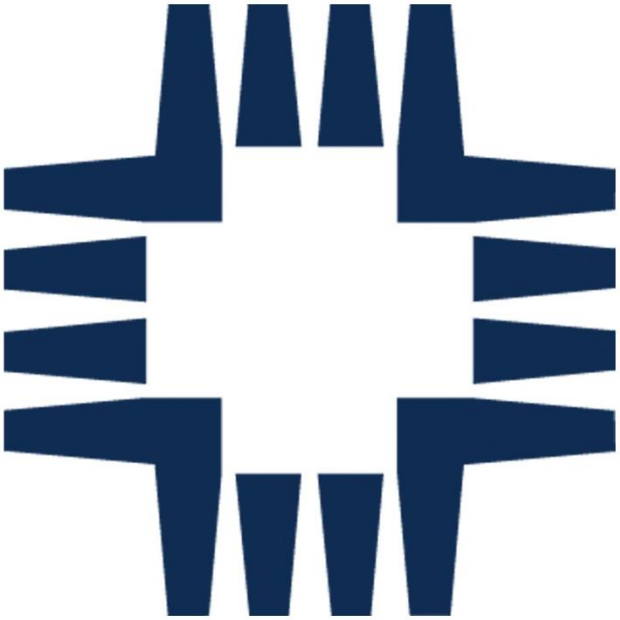
15th Annual

Academic and Research Symposium

Concordia University, Nebraska

April 27, 2026



ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM – PRESENTER SCHEDULE

	Dunklau Lobby	Dunklau 142	Dunklau 143	Dunklau 144	Dunklau 150
2:30 PM - 3:30 PM	**Poster Session A** Patrick Mars Qwin Zabokrtsky Nathan Kurth Simon Blankenship Zackery Day Talisa Buhr Torrance Keehn Francisco Mendez	**Oral Session A1** Jaelynne Kosmos Abbey Kudrna Reagan Martens Ransom Watts	**Oral Session A2** Adah Pflughoeft Nora Betts Eden Dehne	**Oral Session A3** Sydney Rohwer Lilly Loghry Adrianna Rodencal Tobi Topp	
3:40 PM - 4:40 PM	**Poster Session B** Eliya Mars Kelsie Heins Mya Orsatelli Brittani Gutz Spencer Kaufman Kristin Vieselmeyer Iñigo Chavarria Layton Rivas Jaeden Jordahl	**Oral Session B1** Emily Bonilla Nathan Aschmann Grant Rohde Nora Fingerlin	**Oral Session B2** Rachel Brinkman Dylan Parker Quinlan Hendrickson	**Oral Session B3** Annika Staab Gabrielle Schauer Mya Stover Ashlee Trujillo	**Oral Session B4** HarleyJane Carter Landri Loos Karson Pihl Kaleb Eickhoff
4:50 PM - 5:50 PM	**Poster Session C** Colby Gaines McKenzie Bohlen Jack Martin Cameron Pickens Aaron Jendro Nick Velders Grant Huss Max Bartels	**Oral Session C1** Evan Fukuhara Hugo Fuentes Gómez Miriam Ganoung	**Oral Session C2** Eliya Mars Hayley Miles Easton Cooper	**Oral Session C3** Andrew Brosius Nathan Kurth Simon Blankenship	
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM	**Poster Session D** Katrina Sanders Ellen Klintworth Maxwell Carlson Teya Badger Ethan Theilen Savannah Andrews Matthew Boyer Ernie Snyder Oliver Benson	**Oral Session D1** Brynn Holtmeier Grace Donnelly Mollie Urkoski	**Oral Session D2** Julia Hitz Kyla Schleusener Avery Rothert	**Oral Session D3** Bailey Bianco Grace White Mya Gawrych	

Note: If a presentation is done by a group, only the first presenter's name is shown above.

Special Thanks

Thank you to all presenters, faculty sponsors, staff, judges, administrators, and attendees for supporting the symposium!

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Poster Session A

Monday April 27, 2026 **2:30-3:30p** **Dunklau Lobby**

Benefits of Eccentric Training

Patrick Mars

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Eccentric training occurs when a muscle lengthens while a force is produced. Eccentric training has mechanical and metabolic properties that allow for high force production with a low energy demand. Research shows that eccentric training improves muscle strength, hypertrophy, neuromuscular adaptations, athletic performance, preventing injuries, and aiding in rehabilitation. This research project analyzes 5 current resources to examine the physiological mechanisms, training adaptations, and applications of eccentric training for both athletes and clinical populations.

The Effects of Caffeine on Athletic Performance

Qwin Zabokrtsky

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

This project investigates caffeine's effects on athletic and cognitive performance by using recent experimental studies. The findings show improvements in attention, reaction time, and repeated sprint ability, as well as increased muscle oxygen saturation and delayed fatigue, depending on the dosage. Caffeine produced similar anaerobic benefits across sexes and maintained performance under hypoxic conditions, supporting its reliability as an ergogenic aid.

Exploring the Spatial Changes of Bee Populations within the Continental United States

Nathan Kurth

Faculty Sponsor: Joel Helmer

Bees (family Apidae) are essential for pollinating many types of flowering plants, but a changing climate, land-cover change, and fertilizer use threaten their survival. Despite their importance, very few of the roughly 3,600 species within the continental United States have a determined conservation status. This study uses publicly available data from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility to map the spatial changes in observed bee species. The results highlight where species have faced the most significant declines, and where more work is needed to protect these vital pollinators.

Exploring Environmental Factors of Eastern Hellbender Habitat Preferences

Simon Blankenship

Faculty Sponsor: Joel Helmer

At 29 inches in length, the Eastern Hellbender is North America's largest species of salamander, and its numbers are in decline. Native to the Ozarks and the Appalachian Mountains, the Hellbender's threats include pollution and habitat loss. This research presentation uses GIS software to prepare an analysis of Hellbender habitats in reference to known Hellbender sightings within the Tennessee River watershed. This analysis shall consider land cover use, water quality assessment, and other indicators as variables in understanding key habitats for Hellbender populations.

