Indian, or is she Black?" In this presentation, I will analyze Trump's characterization of Kamala Harris through late intersectional feminist, Audre Lorde's, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," this piece helps us better understand the entitlement that Donald Trump has been systemically given the type which enables him to make these types of comments. I plan to use Lorde's work to point out Trump's spot-on resemblance to what she describes as, the "mythical norm" and how this resemblance unfortunately gives him the power—a power instilled by society—to undermine Kamala Harris, someone who does not resemble Lorde's "mythical norm" but instead, the minority in this country—the people who haven't been handed the entitlement that Trump has. Through this analysis, my audience can better understand what Trump was insinuating in the clip, why he was insinuating it, why he thought it was okay to insinuate it, and what his intended takeaway message was. With this presentation, I would like for my audience to be more conscious about the power that, like I mentioned before, society has given and continues to give to people like Donald Trump—a white, wealthy, "Christian," heterosexual, natural-born, male citizen of the United States of America. My audience can take with them a realization that there are effects to who we continue to lend entitlement to—greed, oppression, and marginalization. We have the power to change this.

The Ethics in "How I Met Your Mother"

Alexis Frias, San Jacinto College | Advisor: Cody Pogue

"How I Met Your Mother" depicts the protagonist, Ted, on a quest for true love, culminating in marriage and eventual widowhood, after which he returns to a previous love interest. This narrative raises questions about the concept of "settling" in relationships. This essay examines the complexities of this phenomenon, drawing on psychological research examining the motivations behind choosing a partner, particularly in

the context of long-term commitment. It also analyzes the controversial ending of “How I Met Your Mother,” considering the ethical implications of Ted’s choices. By examining the series through various ethical lenses, this analysis allows us to dive deeper into the central question: “In what circumstances does one have the right to settle for their partner?” By examining the series through various ethical lenses, including utilitarianism, and virtue ethics, this essay aims to dissect the complexities of Ted’s actions, as well as his reasoning for his romantic life decisions. This essay grapples with the different standpoints one may have on this subject. Is it a matter of weighing happiness against other values, adhering to moral principles, or cultivating virtues like acceptance and commitment? Through this analysis, the essay aims to shed light on the delicate balance between romantic ideals and the realities of long-term relationships.

Finding a Place in the Environment: The Emotional Burden of Mixed-Race Heritage in Langston Hughes’s “Cross”

Sloan Landry, Brazosport College | Advisor: Carrie Pritchett

Langston Hughes’ poem “Cross” explores the emotional turmoil of navigating mixed racial heritage and societal rejection. Hughes’ work can be applied not only in the United States, but also in the worldwide study of mixed-race heritage. Through the narrator’s internal conflict between African American and European parentage, Hughes highlights the psychological burden of reconciling divided cultural identities. This research examines the symbolism of the cross, which for Hughes represented personal suffering and societal pressures shaped by colonialism and forced assimilation. Historical parallels were also studied between Hughes’ portrayal of identity struggles and the experiences of indigenous and mixed-race individuals subjected to colonization such as including Australia’s Aboriginal “Stolen Generations”, Canada’s residential schools for indigenous children, and the elimination of the Sámi culture in Scandinavia. The psychological conflict faced by these communities mirrors Hughes’s emphasis of isolation and fractured identity. Furthermore, this research explores the connection of race and gender, showing how societal expectations aggravate these tensions, especially for mixed-race women who are forced to navigate stereotypes and rejection from multiple communities. Framing these historical and cultural experiences through the lens of “Cross” illustrates Hughes’ reflection on racial and cultural duality, revealing the effect of colonization and prejudice on identity. The relevance of “Cross” continues today, as individuals with complex backgrounds continue to oppose societal divisions and search for spaces where their true identities can be fully recognized and respected in the human environment. This analysis serves as a reminder of the lasting psychological scars of colonization, and the strength required to live in a world still grappling with racial and cultural integration.

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. | Session A4
ICB 227: National Politics

Culture, Celebration, and Communion with the Earth: Art and Festivities as Healing Mechanisms in Medellín, Colombia

Ashleigh Lawrence, Brazosport College | Advisor: Carrie Pritchett

While art, celebrations, and parades has always been present in the many iterations of Colombian culture, much of the modern expressions of art are rooted in both reclamation and reckoning with the country’s dark past of the violence of the drug cartels and the notorious control of Pablo Escobar. This presentation specifically explores the cultural and natural art in Medellín, Colombia, and its focus on reflecting upon and shaping the city’s social and historical transformations after generations of unrest. Through this lens, the paper explores the Feria de las Flores as a celebration of the flowers of the Aburrá valley—the main natural resource—while also serving as a reclaiming of traditional practices of the local people in the valley. The presentation also examines street art in Comuna 13. As a neighborhood once ravaged by conflict, its vibrant murals now tell residents and visitors alike the story of sorrow, resilience, and reconstruction. Additionally, the presentation touches on the continued influence of the notorious Pablo Escobar in Medellín’s cultural landscape, investigating how his image is honored in the same form of art that honors his victims. By examining these natural and cultural artistic expressions, this paper sheds light on how different forms of art function as both a tool for healing and a method of remembering the complexities of Medellín’s past.

The Federal Effect on State Policymaking

Kloey Roe, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

This presentation aims to share the discoveries that Mahalley D. Allen, Carrie Pettus, and Donald P. Haider-Markel explore and evaluate in their article “Making the National Local: Specifying the Conditions for National Government Influence on State Policymaking.” In my presentation, I will examine and explain the research methods used by the authors, such as research findings from other well-known authors, comparing cross-sectional data across the 50 states, and an EHA (Event History Analysis) model. I will also explain how the US government’s lawmaking system functions, and how federal funding influences state policy change. With this presentation, I intend to share the research findings in the article, which clearly explains the influences of our federal government and analyzes the impact federal funding has on state policy. My presentation concludes that federal funding has a significant impact on state policymaking. Understanding the relationship between federal funding and current-day state policy changes gives the audience more information to make educated voting choices that make them feel that their vote has a direct effect on their daily life.

The Cost of Not Knowing

Zahara Brakes, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

If greed is the root cause of social and political injustices and a civically uneducated society, then political participation and civic literacy are the neutralizers to subverting this greed. A civically literate person understands critically how the law and democracy affect their everyday lives. They also can perceive and form more critically educated political opinions and are

more inclined to engage in the crucial but what may seem to the uneducated, “unnecessary” civic duties in our unjust society. In “Literacy and Social Equity,” Linda McMillan and MaryAnn O’Neil discuss the different definitions of literacy beyond reading and writing and among other things, claim studies show more than half of Americans are civically illiterate (McMillan and O’Neil 36). The effects of this situation are lower voter turnout, unsustainable policies, lack of advocacy, and affluent socialites benefiting from it all.

Understanding the concept that the wealthy elite wants to undermine and keep the lower class uneducated is a political strategy that proves knowledge is power and greed thrives on ignorance. The misinformed are easily manipulated and political propaganda usually contains misleading information that distracts the public from issues from government topics that heavily impact on the lives of civilians. This presentation will focus on the implications of a misinformed society and how an expansion of civic education would lead the population to recognize how power works; an informed public demands reform. I will also present the results of a survey I conducted that explains how education affects political participation in our city. The purpose of this presentation is to get the public to understand that having a critical understanding of civic literacy will give the citizens of our nation the opportunity to confront oppression and create change.

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. | Session A5 ICB 228: Language and Identity

The Silencing of the Chicana/o Language

Melanie Zarate, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

According to Gloria Anzaldúa, author of the book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Chicana/os have dealt with shame in their own identity for many reasons including, ironically, from criticism about their language use by their fellow Mexican or Mexican American peers. Chicana/os often use the mix of both Spanish and English (also known as Spanglish) when speaking but are frequently silenced and limited to only speaking Spanish or only English. This project focuses on the discrimination that occurs to Spanglish or Spanglish speakers by fellow in-group members. This discrimination comes from the Mexican community’s belief that Chicana/os are “Americanized” and do not care about Mexican culture. For people of Mexican descent, too often Spanglish is stigmatized due of the belief that it is an inferior language compared to “Standard Spanish.” Gloria Anzaldúa argues that languages evolve according to their sociopolitical context while also asserting how Spanglish is important for Chicana/o identity. In this presentation I will be use Anzaldúa’s Spanglish as valid and “twin skin” to identity framework to analyze the poem “La Loca de La Raza Cosmica” by La Chrisx. I argue that Spanglish should be celebrated rather than something to be used against each other especially when the blending of languages is valid and empowering. Chicana/os should not have to accommodate any dominant language ideology nor should they sacrifice their own (American) identity. By being prideful in using Spanglish, Chicana/os can actively resist this oppression.

Spoken Soul: The Cultural Significance of African American English

Daveon Peters, Houston Community College – Northline |

Advisor: Carolyn Cross

The exploration of African American English (AAE) reveals its profound cultural significance and challenges prevailing misconceptions surrounding linguistic diversity. Often marginalized and mischaracterized as “improper” or “slang,” AAE serves as a vital form of expression that encapsulates the historical experiences, resilience, and creativity of African American communities. This project argues that understanding AAE is crucial to fostering a deeper appreciation of cultural identity and challenging notions of linguistic hierarchy.

Through a multidisciplinary lens, we investigate how AAE functions not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for cultural continuity and community solidarity. Drawing on evidence from linguistics, cultural studies, and sociology, we examine the structural features of AAE, its roots in African linguistic traditions, and its evolution within the sociopolitical landscape of the United States.

This research aligns with the theme “Subverting Greed: Living Not on but in Communion with Earth” by advocating for the recognition of linguistic diversity as a form of cultural wealth that enriches our shared human experience. By embracing AAE, we can foster greater empathy and understanding across communities, challenging the greed of cultural appropriation and the commodification of identity. Ultimately, this project seeks to highlight the importance of revering and preserving linguistic heritage as part of our broader ecological and social responsibility. In doing so, we aim to contribute to a vision of sustainability that honors all voices and cultivates a more just and inclusive society.

Latinos in Education: Spanish Speaking Latina vs a Non-Spanish Speaking Latina in a Predominantly White Elementary School

Jacqueline Lopez and Alazae Martinez, College of the Mainland |

Advisor: Dalel Serda

Navigating the educational landscape as a Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish speaking Latina in a predominantly white school presents unique challenges and experiences. Latino students often grapple with a sense of belonging, as they find themselves in environments where their cultural and linguistic backgrounds are not widely understood or represented. Both parties can lead to a feeling of cultural erasure and a loss of connection to their heritage. Growing up bilingual and monolingual in such settings can be particularly challenging. Students may struggle with the duality of maintaining their native language at home while being pressured to conform to an English-only environment at school. This can also apply to monolingual students by creating a sense of identity theft, by not being educated of their origin. This can create internal conflicts and stress, impacting their overall well-being and academic success. The lack of support for bilingual education in homes means that these students often miss out on the cognitive and social benefits of being fluent in two languages. Moreover, the constant emphasis on English proficiency can detract from the actual learning of the curriculum, leaving Spanish-speaking

students at a disadvantage. They may receive less attention to their academic needs and more to their language skills, which can hinder their educational progress and contribute to feelings of inadequacy. The importance of fostering inclusive home and educational environments that value and support bilingualism. By recognizing the unique challenges faced by non-Spanish-speaking Latino students by implementing their cultural background in day-to-day life. This can accomplish a sense of self-understanding and help them find a way of life in their prepubescent years.

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. | Session A6 **ICB 228: Cultural & Philosophical Relationships with Our Environment**

Vines of Vitality: Abroad in Guadeloupe

Daven Bofil, Houston Community College Honors – Central Campus | Advisor: Nicolas Rangel

Survivalist instinct? Or Camaraderie by chance. When one travels to a foreign country, intimidation in a new environment is a common dilemma, especially for those without prior experience. With the year's theme of "Subverting Greed," this project aims to highlight the importance of the world around us and the various journeys it can take us on. The uprising of this direction stemmed from a recent study abroad trip I attended on the island of Guadeloupe, 200 km from Florida and 600 km from South America. This boot camp was held by the French Embassy and focused on the Nature, Cultural, and Sustainability Practices in the French Caribbean. There, I met community college students from across the United States and worked alongside students from the University de Antilles, who had initially served as translators but grew into lasting friendships. The methodology used is observational paired with qualitative research gathered from a survey sent to program coordinators, students from the island, and participants from the U.S. Furthermore, the data collected is projected to comply with the idea of how our experience in the boot camp welded our group together, despite our differences in religion, culture, age, and education. Stepping into this world of sustainability practices and varying social norms has proved to teach even the most entitled how to appreciate the grass below them.

