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Six UD students receive 2023 McGrath Award for research in Catholic intellectual traditions

Bridgett Dillenburger
University of Dayton, dillenburgerb1@udayton.edu

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Six UD students receive 2023 McGrath Award for research in Catholic intellectual traditions

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Friday April 14, 2023

By Bridgett Dillenburger '23

Six University of Dayton students received 2023 Fr. Jack McGrath, S.M., Awards for Research in Catholic Intellectual Traditions and presented their research at the annual Catholic Intellectual Tradition symposium Jan. 30-31 in the Kennedy Union Torch Lounge.

The McGrath Award recognizes students whose research in a Common Academic Program (CAP) course demonstrates rigorous, deep and creative engagement with thinkers, texts and/or themes associated with Catholic Intellectual Traditions (CIT). Students received a \$500 stipend along with the opportunity to present at the symposium.

"I think we had a really strong batch of McGrath awardees this year," said Timothy Gabrielli, Gudorf Chair in Catholic Intellectual Traditions and associate professor of theology in UD's Department of Religious Studies. "We had an engineering student, a business student and a

few in the College. It was fun to have a diversity in focus.”

Gabrielli said CAP is the “beating heart” of CIT at the University. Students from various majors make observations of CIT in their class work, but CAP courses provide additional pathways to create those connections in their education.

The 2023 McGrath Award recognized three students each in the first-year/sophomore and junior/senior categories. Research projects from spring, summer or fall 2022 CAP courses in any academic discipline were eligible for consideration.



The 2023 awardees:

- Elayna Walloch (bottom middle), a first-year entrepreneurship major from Hartland, Wisconsin. Her project, completed for the honors writing seminar taught by Associate Professor Tom Wendorf, is *The Catholic Church’s Teaching on Suicide*.
- Danny Napoli (bottom left), a first-year English and education major from Cleveland. His project, completed for the Roots and Development of Western Culture in a Global Context course taught by Associate Professor Elizabeth Ann Mackay, is *Divine Revelation as Interpreted by Medieval Mystics*.

- Eleanor Yates-McEwan (bottom right), a sophomore philosophy and urban sustainability major from Centerville, Ohio. Her project, completed for the Development of Western Culture in a Global Context course taught by Professor Susan Trollinger, is The 'Midnight Incendiary': America's Myth of Black Violence.
- Jules Carr-Chellman (top left), a junior philosophy major from Moscow, Idaho. His project, completed for the Existentialism course taught by Lecturer Scott McDaniel, is *Camus and the Absurdity of Desalination*.
- Jacob Kulig (top middle), a senior mechanical engineering major from Tallmadge, Ohio. His project, completed for the Metaphysics in Context course taught by Associate Professor Sayeh Meisami, is *Time in Religious Philosophy: A Comparison of St. Augustine and Avicenna*.
- Emily Rotunda (top right), a senior from Fallbrook, California. Her project, completed for the religious studies and theology capstone seminar taught by Lecturer Ethan Smith, is *Divine Labor and Delivery: A Woman's Christology*.

Kulig said it was strange to be recognized for research outside his mechanical engineering major, "but it's motivating to branch out and look into other areas." His project comparing St. Augustine and Avicenna, focused on arguments about the existence of nature of time. Although these philosophers came to similar conclusions, their approaches were different.

Kulig was inspired to explore the connection between St. Augustine and other philosophers of that time after finding most comparisons focused on later Catholic philosophers.

"I found St. Augustine and Avicenna had theories on the philosophy of time, so I went into research of why, how, and what their different ideas were and how they came to those conclusions," Kulig said. "When you take away the different wordings and arguments and focus on what they actually meant, they came to very similar conclusions."

Kulig said he uses the Catholic Intellectual Tradition as a backdrop to compare and contrast new ideas as he evaluates other religious perspectives.

"It's really interesting to see how much your upper level classes can bring in a diverse set of backgrounds and ideas," Kulig said. "It's nice to see that there are so many perspectives."

Kulig said there is a lot to be gained when students are able to select courses that interest them in the required CAP areas.

Carr-Chellman said his recognition reminds him of the progress he's made throughout his undergraduate career.

"When I think back on the essays I was writing as a first-year student, I realize this university has served me incredibly well and trained me to think in a different, and better, way," Carr-Chellman said.

He said the award has shown him how CIT can be applied to various concepts. His project on Albert Camus used an existentialist lens to observe solutions to climate change.

“The McGrath Award has made me realize the breadth of ideas that CIT encompasses,” Carr-Chellman said. “I am very fortunate to be here at UD where CIT is taken so seriously.”

The McGrath Award, named in honor of Fr. Jack McGrath (1935-2015) is sponsored by the Gudorf Chair in Catholic Intellectual Traditions. Gabrielli said the award highlights resources in CIT that may be surprising in their relevance to today.

“It’s an extended conversation that helps us gain an orientation to these big questions,” Gabrielli said. “It foregrounds reasoning for the common good and the life well-lived.”

The award committee included Corrine Daprano, associate dean for UD's School of Education and Health Sciences and professor for the Department of Health and Sport Science; David Fine, associate professor of English; Julio Quintero, director for inclusive excellence strategy and initiatives; William Trollinger, professor of history and Core program director; and Pamela Young, associate dean for the School of Education and Health Sciences and clinical professor for Educational Administration.

[Click here for more information about the McGrath Award.](#)



2023 Fr. Jack McGrath, S.M., Awards

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Elayna Walloch presents her research at the annual Catholic Intellectual Tradition symposium Jan. 30-31, 2023 in the Kennedy Union Torch Lounge.