Importance of Play in Youth

Zackery Day

Faculty Sponsor: Corina Beimers

Play is such a simple thing in youth, but the impacts it has on a person can be tremendous. In a world where play is starting to disappear in youth due to the advancement of technology and the increase of sports specialization, people are forgetting how vital play is for youth. Play is an opportunity for kids to be free from parental supervision and the confines of organized sports, and helps them grow in incredibly important areas that will benefit them in the future. Through play, youth have the ability to develop socially, along with growing their mental and physical abilities. Lessening play and taking it out of youths' lives robs them of this time of great growth and the skills they need to develop. This, in return, will set them behind or can even cause significant problems in the future.

Effects of Blood Flow Restriction Training on Strength, Performance, and Physiological Adaptations

Talisa Buhr

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Blood flow restriction (BFR) training uses cuffs to limit blood flow, creating a low-oxygen environment that promotes muscle adaptation with light loads. BFR is shown to improve strength, endurance, and muscle growth similar to heavy training. It also enhances vascular function, neuromuscular performance, and recovery without negative cardiovascular effects. BFR is effective for athletes, rehabilitation, and individuals unable to lift heavy weights, making it a safe and effective training alternative.

Heat or Ice? Evaluating Physiological Responses and Performance Impacts

Torrance Keehn

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

This project compares the physiological mechanisms and recovery outcomes of hot and cold therapy in athletes. Cold therapy reduces tissue temperature, cardiovascular strain, and supports acute recovery, while heat therapy enhances circulation, metabolic activity, and chronic mobility benefits. Findings show neither modality is universally superior; effectiveness depends on context, recovery goals, and training phase.

Poster Session B

Monday April 27, 2026 **3:40-4:40p** **Dunklau Lobby**

Assessing Wellness Shot Ingredient Treatment on IAV-infected A549 Cells

Eliya Mars and Hayley Miles

Faculty Sponsor: Raegan Skelton

Inspired by wellness shots, the project's purpose is to study Influenza A virus infection in vitro using A549 human lung epithelial cells. Our research question asks, 'Will treatment with wellness shot ingredients affect cell viability?' Via dilution, infection, and treatment experiments, we exposed A549 cells to orange juice, honey, and turmeric with/without influenza infection (A/Puerto Rico/8/1934). Initial results find turmeric to inhibit cell monolayer observation, honey to negatively affect cell viability, and OJ to have surprisingly positive effects. Virus experiments are underway.

Effectiveness of Telehealth Physical Therapy in Rural and Underserved Populations

Kelsie Heins

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Telehealth physical therapy (PT) is an effective alternative to in-person care, particularly for rural and underserved populations. Across studies, telehealth PT produced comparable improvements in pain, function, and quality of life, with no significant differences from traditional therapy in some cases. Rural programs reported high patient satisfaction and positive user experiences. However, only 35% of patients reported willingness to use telehealth, highlighting adoption barriers. Research indicates that telehealth PT improves access while maintaining clinical effectiveness.

Bacterial Dilution Effects on Human Lung Epithelial Cells Following Influenza A Virus

Mya Orsatelli and MaKenna Culler

Faculty Sponsor: Raegan Skelton

Influenza A virus (IAV) disrupts lung epithelial barrier function, facilitating secondary bacterial infections. Staphylococcus aureus is a leading cause of post-influenza pneumonia, yet its dose-dependent impact on cells in vitro remains poorly defined. We are investigating how S. aureus affects viability of IAV-infected A549 human lung epithelial cells, characterizing dose-dependent S. aureus effects to identify the lowest bacterial dilution that enhances mortality in co-infected cells within 24 hours. Readouts include CFU quantification, CPE scoring, viability assays, and HA titers.

Rhythmic Auditory Stimulation to Improve Gait in Parkinson's Disease

Brittani Gutz

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Patients with Parkinson's Disease endure numerous deficits in motor functioning including the presence of gait abnormalities. This is due to the degeneration of dopaminergic neurons, which are essential for motor control. As a result, there is a loss in automatic rhythmic coordination. In an attempt to bypass the regions of the brain that block natural rhythm, the implementation of rhythmic cues during gait training,

referred to as rhythmic auditory stimulation (RAS) has been considered. Research has shown that RAS paired with gait training provides notable improvement in walking performance.

Cycling into Wellness: A Powerful Tool Towards Healthy Aging

Kristin Vieselmeyer

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Stationary indoor cycling is booming globally as a widely accessible, high-intensity aerobic exercise. It offers numerous long-term health benefits and serves as a low-impact fitness option across the lifespan. Regular participation from a young age improves cardiovascular health and supports knee joint function. It also contributes to positive body image, emotional well-being, and overall health perception. The low-impact nature of stationary cycling supports individuals of all ages in staying healthy, mobile, and active.

Effects of Hydration and Electrolyte Supplementation on Athletic Performance and fluid Balance

Iñigo Chavarria

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

The impact of hydration and electrolyte supplementation on fluid balance and athletic performance is investigated in this review of the literature. Studies indicate that good hydration is vital for physical activity including cardiovascular efficiency and thermoregulation; dehydration, however, degrades cognition, endurance, and strength. Particularly sodium and potassium, electrolytes are crucial for muscle function and fluid balance. Particularly in extended exercise, evidence points to supplements improving endurance performance and slowing down exhaustion. Incorrect usage, nevertheless, presents dangers therefore underlining the need of individualized methods and instruction.

Psychological Skills Training For Athletes

Layton Rivas

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Athletes commonly experience pre-competition anxiety due to the heightened pressure and demands of athletic success. A solution is psychological skills training, which focuses on practicing and improving mental techniques that help athletes enhance focus, emotional control, confidence, and performance. Excessive anxiety can harm performance by fostering a negative mindset. Numerous studies have examined how certain mental therapies can help with psychological resilience, coping strategies, and competitive pressure. Overall, PST shows strong potential to improve mental readiness.

Overload vs Underload in Baseball Bat Speed

Jaeden Jordahl

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

In baseball bat speed is a huge factor in hitting success as you get into higher levels of competition. Many hitters warm up before at bats in the on deck circle just outside of the dugout to prepare for the at bat. Some use heavy bats, some use light bats, and some just use their regular bat while warming up. The on deck circle is used to prep your body to swing as fast as possible while also being controlled enough to hit difficult pitches. The research suggests that neither overload or underload bats impact swing speed significantly enough to affect game bat speed.