Personal Environmental Initiative

Trinity McCleary, San Jacinto College | Advisor: Cody Pogue

We are currently living with a quickly warming Earth and the threat of a 6th mass extinction. While both issues are known to be caused by humans, data shows that only 1 in 4 Americans report having done anything to actively care for the environment in the past year. Although concerns are rising, action among citizens remains low. Free will guided purely by incentives rather than reason has fueled years of irrational harm to nature. Environmental adaptations are taking place but are often hindered by this lack of urgency and understanding of what climate change action should look like. Through understanding why, it is important to act in ways that help the environment and a change in our culture we can stop this

hindrance. Environmental justice should allow all living things the foundational resources to live an optimal life, but this opportunity is stripped from many organisms due to climate change. So, what is causing this lack of action and how can we argue that personal initiative is important? Utilitarianism doesn't account for plants' health and allows minimal dedication to plant life to persist. In a search to find a philosophy that achieves my idea of justice for all living things in nature I use the teachings of Kant to show that virtue and personal action are vital to environmental protection. Respecting non-human nature as more than a means, practicing frugality, and duty to other humans can initiate a change not only for oneself but the world around them. Kant gives us the key to what must be done for harmony between humans and nature. Through promoting moderation and genuine respect for all aspects of nature Kant shows us contrasting morals compared to our current culture and how we should teach the importance of personal initiative.

Identity Takes Place: Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" in Nayarit, Mexico

Denisse Gonzalez, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

I will use Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" to analyze a small rural locality in Nayarit, Mexico. I will focus on the journey of an eight-year-old girl who grew up in a pueblito (A small town). Using current images of her childhood school and home as a metaphor for her contained cave, I will analyze how her interrogation of her current state changed her assumption of life and her decision to step out of the "Cave." For her, breaking free from ignorance also meant breaking free from a mindset of scarcity and accumulation into one of reciprocity and communion. Suppose society conditions us to equate a good life with material gains. In that case, we become trapped in a race to accumulate "Shadows" rather than growth in knowledge, relationships, and spiritual fulfillment. This presentation challenges the audience to consider: What does it mean to live well? What does it mean to pursue enlightenment not just for oneself but for the greater good? By linking Plato's philosophical framework to a real-life story, this presentation will encourage viewers to reflect on their lives. What caves are they trapped in? What illusions define their understanding of success and fulfillment? Are they living on the world—extracting, consuming, and competing—or with the world in communion, reciprocity, and shared growth? The pueblito represents the cave and education serves as the first light that broadens the girl's perspective, and it is God, as the ultimate Sun, reveals life's true purpose. This interpretation underscores the transformative power of learning and faith in overcoming ignorance, finding a more sustainable, just way of living, and considers how to use their enlightenment to build a world prioritizing balance over excess, peace over greed, and connection over isolation.

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. | Session A7 ICB 304: Public and/or Private Profit

Profit, Avarice, and Prison Abolition

Jack McHaney, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

All across America, personal interest and profit are deeply involved in the management of prisons, both private and federally owned. The joint interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing, and imprisonment to approach economic, social and political problems continue to prevail over equitable and progressive alternatives. Last year, 2024, marked a significant change in this conversation. In contrast to the Democratic Party's 2020 platform, the new platform features no mention of mass incarceration or criminal justice reform. For the first time in over a decade, neither major party featured opposition to the death penalty, and both called for raised police funding. Concern has only grown since this development, and the importance of fighting for a society that values communion and care has grown as well. In this presentation, I will demonstrate how dismantling the prison industrial complex and replacing incarceration and punishment with alternatives, like community care, education, and rehabilitation, would improve society and allow all the chance to live a full human life.

Examining the Impact of Private Equity

Abdurrahman Meguader, College of the Mainland |
Advisor: Siromi Wijesinghe

The 1980s would open a door to a new era on Wall Street, introducing a capital structure model becoming the topic of widespread debate. Private equity (PE), a term that doesn't mean much to the average person, until they begin to understand the significance behind it. Many critics argue that the driving force behind private equity is greed, and many believe that its capital structure model poses immense risks to our financial system. However, the structure of business acquisitions under private equity has also drawn strong support from investors due to its high return on investment (ROI). Private equity drives innovation by funding new projects and enhancing business performance through strategic management. Yet, the capital structure model remains the main point of controversy in this ongoing debate. This research will examine two case studies of some of the most intense boom-and-bust cycles in the private equity industry, with particular focus to its criticized business model. The study will also explore whether private equity model can be considered sustainable, while presenting real-world examples to help the audience form their own conclusions. Ultimately, this research aims to shed light on both the benefits and challenges associated with private equity, while allowing the audience to determine whether this business model represents greed or offers genuine economic advantages.

Creation of the Greenback as U.S. Money by President Abraham Lincoln

Janis Richards, San Jacinto College, North Campus, Honors Program |
Advisor: Cody Pogue

Why was President Abraham Lincoln's creation of the Greenback Dollar important when he did it, and how would recreation of the Greenback experience impact the United States today? Since U.S. money is currently being created and circulated by the private sector, under the auspices of the Federal Reserve, this process is in violation of the Constitution. The Federal Reserve is not a government organization. It is a private cartel of 10 powerful private banks, each of which has the sole responsibility of earning a profit for its investors. The function of earning a profit interferes with the function of working on behalf of the public. Consequently, the U.S. is currently experiencing a pricing structure that harkens runaway inflation. There are no elected officials on the Federal Reserve who are responsible to the American public. The methodology of the Federal Reserve is opaque. It was originally created under fraudulent circumstances in 1913.

Historical precedent described from scholarly research verifies the unconstitutionality of private creation of U.S. money. Research methodology will consist of proof from numerous case studies which confirms the thesis. The conclusions will show that U.S. money can only be created and circulated by the Congressional branch of the U.S. Government. These conclusions will be discussed in the context of historical experience with current evidence of the danger of this private system of money creation to the American public and the world, as was evidenced in 2008.

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. | Session A8 ICB 306: Preserving Home Heritage

Memory Keepers: The Lasting Legacy of Cultural Erasure and Identity in *The Last Karankawas* by Kimberly Garza

Caitlin McKnight, University of Houston – Victoria | Advisor: Dalel Serda

This project explores Kimberly Garza's novel, *The Last Karankawas* (2022). I begin by using a historical framework to contextualize key literary themes such as alienation, cultural erasure, and displacement experienced by the modern Mestizo community. I focus specifically on the history of the Karankawa people as their culture pertains to the primary source. My methodology combines both historical analysis as well as the interpretation of complementary Chicano literary texts to illustrate how literature archives lasting traumas, and to build a larger understanding of the Mestizo's complex experience. By examining complementary texts, I assert that literary representation serves as a crucial tool in challenging dominant narratives and promoting self-empathy and self-acceptance within the Mestizo community. Thus, this paper argues that the myth of American exceptionalism influenced Manifest Destiny which perpetuated violence, imperialism, and the generational trauma of culture erasure experienced by the Mestizo community, and that minority authors serve as "memory keepers" of these historical wrong doings. The desired effect of this project is to foster empathy, provide cultural context for modern issues of identity as it pertains to the Mestizo, and to recognize the legitimacy of literature as a means to represent nuanced social constructs and marginalized communities in history.

My Country and My People

Pablo Garcia Vaquiz, Houston Community College Southeast |
Advisor: Toni Holland

I came from El Salvador three years ago after spending, basically, my whole life in the same school and neighborhood. Looking for better opportunities was the main reason why we had to leave everything behind. There are so many people I miss, as well as some places, meals, and especially, my culture. Not having the same traditions as most of the people I interact with has been difficult, that is why I feel so happy whenever I find someone from my country. Although I usually visit El Salvador at least once a year, there are many times where I wish I could be there with my family and friends. Christmas, for example, is one of those special days that I loved back then. I, as a shy person, used to talk to many people I did not know just because of the strong feeling of happiness of such a holiday, which is one of the things I miss the most. It is hard to stay away from all my childhood memories, but I came here with a goal, so although it may be hard sometimes, I will not give up.

My country has always meant a lot for me, and I will always be proud of who I am and where I come from. Although I am Salvadorean, when I say, “my people,” I mean all the Latino community. I truly believe we are the same people just separated by imaginary lines. Working as an ESL instructor, I have met so many people from different backgrounds, and I have noticed we all have similar values. I enjoy spending a lot of time with my people, making my job a heartwarming experience knowing that I am helping them to achieve their goals.

The Great Indian Divide of 1947: Told by Two Generations

Anisah Khan, University of Houston | Advisor: Auritro Majumder

The Great Indian Divide also referred to as partition, occurred a little over seventy-seven years ago, and the importance of preserving the memories of partition survivors. Most survivors are reaching their late 80s to mid-90s and risk fading if not maintained by oral histories or literature and remembered by future generations. This project will be a chapter for my senior honors thesis project which poses the question, “To what extent do second-generation partition narratives from authors who inherited memories of first-generation writers preserve themes of identity from the great partition of 1947 in ways South Asian communities of today can understand?” through literature, oral histories, and History.

My presentation will focus on the events that took place during the Great Indian Divide of 1947 what occurred after the divide, and how the past still has a significant impact on South Asian communities today. My interpretation of subverting greed is to actively resist excessiveness, whether it be materialism, rejecting exploitation, or challenging long-lasting traditions, I see subverting as an action to preserve what is at risk. Even if subverting means challenging a system that has been put in place for decades and the potential erasure of an important history relevant to many out of the “22 million Asian Americans trace their roots to more than 20 countries in East and Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent” (Budiman, and Ruiz). Therefore, I am taking on the theme, “Subverting

Greed” and putting on an educational and creative perspective to answer the question, in what ways can modern South Asian communities living in the United States subvert greed present in their school systems so that the history, as well as the human dimensions of the partition, is guaranteed to be preserved and remembered?

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. | Session A9

ICB 318: The Sociology and Psychology of Human Needs and Impulses

Creating A New Mindset

Tievoli Carson, Houston Community College – Eastside |
Advisor: Toni Holland

Confronting greed requires us to boldly challenge and transform the societal, economic, and individual forces that prioritize self-interest and the relentless pursuit of wealth, often at the cost of others. Greed—deeply rooted in materialism, competition, and inequality—permeates our modern systems, driving rampant consumerism, harming our environment, and perpetuating social injustices. To truly counteract greed, we must advocate for powerful alternative models that emphasize community-oriented economies, environmental stewardship, and collaborative ventures. These approaches prioritize the well-being of the collective over individual gain, paving the way for a more just and sustainable future for all.

To effectively counteract greed, we must delve into the psychological, cultural, and structural elements that enable its persistence. At the psychological level, emotions such as desire, fear, and the quest for status often propel individuals toward an insatiable urge for consumption. This relentless pursuit not only widens societal disparities but also erodes our empathy for one another. Culturally, greed is frequently celebrated in media and mainstream narratives, fostering societal norms that confuse success with the mere accumulation of wealth. We need substantial structural reforms to dismantle the systems that incentivize exploitation, including rigorous regulatory measures that promote fair resource distribution, hold corporations accountable, and guarantee equitable access to opportunities for all. Only by addressing these underlying issues can we cultivate a more compassionate and just society.

The Science of Concerts: How Live Music Affects Your Body and Mind

Manuel Briceno Carvajal, Houston Community College – Central Campus |
Advisor: Nicolas Rangel

Live music experiences such as concerts have a profound impact on our physical and psychological well-being, but they also positively impacted me. Combining music, social interaction, and shared emotional experiences creates a unique environment that triggers various physiological and emotional responses in our bodies. On my research I have found important facts about attending live music concerts, having a multitude of effects from changes in brain-chemistry and cardiovascular function to mood enhancement and social connection. Live music provides a unique and powerful experience that benefits

our overall well-being, making these human connections and emotional well-being not to be underestimated. For me, it is important to highlight amazing effects on brain chemistry like increased oxytocin, dopamine release, endorphin release, and cortisol reduction, and other cardiological and physiological effects, also highlighting the social connections.

I chose this topic because for me, live music has played a huge role in my life, shaping my vocabulary and my way of thinking, appreciating art getting into the soul through our hearing sense. After being a Madonna fan for about fourteen years I saw her live last year, that day I learned the positive effects of how concerts make us become more projected, hard-working, and happier persons, I have lived the same incredible feelings in the five concerts I have attended since last year, and the excitement of the many more I'm going to attend in the current one. I believe a lot of people will be feeling identified with this presentation about live music, and like Madonna says, "Music is the one thing that bring us all together." These positive effects to my well-being make me feel engaged with the topic.

The Painkiller for Human Fear

Johan Munoz Lopez, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

This project explores the paradoxical relationship between humans and greed, examining how it stems from a deep-rooted fear of mortality and uncertainty. It argues that greed is not an inherent aspect of human nature but rather a learned response to the existential dread we face as conscious beings aware of our impermanence. By accumulating wealth, power, and knowledge, humans seek to control the unknown and avoid the fear of insignificance. The project critically evaluates the consequences of unchecked greed, demonstrating how it has shaped civilizations and driven human progress, but also led to conflict, inequality, and a disconnect from meaningful relationships.

