Magmatic Memory: A Narrative Study of Mount St. Helens 1980 Eruption
Ethan Benson, Junior, History
UW Honors Program
Mentor: Nathan Roberts, History
Mentor: Stephanie Smallwood, History

Mount St. Helens shook local communities and spewed volcanic ash into the sky for two months before it finally had its major eruption. In those two months newspapers eagerly tracked the activity, crafted a story, and relayed it to their audiences. When the mountain erupted on May 18, 1980, the world caught a glimpse of nature’s power and found a dramatic climax to their two-month story. In the immediate aftermath, accounts of what had happened took various forms, ranging from personal hymns to films, with each of them showing a different response to the eruption. These responses showcase a population reconsidering what it means to live alongside nature. Today, forty years later, Mount St. Helens’ story is still being told through a wide array of sources. In my research, I analyze works approaching the eruption, reacting in the immediate aftermath, and those which have come out in memory. I note the content of these sources as well as their framing to construct an analysis of how changing treatment of the Mount St. Helens story reveals society’s approach to nature before the eruption and how that approach changed in response to the events of May 18. I specifically focus on sources consumed and produced by the broader public, such as films and songs, using private correspondence or scientific conferences only as a source of what does not make widespread narratives. This approach encapsulates how people of various communities make sense of living alongside the natural world, and especially how they conceptualize sudden change events like volcanic eruptions. My research uncovers both flaws in the population’s conceptual relationship to nature as well as their tendencies to remember natural events, specifically Mount St. Helens, in a way that maintains or minimally changes the way the see themselves in the world.

Imagining the Future of Bangkok Under Climate Change Through Fiction and Policy
Rachel Suominen, Senior, Business Administration, International Studies
Mary Gates Scholar, UW Honors Program
Mentor: Jesse Oak Taylor, English

The location of Bangkok on the Chao Phraya River delta as it enters the north end of the Gulf of Thailand makes the city particularly vulnerable to climate change-induced changes in hydrological systems. Rising sea levels, low-lying land, and rapid development on unstable marshes - which has led to the city sinking at an annual rate of 1 to 2 cm - combine to make it necessary for Bangkok to grapple with how it will survive into the future. In this work, the majority of climate change research takes a quantitative angle, with dominant discourse often surrounding models, numerically determined ‘threshold’ points, and specific environmental impacts. It’s hard to overestimate the importance of scientific work on climate change; however, it is also true that ‘hard’ scientific data has limited influence on opinion and has not prevented the continuing climate crisis. In this project, I turn to fiction and narrative analysis as alternative, qualitative methods for examining problems of climate change. Building on the work of ecocriticism and literary theory, this project explores narratives used in policy and fiction as they depict Bangkok’s future under climate change in order to understand how narratives influence how we imagine - and thus, determine - potential futures. This thesis examines the stories that shape our lives and our role in creating and responding to them. In close readings of Pitchaya Sudbanthad’s novel Bangkok Wakes to Rain (2019) alongside the government-led Bangkok Resilience Strategy produced by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and the 100 Resilient Cities initiative, this project examines ecocritical claims to the virtues of climate change fiction in interdisciplinary research and argues for the importance of including qualitative values into humanity’s attempts to confront the challenges of climate change.
We are living in a world of gender, but it’s difficult to grasp its shape because of its fluidity and complexity. And yet, many of us are taught to believe that gender only exist as “either-or”, or that it is merely about our own identities. My research about gender in my gender and sexuality course GWSS 200 and GWSS 390 have offered me the tools to better articulate historic and current ideas and experiences related to gender and place. With this interactive zine project, I invite my audiences to question and interrogate assumptions about gender and our gendered world through words and images. I introduce a series of terms and their definitions accompanied by abstract graphics based on my own understanding and experiences. During the reading process, I encourage my readers to embrace and embody those terms through their deeply personal lenses and experiences, as well as through guided intentional practices, like making art pieces or writing poems with the terms and ideas provided in the zine. In so doing, participants examine their own vulnerabilities around gender in a safe space. Unfamiliar vocabularies are intended to evoke questions if not some confusions, but that’s the point. I hope to deepen our awareness of gender-related topics and ongoing issues through a humane, educational, and playful strategy, and eventually, cultivate more empathy within us.

Second Generation Asian-American Gender and Sexual Minorities’ (AAGSM) Perceptions of Emerging Adulthood
Anita Anni Mean, Senior, Psychology, Sociology
Mentor: Judith A Howard, Sociology
Mentor: Daniel Nolan, Sociology

Becoming an adult is a significant life course transition which brings much uncertainty to an individual’s life. Previous studies attribute this uncertainty to navigating a growing sense of agency, with more outlets to explore emerging adulthood and personal identities. As young adults increasingly engage with these opportunities, more time is spent away from their families. As a result, they are less susceptible to the parental, familial, and cultural pressures in the home, where parents enforce their expectations for adulthood onto their children. The lifestyle of young adults of Asian immigrant parents who identify as a gender or sexual minority (AAGSM) often conflicts with their parents’ ideal of a successful transition into adulthood. Yet, they find themselves poorly represented within gender and sexual minority (GSM) spaces, often downplaying their racial or ethnic identities to feel accepted. Scholars are only beginning to examine the outcomes of this identity conflict with AAGSM young adults, and so far, none have made a clear connection between the transition to adulthood literature and the (in)visibility of Asian-American coming-out narratives. The goal of my study is to understand how parental closeness and expectations for emerging adulthood affect how AAGSM young adults perceive their preparedness for adulthood. This goal will be met by conducting semi-structured interviews, asking participants to reflect on their parents’ and their own expectations for adulthood with the consideration of their AAGSM identity and relational closeness. As I am using grounded theory to conduct my analysis, the anticipated results of my study have yet to be determined. Focusing on AAGSM young adulthood is a promising area for future research, as it holds important implications on how to accommodate the intersectional experiences of individuals as culture continues to evolve.