The Effects of Creatine Supplementation on Muscle Hypertrophy and Athletic Performance

Spencer Kaufman

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Creatine is one of the most widely used and researched supplements in sports performance. It is commonly used to improve strength, muscle mass, and overall athletic ability. Research shows that creatine supplementation, especially when combined with resistance training, can improve performance outcomes and lean muscle mass [5]. This project evaluates the effects of creatine on muscle hypertrophy and athletic performance using peer-reviewed research.

Poster Session C

Monday April 27, 2026 **4:50-5:50p** **Dunklau Lobby**

Mapping Shooting Sports

Colby Gaines

Faculty Sponsor: Joel Helmer

I will be using ArcGIS to map various individuals and schools involved in shooting sports. The focus will be on the results of the National Shooting Sports Championship. My goal is to determine whether there are any regional similarities among the top shooters, including where they are from and which schools they attend.

Psychological Factors in Track: Pole Vault

McKenzie Bohlen

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Athletic performance is shaped by both physical and psychological factors, yet the psychological demands of pole vault remain under-explored. Due to its unique combination of height, inversion, equipment use, and complex technique, pole vault presents distinct mental challenges. Despite this, participation is lower than other track events. This study examines psychological factors that influence performance and explores how these factors may deter athletes from choosing pole vault.

The Aerodynamics of Toy Cars

Jack Martin

Faculty Sponsor: Robert Hermann

This project entails the design and construction of a desktop wind tunnel for studying basic aerodynamic principles. The tunnel was designed to generate airflow using a PC fan, while incorporating flow straighteners to reduce turbulence and improve uniformity. A pitot tube was used to measure air velocity, while a force sensor was placed under a platform holding a toy car to measure pressure differences at varying wind speeds. Additionally, flow visualization in the form of a water mister was implemented to make airflow patterns visible, allowing for the visualization of streamlines and turbulence. An Arduino microcontroller is implemented to collect and process the sensor data. This data was then used to compare downforce generated at varying wind speeds. A variety of toy cars were tested both quantitatively and qualitatively to provide an understanding of basic aerodynamic principles and behaviors.

UCL Injuries in Baseball: Risk Factor and Mechanisms

Cameron Pickens

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) injuries in baseball result from repetitive microtrauma caused by high-velocity loading and excessive valgus stress during the pitching motion. Primary risk factors include increased pitch velocity and overall workload. Biomechanical factors, such as decreased range of motion in the shoulder and poor posture in the trunk or pelvis, also increase injury risk. Although these injuries are increasing across all levels, youth are at significant risk. Prevention of UCL injuries requires managing overall workload and pitching mechanics.

Effects of Training Periodization on Mitochondrial and Capillary Adaptations in Endurance Runners

Aaron Jendro

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Endurance performance is driven by aerobic energy production and oxygen delivery. This literature review brings together findings from systematic reviews to examine how training periodization influences mitochondrial biogenesis and capillary density in endurance athletes. Structured training of intensity and volume promotes key muscular adaptations, improving oxidative capacity, oxygen transport, and endurance performance outcomes such as running economy and sustainable performance.

Mental Health in College Athletes

Nick Velders

Faculty Sponsor: Corina Beimers

College athletes face unique pressures as they balance academics, sports, and outside expectations. These demands can increase stress and place athletes at greater risk for mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, and burnout. This literature review examines the main causes of stress in college athletes and how those challenges affect their mental health. It also explores the role of coaches, athletic staff, and support systems in helping athletes manage these pressures. In addition, this review discusses the importance of mental health screening, prevention, and resilience in improving athlete well-being. The findings suggest that athletic programs should provide more mental health resources and create an environment where athletes feel comfortable seeking help.

From Student Athletes to Student Entrepreneurs: The Hidden Effects of NIL on Division 1 Football

Grant Huss

Faculty Sponsor: Corina Beimers

The introduction of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) in the NCAA has been the stepping stone into the new era of college athletics. Division 1 football has been one of the primary beneficiaries of NIL, so much due to the significant revenue they generate for the NCAA. Articles and research I've found focuses on the areas that have shown to significantly change a team due to NIL. Findings like player recruiting, team culture, and personal performance are some of the most affected categories. College athletics have increasingly become business opportunities for these young athletes, turning focus into student entrepreneurs.

Artificial Turf vs. Natural Grass: Effects on Lower Extremity Injury Risk

Max Bartels

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Artificial turf is used more often in sports today, but there is still debate about how it affects injury risk compared to natural grass. This study examines research on lower extremity injuries across both surfaces in different sports. Results are mixed, with some studies finding higher injury rates on turf and others finding little to no difference. Factors such as sport type, player position, injury mechanism, surface conditions, level of competition, and prior experience with different playing surfaces may also play a role. However, overall findings remain inconclusive.

Poster Session D

Monday April 27, 2026 **6:00-7:00p** **Dunklau Lobby**

Determining Molecular Characteristics of Eight Recently Discovered Alkaloids Isolated from Aspergillus candidus Using Electron Structure Calculations

Katrina Sanders

Faculty Sponsor: John Jurchen

Indole alkaloids derived from marine fungus have shown promising biological activity along with notable structural diversity. Here, we use molecular modeling to characterize recently discovered terphenyl-indole alkaloids and compare these structures with cis-platin, a commercial medicine to provide insight on their antifungal and cytotoxic activity. We also review a previously proposed biosynthetic pathway for the most biologically relevant novel molecule.

Clicking Against Influenza A: Using Electron Structure Calculations to Examine the Effects of the Optimized Linker's Length on the VHL Ligand in a Proteolysis Targeting Chimera (PROTAC)

Ellen Klintworth

Faculty Sponsor: John Jurchen

Influenza A is a deadly, highly contagious, and persistent virus responsible for the majority of recent pandemics. Proteolysis targeting chimeras work to simultaneously degrade all eight viral proteins making it difficult for the virus to escape through mutation. Here we use molecular modeling to explore aspects of the PROTAC molecule responsible for the targeting including how a "linker length" affects the molecule and investigate the underlying molecular orbitals responsible for the "click chemistry" responsible for the synthesis of the molecule.