The evidence draws on historical and philosophical perspectives to show how civilizations have been built on the foundation of greed, which is rooted in the anxiety of our mortality. The project analyzes how greed, while offering temporary relief, ultimately does not provide true fulfillment or security. It links this argument to the broader theme of redefining human success—shifting from materialism to a more symbiotic, meaningful existence. The project suggests that in order to subvert greed, we must redefine what constitutes security and meaning in our lives, emphasizing connection over consumption, and purpose over profit. This reframing offers a path toward liberation from the anxiety that fuels greed, enabling humans to live more fulfilling and connected lives.

The project concludes that greed, as a learned response to fear, can be transcended by embracing a deeper, more interconnected way of living. This approach focuses on what we create, share, and leave behind, rather than what we own. In doing so, humans can redefine their existence and move toward a more liberated, meaningful future.

9:20 – 10:30 a.m. | Session A10 **ICB 319: College of the Mainland's Creative Writers |** **NONJURIED SESSION**

Moderators: Lisa Frase and Courtney Pugh

Student Writers: Destiny Tobey, Dustin Cooley, Ashley Tompkins, Brianna King, Calvin Higgenbotham, Courtney Crow, Oscar Galindo, River Dickman, Vincent Ybarra, Maximillian Ybarra, Cody Myers, Juvoni Lozano, Randy Acevedo

Creative writing is an artistic endeavor where authors provide an immersive experience for readers to explore uniquely human experiences within the natural world. Through words on the written page, we learn to appreciate living in balance and harmony with nature. The emphasis in creative writing is on the narrative tradition and poetics, character development, and language awareness, as well as celebrating the written word's power to move, reflect, and interpret reality. Personal experiences and observations blend into factual narratives in creative nonfiction, and some writers experiment with the way these genres intersect. The writers in the session, students in the COM Creative Writing Club and current Introduction to Creative Writing class will share short, original pieces of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. This session is advisor moderated.

10:40 – 11:40 a.m. | Session B1 **ICB 203: Rethinking Science Application**

Currents of Greed: The Deep Wounds We Inflict on Our Oceans and Ourselves

Erika Morales, College of the Mainland | Independent Scholar

This presentation focuses on how petroleum harms the ocean and the creatures that depend on it, such as coral reefs and shellfish, even leading to people that depend on these creatures to make a living. When fossil fuels are burned, carbon emission is released into the air. This carbon eventually makes its way into the ocean, causing it to become more acidic. As the water's pH drops, calcium found in the water drops as well, driving shellfish and coral to struggle in building their skeletons. The evidence is clear, the ocean is becoming more acidic, and marine life is facing major challenges. This not only affects ecosystems but also workers who rely on the shellfish industry. The root cause of this issue is the greed of people for petroleum with the demand for more fossil fuels, driven by the desire for money, often ignores the long-term environmental consequences. This destructive approach shows a lack of concern for the planet and its inhabitants. Some people choose to overlook the symbiotic relationship with the earth since the earth cannot speak up for itself. At the heart of this problem is the broken relationship between humanity and the Earth. Instead of working with nature in a way that benefits both, many people are exploiting the planet for short-term gain, ultimately causing harm to other groups within their own communities as well. While it's true that we can't completely stop using petroleum, there are opportunities to reduce our reliance on it. The challenge is that people's greed and short-sightedness often prevent us from exploring sustainable alternatives. This presentation emphasizes

the need for a shift in how we use resources, urging a more responsible and balanced approach to living not on but in communion with earth.

Bleach: The Dancer Who Doesn't Get Off the Floor

Amaria Thompson, College of the Mainland | Advisor: James Mubiru

Bleach has been used as a household disinfectant for cleaning city water and household disinfection for over 200 years. One of the most noticeable setback for the use of Bleach as a disinfectant is the smell. Many new disinfectants have been invented and have been suggested that they are better than Bleach. We set out to explore the effectiveness of bleach on bacteria commonly found in households. We selected three kinds of bacteria that are commonly found in households. The three bacteria we used were Staphylococcus epidermis which is commonly found on human skin, Escherichia coli is commonly found on our bodies and is a result of fecal contamination, Bacillus cereus is normally commonly found in dirt. Bacillus cereus is the hardest bacteria to kill because it has endospores. We used the diluted the disinfectant per the recommended by the manufacturers from the product label which is supposed to give us the most effective solutions for killing bacteria. We purchased the disinfectants from the grocery stores where they are commonly found and tested the ability of the disinfectant to inactive or kill the bacteria. Our results indicate that Bleach effectively inactivates all 3 bacteria and therefore should be the first choice for a household disinfectant. Many disinfectants that are commonly used now are not as effective as Bleach and they are more expensive. This adds cost to people but does not work as well as Bleach.

Redefining Petroleum Engineering: Toward Sustainable Resource Extraction

Auburn Carvell, Houston Community College Central Campus | Advisor: Nicolas Rangel

As an energy production and industrial nurturer, Petroleum engineering has dominated the realm of profitable growth. However, traditional methods for petroleum recovery are often efficient and profitable but ignore environmental balance. This, in practice, supports a path toward resource depletion instead of new creation. In greater depth, this document examines the potential for petroleum engineering to pursue sustainable practices by drawing upon permaculture principles of mutual benefit and coevolution, undermining greed-driven harm. Developments in carbon capture, enhanced oil recovery, and geothermal incorporation all provide opportunities for the extraction of energy while also minimizing the damage done to the environment and encouraging sustainability. Moreover, ethical orientation and policy architecture are vital to stimulating industry change; they prompt petroleum engineers in their own time. Indeed, this profession can dream of a day when reliance on fossil fuels will be a bridge to sustainable energy solutions. By challenging the assumption that prosperity must come at the price of exploiting nature, this study argues for a Centrist way that neither blocks innovation nor plunders natural resources. Through emphasizing interdisciplinary cooperation and technological imagination, the field can realize

energy production as something that exists in concert with the Earth rather than damaging it, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration among industry professionals.

10:40 – 11:40 a.m. | Session B2 ICB 204: The Politics of Existing

Is Democracy Failing Us?

Angelica Villadei, College of the Mainland/Clear Creek High School | Advisor: Will Bryerton

Can democracy still be considered an exemplary model of governance? In a fragmented geopolitical landscape (e.g., the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the territorial ambitions of China and the United States), made increasingly dangerous by energy and environmental crises, migration flows, the threat of terrorism, disruptive new technologies, growing economic inequalities, and the rise of populist and authoritarian regimes around the world, democracies in the 21st Century face a number of challenges to ensure the endurance of this form of government. Will democracy be able to meet and overcome these challenges or is it doomed to fail under the imminent pressures of the new millennium? In my presentation I will try to answer this question, starting from the premise that democracy presupposes the existence of a people who not only know how to exercise their power but are also willing to preserve it. Are we—those who live in Western democracies—really aware of the difficulties and responsibilities involved in preserving democratic governance and institutions? Will we be able to realize the importance we, citizens, have in the success of this form of government, or will democracy succumb before our oblivious eyes? Is democracy doomed to die? Is democracy failing us, or are we failing democracy?

Greed and the Coexistence Challenge

Julissa Reyes, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

Humans have long relied on Earth's resources not only for survival but also for comfort and development. From the seed that grows our food, to the water that we depend on for daily life, to the forests and minerals that fuel our economy, Earth resources are essential in many ways. However, this relationship has been often defined as exploitation rather than a balanced coexistence. As global warming becomes an increasingly urgent issue, the rising question is: How can we live in harmony with the Earth, using its resources while protecting it? Unfortunately, one feels conflicted when answering due to greed, which often drives us to excessively exploit the planet without considering the long-term consequences. An exemplar of this tension can be seen in El Salvador, where the president plans to remove the ban on mining minerals. The funds from mining are intended to be reinvested in cleaning polluted waters, however it underlines a broader issue: taking from the earth without giving back. While mining may offer short-term benefits, it harms the environment creating a cycle of sourcing without proper rehabilitation. This highlights the damaging imbalance created

by taking too much from the Earth, where humanity's demands often overshadow the long-term well-being of the planet.

Greed often clouds our judgment, making industries and individuals chase after more resources resulting in exploiting the Earth without thinking about the damage they cause. From cutting down forests to overfishing the oceans or drilling for oil, greed drives a mindset that says, "grab as much as you can now, without thinking about the consequences." Prioritizing immediate profit over the protection of the planet puts at risk the very resources we depend on. Greed may fulfill our desires today, but it's slowly destroying the world we'll need for the future.

Can Democracy Survive? A Philosophical Investigation into Tocqueville and Mill's Theories of Cultural Cohesion in View of Immigration from Authoritarian States

Axli Deritzia Alvarez, San Jacinto College – North | Advisor: Cody Pogue
This research investigates whether democracy is possible when mass immigration occurs, particularly if the immigrants come from countries with authoritarian regimes, sharp cultural norms, and divergent political experiences. A democratic regime is very often based on shared history and cultural cohesion, while immigration brings diversity in values and practices. Can democracy adapt to this complexity without compromising its principles? Through a comparative thematic analysis of Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill's works, this study examines the interplay between cultural integration and democratic resilience. Tocqueville emphasizes the importance of civic associations and a shared democratic ethos, warning that fragmented norms could weaken societal unity. Mill advocates for liberty and individuality, but he also does acknowledge that cohesion and mutual respect are essential in effective governance. Their philosophies taken together offer a lens to analyze how democracies may find a way to integrate different populations. This research constitutes an original contribution to knowledge in the development of a linkage between classical philosophical frameworks and modern debates on immigration with ethical and structural tensions found within democratic systems. Though many think that immigration burdens democratic institutions, this study discusses how it may also act as a catalyst for innovation, forcing democracies to reconsider what inclusiveness entails without sacrificing stability. Findings suggest that a democracy's ability to thrive depends on its capacity to reconcile cultural differences without sacrificing shared principles. By linking historical thought to contemporary challenges, this study provides actionable insights for policy makers grappling with global migration's impact on democratic values. Ultimately, it demonstrates that resilience and adaptability are essential for democracies facing the complexities of immigration.

10:40 – 11:40 a.m. | Session B3 ICB 206: The Self and Education

Education Beyond Profit and Competition

Jaylin Trujillo, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

Greed seems to be flowing through our education system and so are the concepts of power, status, and success. Everyday our

life is expanding throughout its horizon; our future has become part of technology and competition. Globally our traditional education is prioritizing profit over the main point and that is true learning, understanding. Colleges and universities once were places of finding oneself but now it seems education is not only for growth but rather it seems that exploitation of the self is part of education's business. Our tuition has skyrocketed and made debt grow enormously. But what if this was not the case? What if we removed the greed and the profit from the equation? This future system might look vastly different, perhaps embracing the support in learning developing humans' potential. It might put more focus on the ethics of community and include a vision for the better of society and regain its true value as a place and system that exists not for the power it comes with or the status but rather for the inner value. Greed, in this sense, could be replaced by a broader sense of social responsibility — where the true value of education is measured not by the wealth it creates, but by the quality of life it enhances.

Robot Children: Examining the Impact Internet Access Has on Adolescents' Socio-emotional Skill Development

Azia Miranda, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Independent Scholar

Living in the digital age makes it easy for us to forfeit our face-to-face communication by instead using technologies like the internet. Though it is convenient, we are now being forced to face the consequences that this standard of communication has had on children's socio-emotional skill development. In "Youth, Pornography, and the Internet," Dick Thornburgh and Herbert Lin claim "the internet is both a source of promise for our children and a source of concern" (Lin and Thornburgh 43). In this project, I will be examining the impact various levels of internet access have had on the development of socio-emotional skills for adolescents. The varying levels of internet access that I examine include social media, instant messaging, and access to explicit materials found on the internet. Although Subrahmanyam and Greenfield's research in Online Communication and Adolescent Relationships shows that adolescents use online communication to strengthen existing relationships, my research will explore the question; how profound can our connections with others be if there is always a screen in between us? (Greenfield and Subrahmanyam 128). If our youth abide by the standard of communication that the digital age has set a precedent, then what sort of socio-emotional skill development can we expect from them? If humanity continues to be stripped away from our communication, the detriment to young people's empathy, socialization, and interpersonal relationships will continue to increase.

