Fall 2021
Honors Conference
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COMMONWEALTH HONORS
at MASSASOIT COMMUNITY COLLEGE
In June 1997, the Board of Higher Education established a free-standing honors college of distinction at the University of Massachusetts Amherst called Commonwealth College. This organization has since approved Commonwealth Honors Programs at 24 public higher education institutions including community colleges, state colleges and all UMass institutions. As an accredited Commonwealth Honors Program institution, each semester Massasoit Community College’s honors students produce semester-long honors papers and projects. This booklet reprints the essays written by the recipients of the Fall 2020 Honor Garden Scholarship. This booklet also represents a portion of honors students’ research in abstract format and produced in various academic disciplines under the tutelage of students’ respective faculty sponsors.
HONORS ABSTRACTS

Each of the abstracts in this collection describes an individual research project of students enrolled in Honors courses. These Honors courses include Seminar in Ethics and individual Honors Directed Studies.

Student abstracts are the original work of the student and based on personal study and research.
STUDENT PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

Student: Matthew Bennett
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Autonomy at a Cost: Navigating Business Ethics in the Gig-Economy

Considering the ongoing conflicts with U.S. labor relations, this paper aims to explore the intricacies of business ethics in the gig-economy. The research process behind this paper included the careful analysis of case studies, statistics, interviews, and U.S. history to understand how the gig-economy became what it is today. While the gig-economy has revolutionized the way we live, the adoption of its fundamentals by big businesses undermines established labor laws and sets a dangerous precedent for the future of labor rights in America. Since the early 1930s, America has implemented legislature that holds businesses accountable to their workers; minimum wages and workplace safety mandates are some of countless measures in place to prevent corporate greed. However, a radical shift is transpiring across the business landscape following the success of big players in the gig-economy like Uber. Corporate giants like Amazon have seen that contract workers are not protected under many labor laws, and by misclassifying their employees as such, companies can circumvent their obligations as an employer. Regardless of some downsides, the gig-economy has made way for remarkable innovation and has brought opportunity to every corner of the nation. The fundamentals of gig-work are a double-edged sword, but the concept is here to stay. So, before society proceeds, we must ask ourselves what the cost of autonomy is going to be.
Self-Body Image: An Ongoing Issue throughout Mass Media

Throughout the years, self-image has been a concern for women and men. Society has created these changing “ideal body images” for women on how they should look. It affects people negatively to the point where they risk their health to perfect their bodies to meet societal standards. However, as the years progress, mass media has slowly accepted and now shows that it is okay to be who you are. Using research from Massasoit Library databases and social media, this paper examines and questions how the media has portrayed the “ideal” body image, and how its portrayal affected those influenced by it
Student: Ali R. Dacosta  
Faculty: Suzanne Morris  
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Teletherapy Efficacy

Researchers have questioned teletherapy efficacy since its introduction. The reigning questions are whether online therapy is efficacious as conventional therapy and will teletherapy produce the therapeutic effect, the capacity of therapy treatment to produce a beneficial effect? Research in teletherapy only spans a limited period from around 1995 to 2021. Originally, Telehealth was developed to serve remote and underserved populations, but it became widespread due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of online therapy research derives from external and internal validity in therapeutic outcome studies, process studies, the process of patient and therapist alliance and overall rapport, and subjective assessment studies. This research also includes quantitative and qualitative information from surveys and self-reports. Due to the pandemic, criticism surrounds teletherapy efficacy, albeit research evidence supports that teletherapy produces similar outcomes to conventional therapy, and therapeutic training and education are vital.
The Cure is the Problem: Over prescription of Opioids

In the last three decades, an increase in opioid based medications prescribed to Americans has led to devastating consequences such as addiction and death. An ongoing epidemic in the US, this problem is not being addressed as physicians and pharmaceutical companies continue the over prescription of opioids in cases where they may not be necessary at all or substituted with non-addictive or less potent alternatives. It is clear to see that although physicians are to blame for the over-prescription of opioids, there is another culprit. The methodology used was reports from CDC data, and researchers from the Mayo Clinic. The pharmaceutical companies are enticing physicians with rewards or gifts in exchange for the physicians prescribing their drugs. This billion-dollar industry is just that, an industry, a business, and not focused on the practice of healthcare. It appears that the patients’ well-being is forgotten or overlooked, and it’s time to stop this abuse in the interest of saving patients’ lives. Using scholarly papers, articles, testimonials and case studies, this paper will shed light on the importance of rethinking medical education, treatment approaches and holding profit-hungry pharmaceutical companies accountable for the opioid abuse.
In the United States, individuals of specific age groups are allowed to legally own a firearm. However, the misuse of firearms over the past and recent years challenges and contradicts the true meaning and purpose of the Second Amendment of the Constitution. The freedom of legally owning a firearm faces multiple obstacles due to the ongoing gun control process and the tragic ongoing events involving firearms. Approximately thirty-nine thousand Americans die every year from gun violence. That is a total of one hundred and ninety-five thousand Americans who have died over the past five years from gun violence. Using information retrieved from researching on the Massasoit Library databases, this research paper will mainly address the issue of public safety and firearms and the battle of different ideologies behind the freedom of legally carrying a firearm. Ethically, this issue is surrounded by those in favor of carrying a firearm for safety and by those who believe that the weapon inflicts more harm than protection.
In recent years, the number of scientists experimenting without a guideline has justifiably raised concerns about bioethical issues. Through an examination of case studies, journals and database articles, this paper analyzes the past and the possible future of gene editing. Since 2012, the leading technological development is CRISPR (clustered regularly interspaced palindromic repeats method) using the CAS9 method. This method could have a negative impact potentially eradicating disabilities, the human race and natural evolution. The long-term consequences of CRISPR and CAS9 are largely unknown, and from what is known, the consequences are severe. Without further research, we cannot fully grasp the weight of these types of decisions. Using the germline editing beyond research leads to differences of the engineered genome, thus deepening of the socioeconomic disparities. Currently, in 2021, the trajectory for the CRISPR and CAS9 are directed for non-therapeutic and superiority enhancement purposes, which many view as controversial. For these reasons, CRISPR, CAS 9, and genome editing should only be used for research and not for clinical reproductive purposes until worldwide governances are in place.
Prescribing Medications to Disabled Minors: Examining Controversial Treatments for ADHD