Examining the Effect of the Conformation of Mannose 4 of the Glycan M5G0 on its Surface Properties Before Cleavage by α-mannosidase II in Silico

Maxwell Carlson

Faculty Sponsor: John Jurchen

A-mannosidase II (MII) is an enzyme that is overexpressed in certain cancer types, so it is very beneficial to learn its mechanism of action so that it can be inhibited to prevent tumor growth. In this project, the conformations of the enzyme's substrate, M5G0, are examined using electron-structure calculations to find the effect on the surface properties from manipulation by the enzyme before the reaction takes place. The surface properties and thermodynamics of several conformations of M5G0 will be presented along with potential reasons for their reactivity in the enzyme-substrate complex.

Estimating proton tunneling probabilities through graphene monolayers including defects and modeled size using electron structure calculations

Teya Badger

Faculty Sponsor: John Jurchen

Graphene is an important, “space age” molecule notable for both its physical characteristics and its nature as a fundamental material under intense consideration by material scientists. One notable characteristic of graphene is its ability to transmit protons but not other molecules through its lattice. It has been suggested that protons either tunnel through graphene or pass through molecular defects. Here, we evaluate these pathways using molecular modeling at a variety of levels of theory to estimate potential barrier height and width and resulting quantum tunneling probabilities.

GPAC Cross Country correlation to track times

Ethan Theilen

Faculty Sponsor: Brian Albright

Many athletes in the GPAC compete in both cross country and track and field. This study takes race marks from these athletes and sees which outdoor track events have the highest correlation to cross country times.

Eating Disorders in Female Collegiate Athletes: Prevalence, Risk Factors, and Impact on Performance

Savannah Andrews

Faculty Sponsor: Nolan Harms

Eating disorders and disordered eating are growing concerns among female collegiate athletes due to performance pressures, body image expectations, and sport-specific demands. These behaviors can negatively impact physical health, psychological well-being, and overall athletic performance. This literature review examines the effects of both clinically diagnosed eating disorders and subclinical disordered eating on physical, psychological, and performance-related outcomes in female collegiate athletes. The review identified several contributing factors, including body image concerns, performance pressures, and external influences such as coaching environments and societal expectations. Overall, these behaviors are associated with decreased energy availability, impaired performance, increased injury risk, and heightened psychological distress. These findings emphasize the need for early identification, education, and targeted interventions to support the health and performance of female collegiate athletes.

The Impact of Smartphones on Athletic Performance

Matthew Boyer

Faculty Sponsor: Corina Beimers

The widespread use of smartphones among athletes has become a progressively powerful factor in both performance and well-being. This literature review examines how mobile phone reliance impacts athletic performance through physical, psychological, and cognitive mechanisms. While smartphones provide benefits such as communication, access to training tools and motivation, excessive use has been shown to reduce concentration during training, disrupt sleep quality, and impair recovery, overall leading to decreased performance.

How does Nicotine Affect Athletes?

Ernie Snyder

Faculty Sponsor: Corina Beimers

My presentation focuses on the influence that Nicotine has on athletes of all ages, with a primary focus on high school athletes through professional athletes. When you start using nicotine, you can become dependent on it. Nicotine use is most common in hockey and baseball, with zynns being an extremely popular way to use nicotine. Athletes say that they use nicotine to calm themselves down, but the side effects of nicotine use are damaging. Nicotine is a substance that is extremely easy to abuse and extremely hard to quit, so do not start.

College & Professional Pathway Issues in Soccer

Oliver Benson

Faculty Sponsor: Corina Beimers

This poster examines the route from youth soccer to the collegiate and professional ranks, highlighting the key obstacles that impact an athlete's advancement. This study aims to synthesize existing research on recruitment methods, structural disparities, developmental challenges, and psychological needs in soccer development programs. Peer-reviewed articles from the previous 5–7 years that were found in scholarly databases like SportDiscus and Google Scholar were used as sources. According to the results, progression to higher levels is contingent upon talent, access to resources, subjective selection methods, and the capacity to strike a balance between academics and sports. Additionally, athletes may experience tremendous psychological stress while moving from youth to senior levels. The U.S. and European systems have both advantages and disadvantages, as comparisons between them show. Overall, this study emphasizes the necessity for fairer, more adaptable, and more encouraging development systems in order to promote long-term success and provide aspiring soccer players with more consistent opportunities.

Oral Session A1

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 142**

Knee Drive Angle and Jump Length Correlation

Jaelynne Kosmos 2:30-2:45p

Faculty Sponsor: Brian Albright

This project talks about the relationship between knee drive angle and the length of a long jump. A quadratic model of best fit was able to be used for predicting data and what knee drive angle provides the farthest jump from this data set.

Asian Trip: Minimizing Cost vs Time

Abbey Kudrna 2:45-3:00p

Faculty Sponsor: Brian Albright

Imagine you are planning a trip throughout several capitals of various Asian countries. How can you create the "best" path that minimizes flight costs? Flight time? This presentation seeks to create a mathematical model to aid in answering this question.

Gender Differences in Politeness

Reagan Martens and Mary Beth Hart 3:00-3:15p

Faculty Sponsor: Vicki Anderson

Females and males communicate differently using specific tones of voice, phrases, and expressions. For example, we learned that women often use super-polite forms and apologize more often. Men often talk more and attempt to make their voices lower. Additionally, we discussed politeness in our society and how people communicate to follow social and cultural norms. We want to put this knowledge to the test. We are going to observe customers and employees at the 10:31 coffee shop on campus. We will compare conversations between same genders and opposite genders to see the politeness skills and how they change depending on who people are talking to.

Wildfire Regeneration in Colorado's Front Range: 1996-2026

Ransom Watts 3:15-3:30p

Faculty Sponsor: Joel Helmer

In Colorado, wildfires are an ever present and natural feature of the landscape, and every year, many thousands of acres are burned as a part of this process. My research is intended to demonstrate the decades-long regenerative process of montane coniferous ecosystems following a fire, and to show which environmental factors lead to successful regrowth. I chose three fires that occurred along Colorado's Front Range within the past 30 years to demonstrate this process. A thorough understanding of which environmental factors result in successful regeneration is necessary to better understand wildfires and the natural world that we occupy.