Learn How to Achieve Successful Learning

Gloria Chavez, Houston Community College – Northline |
Advisor: Carolyn Cross

One important ability that is frequently disregarded during our academic careers is learning how to learn. Since effective learning practices are rarely taught directly in schools, this project seeks to raise awareness among students about their

significance. Many students are left to rely on trial and error to determine the optimal learning method for them, missing out on strategies that could make learning more efficient and meaningful. Given that learning is a continuous process rather than a one-time event, this gap is particularly significant, especially in an interconnected world. The study emphasizes that mastering successful learning approaches enables students to retain knowledge, manage their time effectively, and develop a deeper understanding of the content. Moreover, the project advocates for viewing education not as a limited activity confined to the years of schooling but as an ongoing journey that fosters lifelong growth, adaptation, and contribution. Just as humans are deeply connected to the natural world, learning is a process that allows us to stay connected to our surroundings—whether it’s our social, academic, or natural environments—and adapt to the continuous changes we face. Drawing on expert insights, including Chew’s (2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2011e) series on cognitive principles and Duckworth’s (2019) research on grit, the project explores how adopting a growth mindset and applying cognitive principles can enhance the learning process. By incorporating surveys, interviews, and the practical application of these concepts, the project demonstrates that students proficient in learning strategies achieve superior academic results and develop the resilience and drive needed for lifelong success. This work aims to inspire students to see learning as a dynamic, vital skill—one that equips them to thrive in a world that is constantly changing, encourages them to engage more thoughtfully with nature, and challenges them to keep learning, growing, and contributing to both society and the planet.

10:40 – 11:40 a.m. | Session B4 ICB 228: U.S. Impact on Climate Change

Dioxin and Deforestation: A Decade of Agent Orange and Its Effect on the Environment and Health of Vietnam

Hannah LaCost, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Courtney Pugh

Agent Orange, a mixture of dangerous herbicides, most notably of them being dioxin, was used by the U.S. military against Vietnam from 1962 to 1971 during the Vietnam War. The U.S. dumped millions of pounds of Agent Orange across Vietnam and parts of Cambodia and Laos, defoliating the dense forests and agriculture of the region to aid in the detection of the Vietcong and North Vietnamese soldiers, and cut off their food supply. Although it was banned in 1971 by the U.S., the use of this dangerous herbicide, and other “Rainbow Herbicides” weaponized in the Vietnam War, resulted in severe ecological and health ramifications for the nation. Research has found that much of the dioxin in Agent Orange has persisted in soil and water samples, resulting in lasting ecological and health ramifications far after the immediate effects seen in the near decade it was used over 50 years ago. The lasting damage done to Vietnam has severely impacted the way of life in the region, including but not limited to, damages to the agricultural industry, disruptions to the wildlife, and serious health disorders that have left many disabled, in addition to

being passed down genetically. Various studies have shown the wide-reaching effects on the ecosystem and health issues that have afflicted the area. This examination will compile the evidence from those sources to explain the numerous ways that Agent Orange has impacted Vietnam and highlight the need for funding and increased aid from conservation and health organizations to curb the effects of the herbicide.

Greed Builds Humanity

Gina Gomez, Houston Community College – Southeast |

Advisor: Toni Holland

We see in today’s world that humans are living together but separately with boundaries of history that civilizations built upon on. Civilizations are created with ideals of becoming a greater power and possibly a global power. But why do they want control and do these boundaries hold us back from wanting to live together. Does imperialism highlight the fear that humans have that they might be left behind if they do not have the greater hand. There is greed for power and control and how come this greed cannot be turned into the desire of a symbiotic world with others and with Earth. The only living communion we have within humanity is greed, which draws us more into our insatiability, which leads to neuroticism staining the possible bonds we can have. As much as there are many efforts to create a livelier world with bountiful connections within each other in the world, they are often over-looked and is everyone in humanity’s existence thought off when we plan a better world or is that limited to those of the powerful and hungry. Is their “better world” of something unimaginable that may require only those who are as greedy as them?

The Greed of Empire: U.S. Militarism and Environmental Devastation

Jillian LeMaire, Sam Houston State University | Advisor: Dalel Serda

The United States is a nation defined by its competitive structure and relentless pursuit of capital accumulation to maintain its position as a hegemon on the world stage. Our nation’s mastery of capitalist imperialism is rooted in the founding principle of boundless acquisition by whatever means necessary. Given the technological advancements of the Western World, such acquisition is often achieved through militant force. The United States is the world’s largest military spender and is second to China in global greenhouse gas emissions. According to scholar Neta Crawford, “the Pentagon’s total greenhouse gas emissions...were greater than the greenhouse gas emissions of entire industrialized countries...” (Crawford 2019). I will explore the link between the U.S. imperial agenda and environmental decline. While military investment is merely one of many contributing factors to climate change, the link between the two may highlight our government’s inclination for prioritizing profit over human life and the health of our planet.

Our current administration perpetuates this agenda. Once more, President Trump has signed an executive order declaring withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, arguing that the policy places an undue economic burden on the United States (Perez and Waldholz 2025). Concurrently, Trump signed into

effect the \$700 billion National Defense Authorization Act, according to the U.S. Department of Defense (Garamone 2025). These initiatives maintain the narrative that the costs of environmental investment outweigh the benefits while arguing the opposite is true of defense spending without consideration for the costs of climate change.

I propose military divestment and advocate for the reallocation of such funding to social programs, including environmental initiatives. We must find motivation to sustain human ingenuity beyond a profit margin. The ingenuity that has facilitated our nation's development should not cost us the planet that sustains such drive.

10:40 – 11:40 a.m. | Session B5 ICB 228: Animal Rights Justice

Exploitation of Animals

Lilibeth Gonzalez-Gomez and Melanie Dominguez, Houston Community College Central | Advisor: Nicolas Rangel

Humanity's ambition to reach the top of the food chain was once one for survival; we now maintain that position due to greed. Humanity has reached a point of abuse of nature through the exploitation of its vegetation, valuable minerals, and, most abundantly, its animals. Humans persecute the lives of other creatures even if they are not hungry. We kill for the sensation of superiority, and the ambition for such superiority under these conditions is unjust.

We will be covering the many ways we humans have exploited animals, taking a look at the many industries which profit off of their abuse and the effects this leaves on not only them, but our biosphere as a whole. It is important that we address this issue as many of its effects will be, and already have been, irreversible.

For this project, our primary research method for our study will be online research through credible sources. We will also do some in-person research as well, where we visit a center that concentrates on the education of wildlife conservation. We will then provide the information that we are educated from that said organization. We will explore the material with professions through questionnaires. Through this study, we aim to inform our audience on the ways they may unknowingly be contributing to animal exploitation. We're hoping that our audience will leave both educated and motivated to help bring change.

Dominion Over the Earth: A study on Colonial America's Fishing Industry

Makayah Kellum-Rivera, Lee College | Advisors: Portia Hopkins and Georgeann Ward

The colonization of the New World held many religious, economic, and environmental changes. The method of fishing used by the colonists was a means of survival but quickly turned into an economical and religious resource. The colonists used fishing to create ties in a community or with other colonies, as economic trade markets rocketed and new methods for fishing

quickly followed. Fathers used the metaphor of fishing to teach obedience and means of survival to their children, while merchants used fishing businesses to build the economy. The changes in our environment today can be tied all the way back to the first colonial fishing methods, just as religious sermons are tied to the metaphors of fishing used by our forefathers. Research today establishes scientific relations between the history of the fishing industry to the impacts faced by fishing today. The size and bag limits of fish can be traced back to overfishing in colonial times in an effort to establish capitalism. As the first mass-produced food source, many changes to the environment and economic impacts are related to the fishing industry. The fishing revolution has been grossly underestimated in its historic, ecological, and economic impacts upon the New World and recent studies have proven this to be true.

Don't Pay, Spay, and Save a Stray

Sandra Pena, Houston Community College – Northline | Advisor: Carolyn Cross

In this project, my partner and I addressed the pressing issue of stray animal overpopulation in Houston, focusing on dogs and cats. We developed a Google slideshow presentation, which we shared with various audiences, under the motto "Don't pay, spay and save a stray." Our presentation highlighted the harsh conditions faced by stray animals and examined the factors contributing to this persistent problem. We also proposed potential solutions to mitigate the issue. Photographs provided a visual representation of the challenging lives these animals endure when homeless. We included statistics on stray populations from 2011 to 2019 to underscore the scope of the problem. Our objective was to engage a broad audience and inspire action to support these animals, often considered beloved pets, by encouraging community involvement. To facilitate this, we included QR codes offering information on how individuals can contribute and provide assistance.

10:40 – 11:40 a.m. | Session B6 ICB 303: Analyzing Art to Better Understand Humans and Being

Challenges of Translating Epic of Gilgamesh

Mykola Garazhankin, Houston Community College – Central Honors | Advisor: Nicolas Rangel

My project analyzes how Epic of Gilgamesh was changing over time from its original form as Sumerian poems, ending up as a complete epic, analyzing the Old Babylonian and Standard Babylonian versions of the epic. It discusses the problems created by incomplete variants of epic on the tablets that are available to us. I will discuss the different interdisciplinary approaches to adapt to the problems posed by the age of the epic. My paper details a method of storing fragments, creating different translations and interpretations to adapt it to modern languages. All the findings emphasize the challenges of working with such a fragmented piece of work, the importance of correct translation, and the work provides us insight into the ancient world.

Mononoke & Philosophy: Morality Amid Interspecies Conflict

Victoria Martinez, University of Houston – Clear Lake |
Advisor: Stacey Burleson

This video essay dives into some of the philosophies that can be found in the Japanese animated film, *Princess Mononoke*. The film's themes of environmentalism and Shintoism illustrate the entangled relationship between humans and nature. First, I examine Prince Ashitaka's journey to highlight the nature of compatibilism and free will with regard to R. E. Hobart. Then, I analyze the prince's disposition through the lens of stoicism, defined by the key virtues of wisdom, temperance, courage, and justice, which can be understood by Marcus Aurelius' meditations. Additionally, I apply W. T. Stace's approach to morals to interpret Prince Ashitaka's ethically absolutist viewpoint. Furthermore, I consider the conflict between the forest animals and the people of Iron Town through the frameworks of consequentialism and deep ecology, critiquing anthropocentric views and speciesism as posited by Peter Singer. Finally, I examine deep ecology defined by Arne Naess, who advocates for the intrinsic value of all life forms. By analyzing *Princess Mononoke* with a philosophic lens, its underlying complexities can be better appreciated.

"The Quality O' Th' Climate:" Ecological Relationships in Shakespeare

Madison Howell, University of Houston | Independent Scholar

Have we ever really lived in communion with Earth? Modern climate change issues have been developing for centuries, and in 2025 we still struggle to fully acknowledge them. This project aims to analyze the relationship between power and the environment, taking a look into the Shakespearean world of the 16th century. Shakespeare was writing plays long before the industrial revolution accelerated the use of mass manufacturing and fossil fuels, yet there are a plethora of subtle references throughout his work that address the power imbalance between those who govern the natural environment and those that live within it. This project dives into the early manifestations of modern ecological problems through the lens of *The Tempest* and examines the way control is used to manipulate Shakespeare's natural environment in comparison to our own.

10:40 – 11:40 a.m. | Session B7 ICB 304: Corporate Greed and Consumerism

To Live with Greed or Earth?

Julio Pineda, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

For this project, I will highlight how greed and living with Earth are incongruous. Greed is complex; on one hand, it breeds innovation, and on the other, it actively harms the world. Furthermore, an individual's greed may be justified if it is for selfless reasons. Greed has become idolized in society, so much so that it has gone unchecked, and it is this idolization that is the catalyst for the damage that greed causes. It may seem like an exaggeration, but when corporations lobby against climate bills, it may not be so. Corporate greed harms everyone and everything, from the individual who is exploited for their labor to raise profit, to the planet from

which resources are stripped and waste is dumped into. Corporate greed does not care about the environment if it profits, this is exemplified when you look at how 122 corporations are responsible for 72% of global fossil fuel and cement CO2 emissions since 1751. Additionally, companies' constant lobbying and blocking of climate policy is a clear show of how corporations do not care how much they have harmed the environment, nor do they care about how much more damage they continue to do. They cannot be bothered to lower their carbon emissions if it means a hit to their profits.

Ugly Side of Humanity

Erick Gutierrez, Houston Community College – Eastside |
Advisor: Toni Holland

Greed is a word that can have thousands of meanings, but in its simplest form, it is the "intense and selfish desire for something." Nine times out of ten, when someone is speaking of greed, they speak of the desire for material gain or control, driven by fear or insecurity. Studies of humans have greatly shown that greed is heavily driven by our sense of dopamine which plays a role in humans wanting more, it is manifested when we feel pleasure from acquiring more. When we think of ways to subvert greed, we must ask ourselves, is greed an emotion that can be controllable? Or is it something that every human is born with and is impossible to control? Are we in control, or does it have control of us and our actions? Every action we take is subconsciously derived from our emotions, and although people may try to control their emotions, there are times when they are uncontrollable.

To me, living with Earth rather than on it combats the relationship we have with our planet. It is of the same concept as using a peer for personal benefit rather than mutual benefit. Rather than using the Earth as a one-way relationship, humanity can deepen our bond with Earth by taking care of it and as a result, Earth will take better care of us.