The intent of this extensive research project is to identify non-pharmaceutical treatments for children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Since ADHD diagnoses have increased, stimulants like Adderall are prescribed at greater rates. Recent studies have shown that adverse effects are present in some young patients being treated with these drugs. Due to these observations, there is a growing demand for a safer alternative. What prompted this research on ADHD, as well as how stimulants affect children was personal experience. Research was conducted in a variety of methods, including medical databases and psychology textbooks. One conclusion that was reached is that altering the way schools interact with disabled students is a healthier, effective long-term solution. Introducing school staff to proper coping techniques for children diagnosed with ADHD will be an effective substitute for children currently prescribed ADHD stimulant medication.
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The Ethics of Afghan Occupation  

What is the true price for freedom, for basic human rights, and the guarantee of living in a safe and secure country? What isn’t asked is what we think the price of freedom should be for other countries, especially those we claim to be fighting for in the name of their freedom. America has always tried to keep a strong presence around the globe; however, it was after WW2 in which its influence was undeniable. Utilizing data gathered over two decades of occupation in Afghanistan and the impacts it has had in both America and Afghanistan, this paper will examine the bloody cycle of revolution and civil war the people of Afghanistan have been locked in and America’s contributions to it.
With the recent rise in biotechnology research, programs utilizing technology such as CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) need strict regulation and oversight to ensure that eugenic practices are not implemented or created when studied. Through information within peer-reviewed articles and scientific journals retrieved from the Massasoit Library databases, this paper discusses the history of eugenics and the potential moral pitfalls of CRISPR technology, with a focus on potential committees and procedures that can be implemented to protect the population most at risk for eugenic experimentation.
Protestant Doctrines and the Call to Examine the Spirit through Sacred Dialogue

Protestant church doctrines are the written ordinances and beliefs of that particular faith or denomination. Since the establishment of the Protestant Church in the 16th century, these doctrines have been instituted by denominational leaders and echoed by local church clergy. These texts define the denomination's faith and the sanctity of God and Jesus. Additionally, they provide information on the church’s history, establish ecclesiastical authority and maintain the organization and structure of the church's individual affairs. These would include the roles of church officers and administrative duties. Despite their importance in affirming the faith and hierarchies of their denomination, to some, specific sections of these texts are disparaging, causing “heartache” in parishioners and potential believers. With a socially progressing society, countless have come forward expressing their hurt and dissatisfaction with the manner in which these sections are currently written. For example, sections found in the doctrines of denominations detailing their disapproval of women clergy, abortion and “same-sex practices” have been debated and pushed for revision. Utilizing the information collected from Massasoit Library databases, past and present denominational disciplines, manuals, and literary works from individuals vocal about these issues, this paper will explore the history of Protestantism, the issues presented, and the potential outcomes bound to occur if these sections are kept or dismissed in their doctrines.
Legal Reform for Reform of Marijuana Laws

Since the passing of Proposition 215 in California in 1996, many states in the U.S. have followed suit and legalized the use of medicinal and/or recreational marijuana. Before marijuana was legalized, those who were caught with possession of marijuana could have faced fines, probation, and jail time. Unfortunately, a largely disproportionate number of black Americans were victims of racial bias and many were arrested for marijuana crimes before legalization. Using a collection of articles, scholarly papers, and research from non-profit organizations like NORML, this paper serves to educate the public about the current injustice being done by our government and the actions that should be taken by each state after voting to legalize marijuana. It is our ethical duty to mitigate any past inequities that still affect those today, including those who are still incarcerated and past offenders. Each state that will, or has legalized medicinal marijuana, needs to move along the process of reassessing and reevaluating every past case that involves a marijuana-related conviction. After concluding that a case meets a certain legal standard that is approved in court, the convicted must be offered legal clemency, assisted expungement, and compassionate release if found acceptable by new laws.
The importance of nutrition, particularly to elderly persons, is emphasized by the many bodily changes that characterize ageing. Sadly, a few out of the many other African countries can boast of having a reasonable population of aged persons who are in good health, nutrition-wise. With the increasing number of older persons in African societies, there are hardly any governmental interventions in place to improve the health of ageing adults through proper dietary means. By consequence, the ability of these ageing individuals to have access to and adhere to a proper diet is dependent on their financial capacity. This truth is ubiquitous in the African continent, yet paid little or worse, no attention. This research hopes to unearth not only reasons for nutritional deprivation of older adults but other probable reasons for their neglect. Further, current studies have also not only contributed in projecting the vulnerable conditions of older adults in the African society but have presented justifications that underpin my interest in this research topic. To this end, research questions that create a pathway to viable solutions will be addressed in the course of this study. Materials that give insights to the state of ageing persons in Africa will be sourced from the Massasoit library databases, scholarly books, peer-reviewed journals, and official websites to support the research in this paper. There would likely be an unevenness in the use of sources as the point of focus will dwell largely on sources that provide the most relevant data.
The Commonwealth Honors Program invests in teaching students leadership skills as well as critical thinking skills suited for implementation across all professional endeavors.

Rachel M. Williams

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