Oral Session A2

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 143**

“Men were Better:” Civil War Fiction Suggests a Christian Approach to History and Literature

Adah Pflughoeft 2:30-2:50p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

In his 1895 Civil War novel *The Red Badge of Courage*, Stephen Crane wrote that “Greeklike struggles would be no more. Men were better…” Crane’s novel refined the genre of war literature while opening the door for Civil War fiction to explore human nature. As Civil War fiction depicts how the war brought out the best and worst in humanity, it builds off earlier interpretations to call attention to a Biblical understanding of human nature. As a literary proving ground for human nature, Civil War fiction opens the door for a Christian approach to literature and history.

Curiosity and Young Missionaries: Facing Challenges on the Foreign Mission Field

Nora Betts 2:50-3:10p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

The foreign mission field is a context of immense novelty and uncertainty for missionaries in their 20s who are challenged to enter adulthood, contend with their abilities and limits, and share the Gospel in a new environment. When things seem overwhelming, curiosity helps missionaries approach obstacles as learning opportunities, handle changes to their identities, effectively build relationships, and see how God is at work in all things.

Education, AI, and the Image of God

Eden Dehne 3:10-3:30p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

Artificial intelligence has become one of the most recent “buzzwords” in the world of education. Some teachers treat it as the latest best practice, while others condemn its lack of human touch. This research project discusses AI use in a Lutheran school setting, using results from a survey of teachers in Lutheran high schools and of secondary education majors at Concordia University, Nebraska. Based on both the survey results and an analysis of literature on the topic, this study examines the role of teachers and students as human beings created in the image of God, and it explores what impact AI has on that truth.

Oral Session A3

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 144**

Watching Movies and TV Shows with Friends as a Coping Mechanism for College Students

Sydney Rohwer 2:30-2:45p

Faculty Sponsor: Sara Moore

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between watching movies and TV shows with friends and any stress reducing effects. Prior research has found that spending time with close friends and family seems to be a common way for college students to find relief for their stress. Quantitative data will be collected for this applied research study. The quantitative data collected through the survey questionnaire will be analyzed using SPSS software. Findings will be presented upon completion of the research.

The effects of parenting styles on Childhood Trauma and Mental Well-Being

Lilly Loghry 2:45-3:00p

Faculty Sponsor: Sara Moore

The purpose of this study is to better understand the correlation and relationship between different parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and neglectful), Adverse Childhood Experiences, and Mental Wellbeing. Adolescence is a critical period of development where children experience significant cognitive, social, and emotional changes. Prior research has shown that parenting styles can either promote or hinder adolescent well-being and development. The importance of understanding these relationships is that through greater insight into the effects of different parenting styles and the impact they have on children, intervention practices can be developed. The research question for this study is "What are the effects of different parenting styles on adverse childhood experiences and mental well-being?" Data will be collected using a quantitative survey, within this survey there will be a Baumrind's Parenting Styles Questionnaire, Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Questionnaire.

Stimulants and Sickness: Caffeine's Relationship with Influenza *in vitro*

Adrianna Rodencal, Jonah Carter, and Kaiden Mima 3:00-3:15p

Faculty Sponsor: Regan Skelton

Caffeine is one of the highest consumed stimulants. Influenza A, a highly contagious respiratory virus, causes yearly epidemics. However, effects that caffeine has on flu infection remains poorly understood. Using a tissue culture model, we investigated whether the progression of influenza (A/Puerto Rico/8/1934) in A549 human lung epithelial cells is altered by caffeine exposure. Readouts include CPE visualization pre- and post-treatment, HA titers for viral presence, and cell viability assays. This study will further information on the *in vitro* relationship between influenza A and caffeine.

Gene Suppression in Influenza and Secondary Bacterial Infections

Tobi Topp 3:15-3:30p

Faculty Sponsor: Regan Skelton

Secondary bacterial infections are a leading cause of influenza-related deaths. This study examines if influenza A virus (IAV) suppresses antibacterial defenses in human lung epithelial cells (A549) in vitro. Expression of innate immune genes (TLR4, IL-6, IFN-β) will be analyzed after mono- and co-infection with IAV (A/Puerto Rico/8/1934) and Staphylococcus aureus using RT-PCR and gel electrophoresis. Functional outcomes include bacterial load, cytopathic effects, cell viability, and pH. Results aim to clarify how viral infection increases susceptibility to secondary bacterial infections.

Oral Session B1

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 142**

Beliefs About Free Will and Their Influence On Decision-Making Paralysis Among College Students

Emily Bonilla 3:40-3:55p

Faculty Sponsor: Sara Moore

Beliefs about free will shape how individuals understand responsibility, control, and personal agency. This study explores the relationship between free will beliefs and decision-making paralysis among college students aged 19 and older. Participants completed an online survey measuring belief in free will, experiences of decision paralysis, and work-related anxiety. Results are forthcoming and will contribute to ongoing psychological discussions about autonomy, stress, and decision-making during emerging adulthood.

Using Excel to Model Dice in 'RISK'

Nathan Aschmann 3:55-4:10p

Faculty Sponsor: Brian Albright

The board game 'Risk' has a very complicated system for dice. Because of this it can be hard at times to know which side is at an advantage. By using simulations within excel, the odds in favor or against either player in a round can be quantified. By using a sorting system and comparing random numbers generated by excel, I will be modeling the complicated dice system of Risk. Then using this model, I will be simulating several hundred rolls at once, to gain estimates for the winning and losing odds for the players.

Simulating Cribbage

Grant Rohde 4:10-4:25p

Faculty Sponsor: Brian Albright

In this project, I simulate the shuffling and dealing of cards to two players in a game of cribbage. After setting up the simulation to calculate scores, we see if the theoretical probability of getting dealt the “perfect hand” matches the experimental probability.

In Vitro Effects of Interferon Lambda Prior to Influenza Infection on Human Lung Epithelial Cells

Nora Fingerlin and Autumn Deterding 4:25-4:40p

Faculty Sponsor: Raegan Skelton

Interferon Lambda (IFNL), a signal released by the immune system upon viral infection, initiates cellular defenses to prevent infection spread. Influenza A viruses (IAV) can suppress IFNL at mucosal barriers. Our research studied the effect of IFNL on A549 human lung epithelial cells *in vitro* without systemic support of the immune system. We introduced human IFNL (MedChem Express, HY-P7026) at different doses and time points prior to infection with IAV (A/Puerto Rico/8/1934). We measured cell viability, morphology, and cytotoxicity to explore if early introduction of IFNL decreases the progressive effects of IAV.