The Psychology Behind Consumerism: How Marketing Fuels Greed

Hamdah Binte Faisal, Houston Community College Central |
Advisor: Nicolas Rangel

This project explores the psychology of consumerism and how marketing strategies exploit human desires, fostering greed and a culture of constant consumption. It argues that consumerism is not simply a personal choice but a system that is deeply embedded in the structures of modern marketing. Using psychological principles like the scarcity effect, social proof, and hedonic adaptation, this work examines how marketing tactics manipulate emotions and perceptions, encouraging individuals to desire more, even when it is unnecessary. Through examples such as aspirational advertising, limited time offers, and the growth of subscription models, the project shows how consumer behavior is shaped by strategies designed to trigger impulse buys and maintain loyalty. The evidence provided highlights the connections between consumerism and environmental degradation, emphasizing the long-term effects of excessive consumption on both the individual and the planet. This discussion ties into the theme "Subverting Greed: Living Not on but in Communion with Earth" by challenging the view that greed, as driven by

consumerism, is sustainable or fulfilling. The project advocates a shift towards conscious, ethical consumption and offers solutions like minimalism and sustainability-focused choices that aim to counteract the greed perpetuated by modern marketing. It ultimately asks: Can we find happiness and fulfillment outside the cycle of endless consumption?

10:40 – 11:40 a.m. | Session B8 ICB 306: The Impact of Climate Shifts

Learning from Wildfires

Bryant Castro, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

In history, there have been a lot of things that have shown how we as humans have improved and grown. For example, wildfires have caused devastation, but they have also led to advancements and improvements in different fields. For example, it has improved our understanding of ecological dynamics while also highlighting the existence of fire-dependent ecosystems. Also, wildfires have created the development of more effective firefighting strategies, which have been the major achievements in this area. Wildfire has helped us a better improvement in architecture through the creation of fire-resistant building materials and designs, as well as improved evacuation plans that help us increase safety and order during emergencies. Community coming closer has increased, with people in danger often helping one another, because of the increased risk of wildfires.

Moreover, our understanding of the impact that wildfires can have on our human health, air quality, and climate change has improved due to the growth in environmental and climate studies prompted by these events. The consequences of wildfires have also influenced policy reforms, resulting in stricter land-use regulations and enhanced forest management practices. Despite their destructive nature, wildfires have led to significant discoveries and improvements in resilience and mitigation strategies. As we learn about how wildfire affects not just us but also our planet, we can come up with better and improved ways to make wildfire not be a risk to our life while also not affecting the fire-dependent ecosystems.

Impact of Hurricanes and Rise of Temperature Abstract

Madison Williams and Kayleigh Mims, Houston Community College | Advisor: Nicolas Rangel

Our presentation is on the relationship between hurricanes and temperatures with the research question of “What’s the relationship between coastal water temperatures and hurricanes?” We discussed the greenhouse effect and carbon sequestration and analyzed data on the intensity and frequency of hurricanes. Also, the parallel rise of temperatures in the water. We used examples such as Hurricane Milton and El Nino and how it connects back to our research question. We highlight the changes in climate patterns over time, and how it connects to a broader impact on communities. At the end of our presentation, we make a correlation back to climate change and its extremities on coastal regions. To solve the issue of more devastating climate effects, society can either mitigate or adapt

to it. Furthermore, mitigation is actively attempting to prevent the problem from occurring, whereas adaptation is changing lifestyles to the new circumstances and disasters. Other possible solutions are carbon tax, carbon storage growth (like planting trees) and climate adaptation (like floodwalls).

Natural Disasters: Earthquakes

Samantha Turrubiarres, Houston Community College – Southeast | Advisor: Toni Holland

Earthquakes are natural disasters that occur due to the sudden release of energy within the Earth’s crust, causing seismic waves. They occur at tectonic plate boundaries, where plates either separate (divergent boundaries), collide (convergent boundaries), or slide alongside each other (transform boundaries). Volcanic activity can also cause earthquakes by causing pressure fluctuations and rock fractures in areas with volcanoes. Human activities like mining, hydraulic fracturing (fracking), and reservoir-induced seismicity from big dams can also cause earthquakes by altering stress levels in the Earth’s crust.

There are three types of plate boundaries: convergent (where two plates collide, causing subduction or continental collision), divergent (when two plates separate, allowing magma to rise and create new crust), and transform (when two tectonic plates slide horizontally past one another, resulting in shear stress and frequent shallow earthquakes). Earthquakes predominantly occur along tectonic plate boundaries, especially in regions shown in the map.

Seismic waves are measured using the Richter scale, which measures the energy released during an earthquake. Primary waves compress rocks in the same direction as their travel, making them essential for early warning systems. Secondary waves shear rock by moving it side to side or up and down, perpendicular to their direction of travel. The 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake caused extensive destruction at convergent plate boundaries, triggering tsunamis and causing around 230,000 deaths and widespread damage in several countries. The 2017 Chiapas Earthquake resulted from the Cocos Plate’s subduction beneath the North American Plate.

Earthquake preparedness includes safety measures such as identifying safe spots in homes or workplaces, securing heavy furniture, having an emergency kit, ensuring structures are built to withstand seismic forces, and practicing emergency response plans, such as evacuation routes and communication tactics.

10:40 – 11:40 a.m. | Session B9 ICB 318: Rethinking Earth’s Depletion

Co-Existing with Nature: How Nature Becomes a Way of Life

Emily Garcia, Ruby Flores, and Landon Lockett, College of the Mainland | Independent Scholars

Cities are growing in numbers; green areas are declining rapidly as we continue to take without acknowledging the destruction of Earth. The trend where nature is cleared out to create space must be changed; Singapore has taken the steps to create an

environment where greenery and humans live among each other, and Cobber Pedy, a town in South Australia takes a similar approach. These places have proven that we can do more than to only take from the Earth.

Singapore, despite being densely populated, is one of the cleanest and greenest countries. The capital city of Singapore's The Garden by the Bay are structures surrounded by trees and plants that are integrated into the architecture, making it a beautiful work of art. Nature is part of their lives, unlike most cities where they only have parks dedicated to nature in small, contained areas.

Cobber Pedy, a small town in South Australia, takes a different approach to the idea. Unlike the city of Singapore and much of the tropical country itself, the region of South Australia is not green but rather mostly rock. Cobber Pedy has a history of mining for opal, which means it has many mines that may have been abandoned. Instead of leaving mines abandoned; the townspeople found a way to use their history to become quite a famous tourist attraction. It is famous for its underground living accommodations originally based in the mines. It has many buildings like hotels and churches underground which attract visitors to their small town while also honoring their heritage. Our society must learn to escape the usual pattern of destruction to make space for ourselves.

When Greed Corrupts Nature's Blessings

Katherine Chores-Carmona and Nadia Gotcher, Alvin Community College | Advisor: Amy Acord

Earth provides materials for human life. However, organic substances may also cause human mortality. People have used Earth's chemicals for nefarious purposes in many different ways. Our research focuses on the selfish use of chemicals by humans for personal gain, especially in the areas of food production and pharmaceuticals. We will explore the use of science, investigative techniques, and government regulations that protect lives from greed and corruption.

This presentation will highlight historical and contemporary human greed in food production and medicinal usage, including but not limited to, food safety, and intentional and unintentional poisonings using pharmaceutical substances. Additionally, solutions to these problems will be discussed. These include the creation of more effective government policies based on scientific testing such as the Pure Food and Drug Law of 1906, the establishment of the Food and Drug Administration, and advancements in forensic science technology. Earth's bounty can be used positively by instituting ethical practices in food production and pharmaceutical usage thus saving and prolonging lives.

Salvaging Our Planet: A Study of Water

Leonidas Contreras, Odyssey Academy | Independent Scholar

The ocean is the greatest ecological resource on our planet. Its primary roles are to absorb heat and serve as a reservoir for our water. Unfortunately, it is quickly being polluted and changed by humanity. To combat this, I chose to research the effect of corporate greed on our oceans and water. I will study this by

taking a look at human-based factors affecting rising water levels and oceanic pollution worldwide in the past ten years. This subject is important to investigate because the public needs more specificity in what and who needs to change to protect our environment, instead of hiding behind the old "It's some company's fault" excuse. The goal of my study is to answer these main questions: Are human-based factors to blame for the current upward trend in emission levels? What is the effect of these human emissions? And what are the projections if left unchecked? Key points I will discuss are pollution with a focus on greenhouse gas emissions and their impact on the planet's water. These points have been previously researched by government agencies such as NASA and DERPA, and I conducted a scientific literature review of their works, where I discovered that humans contribute to 71% of emissions. These phenomena have caused oceans levels to rise at a rate of roughly 3.9 inches per decade. The impact of this work is to show the effects of a stoppable phenomenon, which if ignored will cause crucial and irreversible damage to the land and lives of humanity.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Session C1 ICB 203: Ethically Humanizing Environmental Sciences

Ecofeminism: Greed, Patriarchy, and Environmental Destruction

Isabella Boettcher, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

Ecofeminism draws practice and theory from root understandings of gender equality, acceptance of nonlinear and non-patriarchal forms, and a worldview with respect for processes in nature, interconnectedness, intuition, and collaboration (Lahar, 29). Environmental destruction accompanies and comes with greed and/or patriarchy-based regimes, such that both women and nature could both be seen and exploited as a source of goods and resources. Capitalism, in its shareholder maximization at expense of viability, promotes deforestation, toxification, and warming of the planet (Park, 1). Patriarchal forms, in contrast, undervalue and exclude women's work and ecological expertise, excluding them from decision making about environmental concerns. Colonialism consolidated these trends through disempowerment and displacement of Indigenous peoples and imposition of extractive economies. Thus, degradation of environment and climate change disproportionately fall hardest on women, most particularly in marginalized communities. In this presentation, I will use an ecofeminist lens to analyze intersectionality between gender oppression and environmental harm, with examples taken both in present and past.

Women's ecologic movements will be analyzed in the discussion, such as Wangari Maathai's Green Belt and Chipko, and consideration of alternative forms for approaches to sustainability through regeneration, collaboration, and Indigenous methodology (Michaelson, 545; Shiva and Bandyopadhyay, 133). By challenging structures connecting ecoharm and inequality, then, ecocentrism holds out a path towards a future both ecologic and more equitable. Attendants will develop an awareness of systemic greed and patriarchy driving ecological harm and begin to explore concrete avenues

towards ecocentric, community-led transformation. This presentation reimagines a future where both people and the planet thrive, actively challenging and transforming dominant narratives about the casualty of environmental harm and its causes.

Sacred Land: Wisdom and Perspective Through the Eyes of the Indigenous

Savannah White, Santa Fe High School | Independent Scholar

In Western society today, which is ever increasingly driven by consumerism and the exploitation of the Earth's natural resources, the worsening relationship between the average American and the land is consistently overlooked and even outright ignored. Western society has grown to view the land as a commodity, feeling as though they have a right to it. Yet, for the Indigenous people, it is not merely a possession, but a living entity in which the roots of their culture grow upon. It is deeply ingrained in their practices, heritage, and spirituality, even down to their preparation of food. It is not a greedy and self-serving relationship like the practices of Western culture today. Rather, it is a mutually prosperous paradigm that flourishes through respect and reciprocity. This harmonious relationship, however, is underappreciated by modern societies which hold no respect for anything that does not benefit them, caring only for their own profiteering. Fortunately, it is not too late and by examining the Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), and the importance of communal stewardship, we can rediscover the invaluable wisdom of the Indigenous people that can guide us towards a more sustainable future.

Unearthing the Past, Shaping Our Future: How Geoarchaeological Findings in Central and South America Can Help Us Rethink Human-Environmental Relationships

Nova Dowdell, University of Texas at Austin | Independent Scholar

For as long as humans have existed, we have shaped and been shaped by the environments we inhabit. Yet, Western conservation movements have long framed nature as something separate from humanity—pristine only when untouched by human influence. This is a colonial mindset that erases thousands of years of symbiotic human-environment interactions and ignores the geological and archaeological evidence proving that we are not apart from nature but an integral part of it.

Geoarchaeology, a field that bridges geology and archaeology, provides powerful tools to uncover these interactions. Through methodology like stratigraphy and micromorphology, we can analyze ancient soils and sediments to study climate patterns, environmental histories, and past human activities. In Central and South America, geo-archaeological research has revealed that rainforest and wetland landscapes once thought to be “untouched” have been shaped by civilizations for millennia. Mayan ruins hidden beneath dense biodiverse rainforests, geometric wetland patterns revealing complex canal systems, and pollen records proving early maize cultivation in Belize all demonstrate the lasting human imprint on ecosystems. Amazonian terra preta, human-made fertile soils found in the Brazilian rainforest ecosystems, challenges the notion that

Indigenous peoples throughout South America lived only passively within the rainforest.