Matsura Rieko’s Natural Woman and the Potential for Visibility and Representation of Queer Women in Contemporary Japanese Literature
Rebecca Victoria Le Veque, Senior, Japanese
Mentor: Justin Jesty, Asian Languages and Literature

In this project I completed last spring, I examine both reception and textual content of renowned author Matsura Rieko’s 1987 short story collection Natural Woman to explore what makes the work an affirmative portrayal of queer women, focusing on the joy, pain, and growth the women themselves derive from their relationships (rather than painting them in a scandalous or pornographic light). I first review reception from both queer women in Japan and literary critics at the time of the work’s release, revealing that the work was embraced by queer women at the time for its true-to-life portrayals but generally overlooked by literary critics for its queer themes. I then explore three main aspects of the work - the protagonist Y??ko’s position as a first person narrator of the three stories, the nonlinear ordering of the stories, and the use of space in the stories - to depict lesbianism as something that is intrinsic to Y??ko’s character and allows her to explore her identity and grow. These three aspects show Y??ko’s growth as a character, all while her continued attraction towards women is not seen as a barrier to her growth, but rather, a means of growth. Additionally, they make the perspective of Y??ko and the emotions of the women she is involved with the focal point of the story, giving queer women voices and depicting pleasure for their own sake. As works of contemporary Japanese literature depicting same-sex relationships between women have largely yet to be examined in depth, my hope is that this research brings attention to the potential for visibility of queer women in contemporary Japanese literature that is gained by examining what makes for portrayals of queer women that are affirmative.
How an Authoritarian Leader Brought Me Closer to Dad
Jasmine Mae Alindayu, Junior, Extended Pre-Major
Mary Gates Scholar
Mentor: Maria Elena Garcia, Comparative History of Ideas
Mentor: Jos?? Antonio Lucero, International Studies/CHID
Mentor: Adam Warren, History
Mentor: Lydia Heberling, English, University of Washington, Seattle

The Philippines is experiencing a new kind of era ever since the onset of Rodrigo Duterte’s presidency. Although the Philippines deems itself as a republic, the president exhibits an authoritarian nature. His tactics, rhetoric, and worldview have garnered attention and controversy, leading to a reevaluation of the country. Despite disagreement and condemnation from human rights groups and other entities, for many people Duterte stands as an effective leader in the Philippines. Even with his brutality, there is a strong presence of approval. In this project, I aim to explore and uncover what makes Duterte such a likable figure among Filipino citizens. A review of the literature reveals many plausible reasons. Duterte veils himself as a ‘common man.’ His efforts to combat the war on drugs are also admirable to many Filipinos; they feel much safer with some of his policies. Initially, my research was supposed to manifest in an academic paper. However, I found that one of my parents shared the same sentiments as other Filipinos. To highlight my findings, I chose to interview my dad and borrowing from the work of Ocean Vuong, I utilized the form of a letter to my father. With this project, I aimed to connect with my dad in hopes of understanding more about my people. Additionally, I was able to hear the genuine thoughts and background of my dad. This brought me closer to my roots, and my dad. This research contributes further to the broader question of what makes dictators and authoritative leaders, such as Duterte, ‘likable’ people to their citizens.

Community Activism and Police Violence in Seattle’s Major Print Media, 1960-1970
Marshall Vincent Bender, Junior, History, Germanics
UW Honors Program
Mentor: Stephanie Smallwood, History
Mentor: James Gregory, History

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in the United States galvanized millions of Americans to fight for a more free and democratic society, banding together to protest racial segregation and other forms of systemic racism such as police violence against minorities. Newspapers covered these actions extensively, spreading the message of civil rights across the US. People eager for change in cities far from the centers of civil rights activism in the South, such as Seattle, responded to this national political fervor by fighting for change locally. In Seattle, activists sought an end to job and housing discrimination, de facto school segregation, and police violence through non-violent direct action. Seattle’s major print newspapers, The Seattle Times and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer covered these issues extensively, spreading news and controversial developments to their readers. In my research, I analyze newspaper coverage on activism and cases of police violence which garnered a strong public demand for justice. With the support of other sources, such as the biographies of Seattle activists, the histories of local civil rights organizations, and studies on media coverage of the police, I construct an analysis of how these newspapers shifted their coverage of civil rights activism and police violence throughout the 1960s as a response to community activism. This critical angle focuses on how the actions of Seattle’s activist community influenced newspaper media, prompting the newspapers to include more activist perspectives in their news coverage. This research, therefore, displays the power that local activists held in influencing print media coverage of their actions, and with that, the influence that activists had to shift the public perspective towards activism in the 1960s in Seattle.