Oral Session B2

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 143**

Examining the Relationship between Gut Health and Emotional Intelligence in Christian Service

Rachel Brinkman 3:40-4:00p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

God's command for mankind to steward Creation provides the basis for a Christian understanding of vocation. Examining emotional intelligence (EI) in detail is one approach by which this unique form of service is illustrated. This project investigates connections between physical health and EI, focusing specifically on the complex interplay between the gut and the natural emotional processes of the body, while placing the findings in light of becoming a better servant of the Lord. Note that the results of this research are exploratory in nature and are not intended to be prescriptive.

Hero Narratives as an Antidote to Existential Crises

Dylan Parker 4:00-4:20p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

Although current treatments for depression and suicidality have become increasingly effective, one of the facets of depression that isn't addressed by modern medicine is that of a true existential crisis, where a person has questioned their motivations to the point of complete indifference. For such people, compelling stories must be brought forward, typically in the form of a "Hero's Journey" narrative which entices listeners into embarking on their own adventures. This project aims to use hero narratives as a guidepost to steer clear of modern distorted narratives in our search for meaning.

What the United States Justice System Values: Its Meaning and Impacts

Quinlan Hendrickson 4:20-4:40p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

The United States justice system constantly has to balance the protection of individual rights and public interest. In the past, the justice system has protected individual rights as its number one priority. However, during the last several decades, the justice system has started to prioritize public interest over individual rights. Looking at this shift allows the American collective to understand the limitations of their rights and how to properly interact with the U.S. justice system. It is crucial to know whether the justice system values individuals or the collective so that everyone can protect themselves as individuals and as a nation.

Oral Session B3

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 144**

The Relationship Between Religious Faith and Psychological Wellbeing in College Student-Athletes Compared to Non-Athletes

Annika Staab 3:40-3:55p

Faculty Sponsor: Sara Moore

The current study aims to explore the relationship between religious faith and psychological wellbeing in college student-athletes compared to college non-athletes. A convenience sample was collected from a Christian university. Participants completed a survey via Survey Monkey with sections covering demographics, religious faith in their life, and an evaluation of psychological wellbeing. This study hypothesized that there is a strong, positive correlation between religious faith and psychological wellbeing.

Dialects Across the Regions of the U.S.

Gabrielle Schauer, Sofie Stiller, and Gretchen Hoft 3:55-4:10p

Faculty Sponsor: Vicki Anderson

We will be researching the different pronunciations of certain words in different regions of the United States. Our presentation will summarize the findings of our research.

Children with ADHD and Physical Activity

Mya Stover 4:10-4:25p

Faculty Sponsor: Sara Moore

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive literature review to understand the idea of how physical activity can help children with ADHD. The central research question is as follows: Is there a relationship between the variables physical activity and kids with ADHD? The form of data collected in this research was through a comprehensive literature review. Using different articles and databases. Recommendations for further research will be presented.

The Relationship Between NICU Length of Stay and Parental Anxiety: A Comprehensive Literature Review

Ashlee Trujillo 4:25-4:40p

Faculty Sponsor: Sara Moore

This comprehensive literature review examines how neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) hospitalization influences parental anxiety, with a specific focus on the impact of length of stay. Drawing from stress theory, attachment theory, and empirical research on prematurity, this study synthesizes current findings and identifies gaps related to prolonged hospitalization as a predictor of parental psychological distress.

Oral Session B4

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 150**

Sibling Relationships After Parental Divorce

HarleyJane Carter 3:40-3:55p

Faculty Sponsor: Sara Moore

The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of how parental divorce impacts the relationship that siblings have with each other. It is an empirical research study where data was collected through a survey. In prior literature, there has been minimal research done observing the possible relationship between parental divorce and sibling relationships. There has been literature demonstrating how divorce can have short and long-term psychological effects on children including anxiety, depression, and adjustment difficulties. Prior literature has also demonstrated that sibling relationships are one of the more stable relationships within the family dynamics and there is a difference in the relationship quality in divorced and married families. The problem is that there is minimal research done to understand the relationship between these variables although divorce within families is a more frequent occurrence. It is crucial to learn more about this relationship between parental divorce and sibling relationships because the information learned could have implications on the understanding of the well-being of siblings and fostering their relationship after experiencing a parental divorce. The central research question is: How does parental divorce impacts sibling relationships with each other? Undergraduate students were surveyed to understand how parental divorce impacts sibling relationships. A mixed methodological approach will be taken to analyze responses to present the findings.

Extroverted Personality Types and Random Roommate Satisfaction

Landri Loos 3:55-4:10p

Faculty Sponsor: Sara Moore

This survey explores the relationship between personality traits of extroversion and satisfaction of randomly assigned roommate relationships. Improving factors that influence roommate satisfaction can increase student satisfaction and improve student outcomes in college. The empirical research data was collected through a voluntary self-report survey. Data will be coded through SPSS to analyze for a relationship between extroverted personality traits and random roommate relationship satisfaction.

A Basketball Coach's Decision-Making Simulation

Karson Pihl 4:10-4:25p

Faculty Sponsor: Brian Albright

The rise of the term "analytics" across the sports landscape has introduced many people around the world to the concept of expected value. "What is the probability our team wins the game if we make this shot?" "Why is the coach not fouling up three points with 5 seconds left?" "We have to foul that guy every time he touches the ball" These are all phrases heard at the local sports bars and basement man-caves across the country that would put the average sports fan 20 years ago into a frenzy. This presentation highlights one key scenario from the Kansas High School state basketball tournament in 2025 where a coach told his players to intentionally foul the opposing team in a tie game with just 30 seconds left, but it also presents a prime example of the new-age analytics systems used in athletic departments today. After seeing the simulation model in Microsoft Excel, the audience will leave this presentation with a new perspective on coaching decisions, specifically in basketball.

Optimizing Workforce Scheduling

Kaleb Eickhoff 4:25-4:40p

Faculty Sponsor: Brian Albright

This presentation is about how I used Microsoft excel to explore ways to optimize my current work schedule. In it I will explore using solver to build a work schedule around constraints like availability and minimizing overtime.