These findings force us to reconsider our role in the environment. Human responses to climate fluctuations are nothing new, but our current climate crisis is. Global warming driven by industrial expansion, over-extraction, and greenhouse gas emissions demands urgent action and we are running out of time to change our approach. By examining past human-environment interactions, we can reshape the way we think about conservation and sustainability. If we continue to view nature as something separate from ourselves, then we are influenced by the same colonial and industrial mindset that led to our current climate crisis. Instead, we must acknowledge that saving the environment means saving ourselves. Geoarchaeology offers both a window into environmental history and the framework for a sustainable future.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Session C2 ICB 204: The Ethics and Culture of Reciprocity

Roots: Living in Harmony with Nature Based on Indigenous Traditions and Knowledge

Alicia Carrizales, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

This project explores pathways to shift away from a culture of greed and overconsumption, advocating for a future rooted in balance, sharing, and respect for the Earth. Success in such societies is oftentimes defined only in terms of material wealth, while this concept feeds into environmental degradation and social injustice. This project explores the importance of living in harmony with nature based on indigenous traditions and knowledge. It was an abiding lesson in time-resistant sustainable systems: taking only what was needed and giving back to the land, from indigenous systems. It questions the mainstream story of incessant growth and consumption and provides help in creating an equitable and regenerative future. Key questions: Is human creativity and innovation compatible with respect for the natural world? How might progress be reimagined so that it is good for people and good for the planet? What systemic change is required to nurture equity over-exploitation and caring for overconsumption? This project is to advocate for stopping greed, collective values, and priorities that need to be reimagined. Ultimately, this calls for a transformative shift in adopting symbiotic and reciprocal relationships with the Earth and one another.

Living in Communion with Earth

Jazzmine Gutierrez, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

The concept of “good living,” “living well,” or “living to our potential” is often intimately linked to material wealth. From an early age, we are accustomed to comparing success with materialistic objects: bigger homes, more possessions, higher status, and greater consumption. Material goods represented the climax of human achievement and the goal of our existence. This mindset fosters a culture of greed, leading to overconsumption, environmental degradation, and social inequality. However,

this year's theme, "Subverting Greed: living Not on But in Communion with Earth," encourages us to rethink our understanding of success and to foster a deeper, more sustainable relationship with the Earth.

Greed is a characteristic part of human nature that becomes harmful when it drives us to exploit resources without regards to long-term consequences. To overthrow greed, we must learn to live in relationship and mutuality with the Earth. Relationships with nature are when different organisms live together in a mutually beneficial relationship, and we must apply this concept to our own lives. Instead of seeing the earth as something to exploit, we must recognize that our well-being is tied to the health of the planet.

Human inventiveness, when directed towards sustainability, has the potential to solve the environmental problems we face. Innovations in renewable energy, sustainable farming, and circular economies offer solutions that can benefit both human and nature. However, these solutions require a shift on perspective—from respecting material accumulation to prioritizing environmental health and social justice. To overthrow greed, we must expand our knowledge of success and well-being. True "living well" is not measured by possessions, but by how we nurture and sustain the Earth. By living in communion with the Earth, we can create a future that benefits all life.

Breaking the Chains of Greed for a Sustainable Future

Saifullah Saqib, Houston Community College Eastside |
Advisor: Toni Holland

In today's world, success is often measured by wealth and possessions, encouraging greed and overconsumption. This mindset pushes people and businesses to take from the Earth rather than live in balance with it. But can success be redefined? This paper argues that true success is not about material wealth but about living responsibly through cooperation, sustainability, and mindful resource use. Greed has fueled innovation and economic growth, but it has also led to major environmental and social issues. A clear example is the modern fashion industry, where rapid production of cheap clothing results in excessive waste, pollution, and resource depletion. Many items end up in landfills or pollute waterways, showing how overconsumption harms the planet.

In response, many companies now use recycled materials and promote eco-friendly initiatives. Some brands create products from plastic waste or offer recycling programs. However, greenwashing remains a concern, as many businesses market sustainability while still engaging in harmful production practices.

A better approach is living in balance with nature, where people take only what they need and ensure resources last for future generations. Indigenous communities have long practiced sustainability, and similar principles are seen in circular economies, where products are reused, repaired, or recycled instead of discarded. These ideas challenge the belief that success is about accumulation and instead promote progress that benefits both people and the planet.

This discussion encourages a shift in mindset—moving from

competition for resources to responsible consumption and shared growth. By focusing on sustainability and cooperation, we can build a future where success is measured not by what we take, but by what we give back.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Session C3 ICB 206: Futuring STEM

STEM Education: Yes, It Can Be Done at Low Cost

Jayda Ramirez, College of the Mainland | Advisor: James Mubiru

Jobs in the workplace now and in the future require training in STEM, however many students graduating from the high schools lack STEM skills. School districts have invested a lot of money in STEM education, but the results are questionable. It is important that a better way is found that educates students, but it is also affordable for everyone. The Sickle Cell Club at The College of the Mainland has pioneered a low-cost method of educating K-12 students in STEM. The club has started outreach programs in the local school districts. The club uses a station-based model to educate students in STEM. Some examples of these models include nutrition, hydration, pH, respiratory mechanisms demo. The club uses sickle cell disease as a hook because Sickle cell disease is felt especially among minority populations. The materials we use are at a low cost and are easily accessible. We found that this model works well in after school programs but can be used in any school environment. The program can be scaled up for a larger audience to fit their educational needs of them. Overall, implementing these STEM programs that are at a low cost to schools is a good idea since it will give the kids the necessary knowledge, they need for their future job while also giving all the kids in the school the same opportunity to learn STEM since it has become a critical part of the workforce today.

Innovating Care Delivery: Advancing Nursing Practice in Healthcare

Gabriela Velasco Zuñiga, Houston Community College |
Advisor: Toni Holland

In an era of rapid healthcare growth, the role of nurses continues to evolve to meet the delicate needs of diverse patients. This presentation explores innovative approaches to nursing practice, emphasizing evidence-based care, and the integration of technology to enhance patient outcomes. Topics include the implementation of advanced nurses, strategies for fostering leadership at all levels, and the use of digital health tools to improve care delivery. By advancing nurses practices, nurses can work more efficiently, communicate better with patients, and ensure faster recovery. Based on recent research and case studies, solutions have been raised for challenges such as workforce shortages, health equity, and care for patients. Some solutions are increasing training programs, expanding access to healthcare, and enhancing patient education. By training programs, we can expand health education programs to produce more qualified professionals. Increasing access to affordable healthcare services, especially in undeserved areas, through community health centers. People can gain insights into how nursing professionals can drive change, advocate for

policy improvements, and shape the future of healthcare. This presentation aims to inspire and equip nurses to lead with confidence, ensuring high quality care in a rapidly changing environment. The goal is to make healthcare more accessible and effective while also supporting nurses in their roles.

Computer Science and the Future

Ian Garcia, Houston Community College – Southeast | Advisor: Toni Holland

Computer science is a constantly evolving field that challenges us to develop skills in programming, algorithm design, data structures, and cybersecurity while also fostering problem-solving and critical thinking abilities. At Houston Community College (HCC), we take courses designed to build a strong foundation in computational theory and practical application, ensuring that we are well-equipped for careers in technology. Our coursework typically includes programming languages like Python, Java, or C++, as well as discrete mathematics, computer organization, and data structures. These subjects help us understand how software and hardware interact while also preparing us for more advanced topics such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and cybersecurity. Beyond the required coursework, we have opportunities to engage with specialized electives that align with our interests, including web development, cloud computing, and database management.

With technology shaping nearly every industry, from healthcare and finance to gaming and government, the demand for skilled computer scientists continues to grow. Companies and organizations are constantly seeking professionals who can develop innovative solutions, optimize existing systems, and enhance cybersecurity measures. As technology advances, so do the challenges and opportunities in the field, making lifelong learning an essential part of a successful career in computer science. Whether through structured coursework, self-directed learning, or hands-on experience, we are preparing for a future where our technical expertise will drive innovation, solve realworld problems, and contribute to the ever-changing digital landscape.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Session C4 ICB 227: Human Complexity in Art

"That Ain't You, Chiron": Unsustainable Male Gender Ideals in Barry Jenkin's *Moonlight*

Ruben Capetillo, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

Barry Jenkin's *Moonlight* depicts the journey of a gay Black man named Chiron as he struggles to conform to traditional ideals of masculinity throughout various stages of his life. The film explores how men navigate the gender roles placed on them, either by adopting dominant behaviors, or facing the consequences of violating the confines of dominant masculine ideals. When this narrative is paired with the ideas within the American Psychological Association's *APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men*, Chiron's story depicts how queer men are ostracized for their non-conformity, and how choosing to conform to dominant male ideals is ultimately unsustainable for men, resulting in them not living to their

potential. In my presentation, I will view *Moonlight* through the "lens" of the *APA Guidelines*, using its contents to strengthen my claim. This analysis will be conducted by examining how the film depicts Chiron's struggle, such as its dialogue, cinematography, and use of sound, in tandem with how the APA outlines these struggles, such as gender strain, dominant masculinity, and gender policing.

Greed and the Demise of Our Planet

Ashley Tompkins, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Gwendolynn Barbee-Yow

Barry Jenkin's *Moonlight* depicts the journey of a gay Black man named Chiron as he struggles to conform to traditional ideals of masculinity throughout various stages of his life. The film explores how men navigate the gender roles placed on them, either by adopting dominant behaviors, or facing the consequences of violating the confines of dominant masculine ideals. When this narrative is paired with the ideas within the American Psychological Association's *APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men*, Chiron's story depicts how queer men are ostracized for their non-conformity, and how choosing to conform to dominant male ideals is ultimately unsustainable for men, resulting in them not living to their potential. In my presentation, I will view *Moonlight* through the "lens" of the *APA Guidelines*, using its contents to strengthen my claim. This analysis will be conducted by examining how the film depicts Chiron's struggle, such as its dialogue, cinematography, and use of sound, in tandem with how the APA outlines these struggles, such as gender strain, dominant masculinity, and gender policing.

Everything is connected: overpopulation leads to the overuse of our natural resources that are exhaustible or slow to replenish. Nature has a way of showing us that there are repercussions. The repercussions are in global warming, which results in more extreme weather or natural disasters. One major natural disaster was the Indian ocean earthquake and tsunami as well as hurricanes increasing in intensity and frequency. It seems that people don't always realize that what people have done in the past and what people continue to do affects the world we live in and will continue to adversely affect our world in the harshest way possible, unless we take more drastic steps to ensure our future. We can only take so much from our environment before we as humans start to suffer and will need to make changes to help future generations.

Breaking the Hegemonic Mythical Norm: Intersectionality and Identity in Aurora Guerrero's *Mosquita y Mari*

Shakuntala Bhowmick, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

In this presentation, I will explore Aurora Guerrero's *Mosquita y Mari* (2012) through the critical lens of Audre Lorde's "Age, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" alongside frameworks of intersectionality as articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw and Nira Yuval-Davis. The film chronicles the evolving friendship between Yolanda—a middle-class, academically driven Latina—and Mari, a rebellious teenager burdened by economic hardship. By examining key scenes and narrative structures, an in-depth analysis reveals how the characters navigate the complexities of identity formation

within a working-class Latino community while also confronting systemic oppression related to race, class, and gender. Lorde's exploration of the "mythical norm" highlights how both girls exist outside mainstream societal ideals and how their shared marginalization fosters both tension and solidarity. Furthermore, this paper demonstrates that their interpersonal dynamics, marked by both economic disparities and cultural expectations, serve as an example for broader struggles against structural inequities. By challenging the authoritative notion known as the "mythical norm"—a construct that often justifies greed and economic oppression—the film encourages a reimagining of entrenched societal structures and envisions alternative solutions to enduring injustices. Ultimately, *Mosquita y Mari* presents a nuanced coming-of-age narrative that redefines notions of friendship and self-discovery, offering various critical insights into the lived realities of women of color as they resist and reshape dominant cultural structures.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Session C5 ICB 228: Living Well

The Function of Diet in Healthy Living

Temiloluwa Lewis, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

It is in the general nature of humans to be stereotypical and this makes us the same thing over even when it becomes less effective or even destructive. To live in communion with the earth would mean we consider our actions and their effect on the subsistence of the earth. We have good examples in the climate change and ecosystem. I would be looking into diets of humans and how it would affect the 'Earth'. This means humans should be profitable to the sustenance of the earth as much as the earth is to humans.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, diet is food and drink regularly provided or consumed; or habitual nourishment; or the kind and amount of food prescribed for a person or animal for a special reason; or a regimen of eating and drinking sparingly so as to reduce one's weight; or something provided or experienced repeatedly. The different types and methods of diet like Atkins, Carnivore Diet, DASH, The Dietary Guidelines, Ketogenic Diet, Low-carbohydrate Diet, Low-fat Diet, Mayo Clinic Diet, Mediterranean Diet, Nordic Diet, Paleo Diet, Pescetarian Diet, Vegan (Plant-Based), Vegetarian, Whole 30, WW (Weight Watchers). Irrespective of the diet chosen, the earth provides humans the raw materials to make their meals. Now we can strike a balance by also providing the earth with what would benefit it. We must not depend on some particular plants or animals than others. We must also see to it that we are able to help these sources of feeding timely replace themselves.

Self-Expression and Connecting to Family Heritage Through Cooking

Karolina Quezada, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Professor Mubiru

Cooking is a way to express myself freely with traditional Mexican dishes that my family has taught me to make throughout the years. As a second generation Mexican American, I have always lived in the United States and in cooking with family members, it serves the purpose of connecting with family

and with my culture. Although I am still learning how to make some dishes, I always love to learn how to make it correctly to be able to connect with the people who came before me. One of the main people who guided me when learning was my grandma.

In learning to cook with my grandma, it served as a win-win situation which was to get her off her feet and back to resting and me learning to make the dishes myself. It was truly an amazing experience to be side by side with my grandma watching and learning how to carry on her style of cooking and to be told later on that my cooking tastes so similar to how she would cook. Now that she has passed, it is truly a gift to be able to taste her cooking through mine. Although I have no control whatsoever of when she passed, cooking allows me to have that control and remember her through it.

Clean Your Room: Minimalism and a Memoir of Hoarding

Layla Leeah, Lee College | Advisor: Brianne Dayley

From the ages of ten to seventeen, I grew up in an abandoned barn turned makeshift house out in the rural areas of Texas. My personal experiences with poverty and the capitalistic ideals of the world have led me to a point where I struggle with hoarding, defined by the American Psychological Association (APA) in *Treating People with Hoarding Disorder* as "difficulty discarding objects, disorganization/clutter, and, in some cases, compulsive acquisition of new items". As a result, my bedroom, household, and entire wellbeing continue to suffer. However, what solutions exist for this issue that are accessible and radical enough to both help an individual like me rewire my brain and help society flip the destructive consumerism that led to it? One remedy to society's constant distractions and material gluttony is leading a minimalist lifestyle, which Leo Babauta, a key philosopher of the idea, defines as living simply, mindfully, and with less possessions. Using the APA guidelines and theories of Babauta, I will be analyzing my own encounters with consumerism, poverty, and hoarding to explore how any acceptance of minimalism as a philosophy has practical application for the betterment of human lives.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Session C6 ICB 303: Changing Perspectives

Finding Peace

Maximillian Ybarra, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Lisa Frase

There is evidence of people feeling at peace even in the worst perceived conditions. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor E. Frankl says, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." Viktor E. Frankl, a holocaust survivor spent the remainder of his life helping people find meaning after loss and suffering. This presentation reflects a personal journey, and the desire for all human beings to acknowledge the inherent option to feel good. The goal is to attain a state of peace regardless of the situation. Humans are prone to compare themselves to others believing that something must be achieved or fixed to feel good now, thus aggrandizing or belittling one's own being.

Evolution occurs with an increasing sense of awareness. This begins with noticing the minds proclivity to judge negatively. No situation has inherent meaning; therefore, the choice is always ours to subscribe to or against positivity. In recent years, it has served my peace well to analyze if simply not liking something or having expectations of another benefit me. For instance, grieving requires my negative attention, with more focus on grateful thoughts, I am liberated. Experience has revealed, attention towards identification with lack as if we are “missing out,” as the original sin. Fundamentally, let us expose whether the narratives we chose to allow within ourselves serve us for the long run. There are some people who do not have the privilege of seeing an external ladder to climb. Nonetheless, the ladder is within us. Let us master the art of being, and not external achievement, for it is the pre-requisite to joy.

Finding Value in Balance, Not Excess

Ashley Ruiz, Houston Community College | Advisor: Toni Holland

Success is often measured by how much we own—more money, bigger houses, newer technology. Society equates having more with living well, but this mindset fuels overconsumption, environmental harm, and inequality. What if true wealth isn't about accumulation but about balance, sustainability, and connection? Many cultures challenge the idea that greed is natural, instead valuing reciprocity and shared well-being. Shifting our perspective on wealth could lead to a more just and fulfilling way of life.

Throughout history, societies have defined prosperity beyond material wealth. Many Indigenous traditions see abundance as the ability to give rather than hoard. In these cultures, success is measured by generosity, community well-being, and a deep relationship with nature. Similarly, ecological perspectives suggest sustainability—not endless growth—ensures long-term prosperity. Psychological studies show that once basic needs are met, more money and possessions don't bring greater happiness. Instead, fulfillment comes from relationships, purpose, and time spent in nature.

Yet, modern consumer culture pushes the idea that more is always better, often at the expense of well-being and the planet. The constant pursuit of more fuels cycles of exploitation—of resources, labor, and even ourselves. This raises important questions: Is greed inherent, or is it learned? Can we unlearn it? What if success were measured not by consumption but by sustainability and shared prosperity? By redefining wealth in terms of balance rather than excess, we can imagine a future where humans live in communion with the Earth, not just extract from it. True abundance may come not from endless accumulation, but from knowing when we have enough and ensuring others do too. Choosing contentment over greed doesn't mean giving up ambition—it means directing it toward a future built on sustainability and shared well-being.

The Unsatisfying Cycle of Greed

Dezeray Calvillo, Houston Community College – Eastside | Advisor: Toni Holland

Greed is the selfish desire to gain influence over money,

relationships, lifestyles, and status. It stems from an insatiable need for more, often at the cost of contentment and inner peace. The inability to be satisfied with where you are in life can be detrimental to both psychological well-being and soul fulfillment. Those who live in the present moment develop resilience—the strength to shake off burdens without being consumed by past regrets or future anxieties. They actively prepare for success rather than dwelling on failures. However, breaking free from greed requires deep self-reflection and a shift in perspective.

Three primary perspectives shape our relationship with greed: the doomed pessimistic view, which sees life as a series of inevitable disappointments; the pragmatic view, which treats greed as a necessary part of business and survival; and the optimistic perspective, known as Active Hope, which embraces growth and generosity as paths to fulfillment. The perspective we adopt influences whether greed controls us or transforms us.

Greed often creeps in, trapping us in debt—not just financial but also the loss of relationships, missed opportunities, and compromised self-control. While greed varies in strength among individuals, most of us experience it. For me, it manifested in a relentless pursuit of immediate gratification—chasing desires without considering consequences. It was a phase of self-indulgence, born from pain after being mistreated by loved ones. When pain intertwines with insecurity caused by others' selfishness, it distorts our thinking. Overcoming greed is not just about resisting material temptations; it's about healing from past wounds and reshaping our mindset to find true fulfillment beyond selfish desires.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Session C7 ICB 304: Faith in Math and Science

Harmonic Sustainability: The Mathematics of Energy-Efficient Computing

Elaine Nguyen, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Jason Duvall

Artificial intelligence is an incredible technology. However, it requires massive amounts of electricity, which causes pollution and environmental damage. Instead of focusing on improving their efficiency, major tech companies like Microsoft, Nvidia, and Google often rely on brute-force computing. They scale up their power consumption to make better products, rather than finding smarter, more efficient solutions. This not only harms the environment but also helps these companies maintain near-monopolies. It shuts out competition and reinforces a cycle of corporate greed and a disregard for our planet.

Recently, a Chinese company created DeepSeek, an AI model that performs at the same level as ChatGPT. Due to U.S. sanctions restricting China's access to the most advanced computer chips, DeepSeek's developers had to find innovative ways to get the most out of the hardware that they had. Instead of relying on raw computing power, they used better algorithms and mathematical techniques to achieve the same results using less energy.

One method that DeepSeek uses to reduce power consumption

is a mathematical concept known as Fourier Series. By breaking down complex data into simpler “harmonic” components, the mathematics of Fourier Series makes it possible to compress files and remove unwanted noise from signals. This leads to more efficient data storage, transmission, and processing. Ultimately, it reduces energy consumption and waste.

My presentation will explore the power of Fourier Series in reducing the computational needs of AI and computing in general. While my talk will be math-heavy, no advanced math knowledge is required to grasp the main ideas.

The Disinfectant “Fabuloso” is a Scam

Jennifer Warfield, College of the Mainland | Advisor: James Mubiru

After the onset of Covid, many people became very much concerned with environmental and personal hygiene. Many companies began developing and pushing products on the consumer claiming that their product was antibacterial- essentially playing on consumer’s fears. One of the products being touted as “antibacterial” is Fabuloso. Numerous households use Fabuloso, believing in its bacteria killing capabilities. Unfortunately, during our experiment, we determined that Fabuloso is not nearly as capable of eliminating bacteria as Colgate-Palmolive would like us to believe.

We carried out an experiment to find out if Fabuloso can kill common bacteria found on our bodies, and in the environment. The bacteria used in our experiment were *E. coli*, *B. cereus*, and *S. epidermidis*. *E. coli* is normally found both in and on our bodies. However, some strains of *E. coli* can cause illness and disease. *B. cereus* is an environmental bacterium normally found in the soil and has been linked to food poisoning. These bacteria forms endospores, so it is a difficult bacterium to kill. *S. epidermidis* is normally found on the skin and has also been linked to food poisoning.

Fabuloso was diluted according to the manufacturer’s instructions (1/2 cup to one gallon of water). We exposed each bacterium above to this disinfectant for thirty seconds, three minutes, and thirty minutes. Our results indicate that Fabuloso cannot kill *E. coli* or *B. cereus*, even after thirty minutes of exposure. However, Fabuloso was able to kill *S. epidermidis* after thirty minutes of exposure. Fabuloso is not sufficiently disinfected. I would not recommend purchasing this product. The experiment was done “triplicate,” meaning that we used three different plates for each bacterium, and the results were conclusive.

Transport of Perfluorooctanoic Acid in Covalent Organic Frameworks

Dione Ebong M., Rice University Climate and Sustainability REU Summer Program and Houston Community College | PI: Tafadzwa Mutepaire; Mentor: Thomas P Senftle | Advisor: Robin Reagler

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are synthetic organofluorine chemical compounds. They are characterized by hydrophobic fluorinated alkyl chains and hydrophilic functional head groups which gives them unique properties which have been exploited for various uses such as food packaging, paints and furniture. PFAS have strong carbon-fluorine bonds which

makes them resistant to thermal and chemical degradation. This leads to their bioaccumulation and persistence in the environment. Human exposure to PFAS happens due to contaminated water and use of ubiquitous materials containing PFAS and it has been associated with negative health effects such as cancer and reduced immune response. This has necessitated the development of treatment methods to degrade PFAS. Some of the methods used for PFAS degradation include plasma, thermal degradation, photocatalysis and electrochemical oxidation. Photocatalysis can be carried out at ambient conditions which makes it a cost effective way of degrading PFAS. Traditional photocatalysts are limited by adsorption efficiency. Covalent Organic Frameworks (COFs) are crystalline organic polymers that are highly ordered with permanent porosity. They have the capability to not only effectively adsorb PFAS but they can also be tuned to photocatalytically degrade PFAS. This study focuses on understanding the dynamic movement of PFAS through COF pore volumes, in particular, investigating how the PFAS molecule adsorbs on the COF. ReaxFF molecular dynamics simulations are used to allow for larger systems and longer time scales compared to DFT. For COFs that the PFA molecule adsorbs via the head perpendicularly (chemisorption) while COFs where the molecule adsorbs through the tail lay flat (physisorption). This means that COFs that chemisorbs have a higher adsorption rate of PFAS. This can assist to screen for COF that are efficient photocatalysts.

Acknowledgement - This work was supported by an NSF award under the NSF Climate and Sustainability REU with the National Science Foundation Grant EEC-2243923.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Session C8 ICB 306: Sacrifices We Make For and With Family

Empowering Families Through Breast Cancer: Understanding the Dynamic Impact on Fathers, Mothers and Adolescents

Alyssa S. Garcia, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

While medical research on patients has traditionally focused on the experiences of individuals with chronic medical illnesses, not much research supports the importance of exploring the impact on other household members. Knowing these key factors may help foster a more comprehensive understanding and create a strong support system. According to research by Parker, Tong, and Bolden, “Given that an estimated 316,950 people will be diagnosed with breast cancer in 2023 and an estimated 15 to 30% of them will have one or more children still living in the home, this represents a substantial number of potentially affected children” (Parker, Tong, Bolden 2022). This research presentation aims to uncover the transformative impact of maternal breast cancer on a family’s well-being from the dual perspectives of the mother and family members guided by the empowering principles of stress and coping. My research suggests that parental education, social support, adolescent gender, and experience with the mother’s illness collectively create a resilient environment where families can navigate breast cancer. Education and social support empower families to interpret and address the illness, while their experience over time enables them to better manage increasing

demands and symptoms. Despite the challenges families can foster a supportive environment by enhancing their coping strategies, which in turn strengthens parenting quality in marital relationships. This positive dynamic promotes attentive parenting, boosts adolescent self-esteem, and enables families to thrive even amidst what is an otherwise traumatic context. By adopting proactive coping mechanisms families can mitigate the negative impacts of the illness, cultivate a more positive family environment, and unlock their full potential for growth and resilience.