Oral Session C1

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 142**

How can coming back from injury impact a collegiate lifting sports athlete's confidence?

Evan Fukuhara 4:50-5:05p

Faculty Sponsor: Sara Moore

"The purpose of this study is to learn about the potential psychological consequences that coming back from injury plays on a collegiate lifting sports athlete. The problem is when an athlete recovers from an injury, we tend to overlook the psychological aspect of confidence and how that might play a role in returning to the sport. The rationale for this study is that it might prove to be beneficial to learn more about an athlete's confidence after injury so that they might have a more successful collegiate career. The central research question is: How can coming back from injury impact a collegiate lifting sports athlete's confidence? To address this question, student athletes completed a survey inquiring about their injury history and confidence. The findings will be presented after thematic and statistical analysis.

How Vacuum Polarization Relates to the Speed of Light

Hugo Fuentes Gómez 5:05-5:20p

Faculty Sponsor: Robert Hermann

In classic electromagnetism, the speed of light appears as a fundamental constant from Maxwell's equations. In this context, its value arises from the parameters ε_0 and μ_0 that are interpreted as fundamental constants of the vacuum. However, in the framework of quantum field theory, this interpretation changes. The vacuum is no longer a passive, inert medium and it becomes a dynamic medium characterized by quantum fluctuations that are able to modify the electromagnetic interaction at different energy states. In this project we analyze how these quantum corrections affect the parameters and we clarify in what sense they can be considered "variable". We show that while quantities such as the effective charge depend on the energy scale, the speed of light remains invariable, since it is protected by the relativistic structure of the quantum theory.

Eastern and Western Wood-Pewee Range Expansion in Nebraska

Miriam Ganoung 5:20-5:35p

Faculty Sponsor: Joel Helmer

The Eastern Wood-Pewee (Contopus virens) and Western Wood-Pewee (Contopus sordidulus) are two avian species so similar in appearance that they were once considered a single species. In addition to their distinct songs, they are best distinguished by their largely separate geographic ranges. The Great Plains act as a barrier between the two species, since they prefer woodland habitats. However, the spread of forest cover along river valleys has allowed their ranges to converge in some areas. This study maps the distributions of both species in Nebraska over 25 years (2000-2025) to examine range extension and overlap.

Oral Session C2

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 143**

Learning How to Live in the Context of Psalm 23

Eliya Mars and Keegan Beisel 4:50-5:10p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

Living in this fallen world is often confusing and hurtful. It can be hard to know what the "right" course of action is. For those who yearn for right and wrong to be black and white, finding oneself in a sin-muddied "gray" area can be disorienting. However, these moments of decision are not isolated. Rather, choices are made within the accumulation of many factors or voices, which influence the final act of will. This project examines these influences through an allegorical lens. Throughout Scripture, human beings are described as sheep in need of a good shepherd. When sheep are not being led by a good shepherd, they may instead follow self-centered hired hands or bad shepherds, until they are abandoned or led astray; or they may be alone and pursued by wolves. Even when they are led by a good shepherd, they may stubbornly cling to idols or follow the flock instead of receiving the provision of the shepherd. Accordingly, this project examines the guiding forces of this world by viewing them in terms of hired hands and bad shepherds, wolves, idols, and penultimate good shepherds. Looking at life through this framework will help people to recognize and evaluate what is influencing their decision-making, and to identify whom or what they may be following. Most importantly, as this project walks through the verses of Psalm 23, believers will be encouraged to lean into the incredible reality that God desires to shepherd his people. When God is shepherd, his sheep can rest in having already received the greatest blessing, which is to be loved and cared for intimately by the God of the universe.

Volunteering: a Gift, an Investment, and a Calling

Hayley Miles 5:10-5:30p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

Volunteering has influenced my personal development, Christian formation, and provided countless experiential learning opportunities. I feel its benefits firsthand, and yet, I find myself grappling with the questions: *What compels people to volunteer? Why do other demands of life seem more important than volunteering? What might be done to motivate more people to seek service possibilities?* My capstone acts as an exploration of volunteerism from a Christian perspective and an invitation for people to consider volunteering.

Rural Mobile Health Clinics: Overview and Future Directions

Easton Cooper 5:30-5:50p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

Rural healthcare has been developmentally behind its urban counterpart for decades. While improvements have been made, current measures are still creating an observable decline in the health of these communities. Gaining traction in the early 2000s, Mobile Health Clinics offer a novel approach to rural medical services by breaking down existing barriers and preserving the relationships, morals, and values deeply ingrained in the populations. Due to the local landing areas these clinics reside in, many problems continue to persist in this field. With further education and funding opportunities, Mobile Health Clinics can uphold the character of the community and slash the healthcare deficit at play in the United States.

Oral Session C3

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 144**

The Most Efficient Route to Visit 20 Sports Stadiums in the Country

Andrew Brosius 4:50-5:05p

Faculty Sponsor: Brian Albright

I am going to display two different traveling salesman problems. One of these will be finding the most efficient route to visit all 16 AFC stadiums in the NFL, as well as Fenway Park, The Dean Smith Center, and Crypto.com Arena. The other one will use these three places, along with the 16 NFC teams in the NFL. Then, I will compare the distances to see which route would be fewer miles to travel.

Exploring the Relationship Between Tardigrade Sizes and Chlorophyll Levels of Moss Tissue

Nathan Kurth 5:05-5:20p

Faculty Sponsor: Joe Gubanyi

Tardigrades are sub-macroscopic organisms that can be found in nearly every environment, yet some microhabitats may be more suitable than others. Moss serves as one such habitat; however, there is a lack of understanding of how its vigor, as measured through chlorophyll levels, affects tardigrades. In this work, tardigrade sizes in relation to absorption spectra of moss chlorophyll are investigated. Correlation tests are performed between tardigrade size metrics and absorption values at given wavelengths. Additionally, possible explanations for the observed trends are explored.

A study on tardigrade habitat preferences in relation to intergeneric growth form variation in lichen samples taken from Oak Glen WMA, Seward County, Nebraska

Simon Blankenship 5:20-5:35p

Faculty Sponsor: Joe Gubanyi

Tardigrades are complex, globally distributed microorganisms that are infamous for their ability to survive in extreme environments. Their habitats include substrates such as lichen, moss, and soil. Despite the reputation of the survival abilities of tardigrades, the scientific community has provided inconclusive results to the question of tardigrade habitat preference amongst different lichen substrates. This presentation shall present data from a study on the habitat preferences of tardigrade taxa relative to samples of two lichen genera taken from Oak Glen WMA, in Seward County, Nebraska.

Oral Session D1

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 142**

The Call to Justice

Brynn Holtmeier 6:00-6:20p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

God's justice is a central theme throughout Scripture. In today's world, social justice has moved away from true justice, leaving Christians to navigate if they are called to justice and what that looks like in the modern world. Scripture and writings by theologians clearly show that God's heart for justice requires Christians to do justice. This project includes recent writings by theologians and academics who have done the work of carrying out justice to demonstrate the call to justice that God has placed on our lives and how to join in this mission.

Christian Leadership Promoting Genuine Community

Grace Donnelly 6:20-6:40p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

Fulfilling our Christian vocations naturally requires us to be in community with other human beings. This capstone explores the ways Christians leaders can foster genuine relationships and promote loving community in all areas of life.

Imperfect Blood, Perfect Donor: A Scientific and Theological Study of Life and Regeneration

Mollie Urkoski 6:40-7:00p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

Research in hematology and regenerative biology suggests that blood can influence tissue repair and aging, yet these effects remain limited and cannot overcome mortality. This paper argues that blood functions as a complex biological system incapable of fully restoring life. These limitations challenge its longstanding association with vitality. In response, a theological framework is applied, drawing on biblical texts that identify blood as the bearer of life and atonement. While human blood sustains life temporarily, it remains fundamentally insufficient. By contrast, Christian theology presents the blood of Christ as the only complete and enduring source of life, fulfilling what biological systems cannot achieve.

Oral Session D2

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 143**

Restoring Wellness in Mind, Body, and Soul: a Holistic Approach to Health by Following the Life of Christ

Julia Hitz 6:00-6:20p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

The topic of physical and mental wellness from a Christian perspective goes largely unaddressed, especially in conjunction with the eternal health of the soul. Spiritual health should be prioritized through intentional care for the physical temple of one's body and mind, as rest for the soul can only be attained through balance with the mind and body. Research in this project is founded on the truth of God's Word, then connected to modern wellness findings by using the biopsychosocial model as a holistic approach. Being a disciple of Christ requires the Christian to follow his example in both body and spirit. The life of Jesus reveals a pattern for how to live in moderation by comparing topics such as fasting with feasting, working with resting, and isolating with gathering. Biological studies ultimately reveal how the body's ideal physical function is patterned after God's intricate design for the human being.

Building Back Self-Confidence for Women

Kyla Schleusener 6:20-6:40p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

I will be covering the underlying causes of low self-confidence in women, emphasizing the roles of family environment, societal pressures, cognitive patterns, and developmental experiences. I argue that confidence is not an innate trait but a skill developed through action, mindset shifts, supportive relationships, and psychological frameworks such as self-efficacy and growth mindset. Additionally, I highlight a faith-based perspective, asserting that true and lasting confidence is rooted in identity in God, providing a stable foundation beyond external validation or personal performance.

The Power of the Christian Creative

Avery Rothert 6:40-7:00p

Faculty Sponsor: John Hink

This presentation explores the importance of excellent craftsmanship in relevance to the Christian life. I am primarily looking at this through the lens of music, but I believe that the principles can be expanded to other kinds of craft. Within this discussion, it is important to define what exactly craft is and is not. I argue that this term describes a process of intentionally creating something that did not exist before. The role of worship in the Christian life provides the opportunity for excellent craft to lead others to praise the Lord by showcasing God's character of beauty and order. The relevance of the use of time in the modern, fast-paced world explores how spending a long time on something perhaps imparts some of its value. Working hard for God's glory illuminates the philosophy of work in relation to craft.

Oral Session D3

Monday April 27, 2026 **Dunklau 144**

Holding On: Affect, Motherhood, and the Experience of Loss in Käthe Kollwitz

Bailey Bianco 6:00-6:15p

Faculty Sponsor: James Bockelman

This project explores Käthe Kollwitz's *Death and Woman Struggling over Child* through a creative and interpretive lens grounded in affect theory, historical context, and theological reflection. Beginning with my original narrative, the paper invites the work to be experienced through embodied feeling before analysis, drawing on Polly Hember's understanding of affect as a pre-conscious intensity that shapes human experience. Attention is given to how Kollwitz's composition, particularly the compression of figures into a tight, ambiguous space where they are not always clearly defined as separate entities, creates a sense of both emotional and physical closeness, while her focus on mothers and children reflects the broader social realities of her time. Influenced by Max Klinger and discussed by scholars such as Daniel Siedell, Kollwitz's work is considered both socially grounded and deeply human. The presentation will include selected images from her broader body of work to support this exploration.

How Social Media effects language development

Grace White 6:15-6:30p

Faculty Sponsor: Vicki Anderson

To find out how exactly social media effects language development, we will be giving out a questionnaire that asks questions about how much time they spend on social media and at what age they started with questions related to writing skills, language habits that could be impacted by social media, vocabulary and how language was learned and developed, how they think social media impacts them and influences language in the world. This questionnaire will be given out through an online survey on Google Forms that will be sent out and posted on social media aimed at multiple age ranges and generations. The survey will be looking at the age groups and generations and analyzing how each group views social media in regards to their language development and how much time they spent on social media in their years of vital language development This will help us find out how social media has affected language development over the generations whether social media has been a more negative impact on language development if they were introduced to social media at a younger age or if the effect is the same if adults are introduced to social media and have frequent exposure to new vocabulary and sentence structures.

How do different household environments shape young adults' body image and their relationship with social media?

Mya Gawrych 6:30-6:45p

Faculty Sponsor: Sara Moore

This comprehensive literature review uses Eric Erikson's stage of isolation versus intimacy to examine whether there's evidence to support the idea that unresolved conflict in this stage could make people vulnerable and lead to body dissatisfaction, depending on the household they grew up in and the connection to social media. Findings will be presented in this comprehensive literature review on the vulnerability factors contributing to body dissatisfaction in relation to household environments and social media.