Sacrifices of the Self: Histories of First-Generation Arab Immigrant Mothers

Marwa Hamdan, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

What if you had to leave your home, family, and culture behind to create a better life for your children? This is the reality of many Arab immigrant women who immigrate to the United States with hope and ambition but end up having to face the challenges of being a mother and a foreigner, while also trying to keep their own identity. This study opens the window to the lives of first-generation Arab immigrant mothers and explores how they sacrifice themselves for their children. However, while they sacrifice their own careers and aspirations, they successfully preserve their cultural heritage. Sacrifice came up differently for the two mothers in my case study; Despite not being Lebanese by origin, Dania sacrificed her Arabic heritage that she had once hoped would shape her children's environment and instead made a life for herself in America. Furthermore, Sara a Lebanese woman, sacrificed her identity for the sake of her children. In the process of being selfless, they were prone to anxiety, depression, and loneliness. This research contributes to filling the gap by elaborating on earlier research by Jen'nan Ghazal's concept that First-Generation women immigrants are the most pressured among second and third generation because of the pressure of fulfilling their duties as a mother and a housewife. S. Jacqueline and Tareq Y. Ismael debated how Arabs were trying their best to blend and fit into society, but the American understanding of their culture was limited and often misunderstood. In sharing these stories, my aim as a researcher with a positionality of an Arab immigrant woman myself, is to persuade my audience that while we can and should make sacrifices for our children, our own aspirations do not have to be erased in the process.

Salt of the Earth: The Forgotten Chicana Feminist Film of the 1950s

Alexa Guzman, College of the Mainland | Advisor: Dalel Serda

The 1954 film, *Salt of the Earth*, directed by Herbert J. Biberman, follows the struggle of Mexican American mine workers and their families in New Mexico. The story is based on real events that took place during the Empire Zinc Strike in the early 1950s. Labor struggles, race relations, and power dynamics are major themes in the film that reflect the social and political climate of its day. But what makes *Salt of the Earth* so unique, especially for its time, is the bold side by side comparison of the power struggles between laborer and boss with those between wife and husband. It connects the public self, what happens outside the home, with the private self, what happens inside the home.

However, *Salt of the Earth* was filmed before the formation of The Chicano Movement, also called El Movimiento, of the 1960s during the Civil Rights era. Chicano activists focused on labor and political rights – for Mexican American men. This exclusion drove Chicanas to create their own faction nearly a decade later because of El Movimiento's unwillingness to question gender expectations, specifically within the home. *Salt of the Earth* predates these movements and introduced, at least on a bigger scale, the conversation of challenging gender roles in Chicano culture by comparing the widespread struggle of labor rights to the more personal struggle of intimate gender inequality. In this film analysis, I will demonstrate how *Salt of the Earth* is a proto-Chicana feminist film that illustrates Chicana feminist ideas of questioning and rejecting traditional Chicano gender expectations, demanding for equal standing among our people, and overall, understanding the clear overlap between gender, race, and class. Ultimately, *Salt of the Earth* teaches us that greed, the struggle for power, trickles down into our most personal battles – often without us even realizing.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Session C9 ICB 318: College of the Mainland's Literary Journal: The Badelynge Review | NONJURIED SESSION

Moderator: Gwendolynn Barbee-Yow

Student Panelists: Randy Acevedo, Kendra Aguirre, Charles Clemons, Maddy Nichols, Annalicia Salazar, and Cora Shirey

The students behind the launch of *The Badelynge Review*, a campus literary journal at the College of the Mainland, reflect on their experiences during the 2024-2025 year. This student-run publication features poetry, short fiction, creative nonfiction, and academic essays, as well as art by COM students. Throughout the year, students have taken on roles as Readers (who evaluate student submissions), Editors (who edit the accepted works), and Reviewers (who review the academic papers published for credibility) collaborating with chosen authors to refine their pieces for publication. This discussion will explore the journey of running the journal, the essential student involvement required to bring it to life, the journal's significance to the campus community, and ideas for its future publications.

11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. | Session C10 ICB 319: The Local Community in Communion

Disparity in Access: The Impact of Library Availability in Houston Independent School District

Maddy Snow, Lone Star College CyFair | Advisor: Aurora Lugo

With an aim to identify the impact of librarian access on the academic success of low-income students, this study investigates the firing of Houston Independent School District (HISD) librarians and its potential effects. While the recent implementation of HISD's New Education System caused librarian employment to decrease, records reveal that most HISD schools, primarily in low-income communities, have never had

an employed librarian. Analysis of North Carolina and Virginia schools by Pribesh et al. established that low-income students have less access to librarian services. A study by Shirley A. Bleidt's revealed that low-income students felt their reading and learning skills improved when they visited their school librarian. Additionally, statewide data compiled by Keith Curry Lance and Debra E. Kachel determined that school librarian presence directly correlates with higher standardized testing scores in low-income communities, highlighting the positive impact school librarians have on students. This research concludes that low-income students in HISD would be positively impacted by the presence of a school librarian by experiencing a potential increase in test scores and improvement in other academic areas, such as reading and learning skills. These results can be used to develop a plan to increase the funding for librarian employment in HISD.

Sickle Cell Club Membership Helps Students Develop Skills and Provides Social Support

Amaria Thompson, College of the Mainland | Advisor: James Mubiru

The Sickle Cell Club at the College of the Mainland has been actively raising awareness about sickle cell disease for over seven years. The club engages the college and the broader community through outreach programs, particularly in local schools, and organizes fundraising activities to support the purchase of disease screening equipment. Additionally, the club hosts regional and international guest speakers twice yearly to give students diverse perspectives on sickle cell disease.

Over 400 students have participated in the club, and involvement is entirely voluntary. Some students engage in occasional activities, while others participate in at least two weekly initiatives. An analysis of club data indicates that membership significantly benefits community college students by fostering leadership, event organization, and public speaking skills. The club's collaborative nature enhances students' communication abilities and promotes a sense of belonging, counteracting feelings of isolation due to the absence of on-campus housing.

Beyond professional skills, the club's strong community engagement helps students develop empathy, perspective-taking, and conflict-management abilities. Additionally, club membership provides a supportive environment where students can express themselves, boosting self-confidence—particularly among new students who may experience age-related or academic knowledge gaps. While we are still analyzing the direct impact of club participation on academic achievement, preliminary findings suggest a positive correlation.

The Children are for Sale: Strengthening Legal Frameworks to Combat Underage Sex Trafficking in Houston

Belen Leal, Lone Star College -Kingwood | Advisor: Mari L. Nicholson-Preuss

This analysis examines the legal system's management of underage sex trafficking to understand what improvements could be made to protect victims more effectively. A comparative approach to analyze the Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Act of 2000, and its most recent reauthorization Act of 2022, further explored changes and their

implications, with additional focus on the Texas Penal Code, Title 9, Chapter 43: (Public Indecency) and Title 5, Chapter 20A: (Trafficking of Persons) to connect these issues more specifically to Houston, Texas. Strategies implemented in other countries to address and reduce sex trafficking, such as New Zealand and Sweden, underscore the importance of stronger legislation surrounding prostitution to prevent minors from entering trafficking networks, especially in Houston which is a major hub for human trafficking. Findings indicate that an expansion of representation and a victim-centered approach is crucial for the legal protection of survivors. In conclusion, evidence suggests that integrating these strategies into legal frameworks can aid in combatting sex trafficking. This initiative is increasingly evident in Texas through efforts including non-profits like Elijah Rising and The Landing, government initiatives such as the Mayor's Office of Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Speakers are funded by both GCIC and Title V.

1:00 pm | Keynote Talks and Q & A: | LRC 131 Auditorium

1:00 – 1:30 pm | Amelia White, History Specialist at The Bryan Museum in Galveston, Texas

Title: “The Karankawa of Coastal Texas”

Amelia White, History Specialist at The Bryan Museum in Galveston, Texas
Title: “The Karankawa of Coastal Texas”

Bio: Amelia White is the History Specialist at The Bryan Museum in Galveston, Texas and a current Ph.D. student at The University of Houston. Her research focus is Spanish American Borderlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She has a BA in political science from Austin College and an MA in history from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Amelia has worked in public history since 2012 and previously held positions at The Alamo and the National Museum of the Pacific War.

Abstract: The Karankawa of Coastal Texas

Join Amelia White, History Specialist at The Bryan Museum in Galveston, Texas, to explore the history and culture of the Karankawa people who inhabited the Gulf Coast from prehistoric times through their systematic near extinction at the hands of Spanish, Mexican, and American settlers in the nineteenth century. We will investigate myths about the Karankawa (no, they were not cannibals) and learn how modern-day descendants are reclaiming their heritage.

Dr. Kimberly Garza, author of critically acclaimed novel, *The Last Karankawas*
Title: “Tell Me Where You’re From and I’ll Tell You Who You Are: Uplifting Identities and Places from the Margins”

Bio: Kimberly Garza is the author of the critically acclaimed novel *The Last Karankawas*, a New York Times Editors’ Choice and an Indie Next pick. Her stories and essays have appeared in *Electric Literature*, *Texas Highways*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Copper Nickel*, and elsewhere. In 2024 she was named a National Endowment of the Arts creative writing fellow. She is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and the University of North Texas, where she earned a Ph.D in 2019. A native Texan—born in Galveston, raised in Uvalde—Garza is a professor of English and director of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Abstract: Tell Me Where You’re From and I’ll Tell You Who You Are: Uplifting Identities and Places from the Margins

Where are you from? People from places like Texas know the weight in a question like this, the way it can crucially shape our identity. Books have always explored places foreign and familiar and shown us the conflicts of the people who live there. Think of the misty marshes of Charles Dickens’ Kent, where criminals

and laborers clash with the upper class, or the idyllic green hills of J.R.R. Tolkien’s Shire, threatened by impending war. Now, contemporary novels have begun spotlighting geographic and cultural places long excluded from canonical literature—places that many marginalized communities have always called home. The storm-ravaged Southern Mississippi of Jesmyn Ward, for one, or the concrete jungle of Tommy Orange’s Oakland, or Rubén Degollado’s border town of McAllen, where *brujería* and love collide. Places even like the melting pot of immigrants, history, and myth that is Galveston Island. As readers and writers, as artists and citizens of this world, reading books that showcase settings like these can teach us about ourselves and our allegiances to family, community, and the Earth itself. And we can learn how these places, where close-knit communities and communal identities reign, can also be threats to individuals, and their own dreams and desires. *Where are you from? Where do you belong?* The answers are not always the same. Kimberly Garza is a writer, professor of creative writing and literature, and the author of *The Last Karankawas*, a novel about a mixed-race community in Galveston navigating the ups and downs of life as they await the impact of Hurricane Ike. Dr. Garza will use a sample of recent books and her own experiences as a mixed-race Texas native to discuss the importance of celebrating diverse settings in books, the conflict between independence and community, and the vital need of place-driven narratives, and marginalized voices, in literature.

THANK YOU

Thank you, College of the Mainland's student hosts, for helping run the technical and logistical aspects of this event: Nehemiah Arceneaux, Kimberley Chavez, Brianna Guevara, Maia Morales Morales, Martha Muñoz, Daniela Escalante, Melanie Gonzalez, Ria Rosete, Romeo Resendiz.

Thank you, College of the Mainland's staff, faculty, administrators, and Board of Trustee members who served as our judges and moderators:

Jason Abshire	Mark Greenwalt	Warren Nichols, President of College of the Mainland	Melissa Skipworth, College of the Mainland Board of Trustee
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Jason Duvall	Rafael Naranjo		
Richard Faillace			
Lisa Frase			

Thank you to all the professors who served as student presenter advisors.

Thank you, Dr. Kim Garza and Ms. Amelia White, for serving as our keynotes.

Thank you, President Nichols and the Gulf Coast Intercollegiate Consortium, and Title V, for your indispensable financial sponsorship! Thank you to all COM administration for your support. Thanks to Dr. Brewer, Dr. Rhodes, Dr. Barney, Dr. Vega-Vasquez, and Dr. Montz.

A special thanks to Deb Fregia, Kari Starz, Elizabeth Urban, Student Life.

A special thanks to Kristen McClendon and Zach McWilliams.

Thank you to all the wonderfully efficient and talented people at Marketing, Educational Technology Services, Student Life, and Facilities. A special thanks to Mary Dehart and Trudy Trochesset. And to Valerie Pieper, Rhonda Shiflet, and Laura Horacefield!

Lastly, thank you, Board of Trustees, for being valuable advocates for College of the Mainland. Events such as these would not be possible without your support.

Sincerely,

Professors Dalel Serda and Gwendolynn Barbee-Yow
GCIC Academic Symposium Co-Chairs

