

## Senior Seminar Topics 2023-2024

### **Jack Davis: “Cheating, Vengeful, Neglected: How the Saw Franchise Challenges the Post 9/11 World of Family Values”**

### **Consciousness and the Use of Fungi to Inspire Hope for Future Generations”**

Fungi have been widely explored and used throughout history for their nutritional, medicinal, biotechnological, and regarded spiritual properties

the twenty-first century. As the United States begins to adopt a more positive attitude towards mushrooms, the sociological and ethical implications of mycology, the study of mushrooms and fungi, are increasingly useful for finding a meaningful template for environmental injustices that have been and are still currently perpetuated against these populations since the era of settler colonialism. In acknowledgment of the past and with a specific focus on fungi use, this paper argues for the adoption of these beliefs to overcome current obstacles of neoliberal dominance, impacts of global warming, revitalization of the American Rust Belt, and the capabilities of fungi for the resolution of the widespread mental health crisis in the twenty-first century. In addition, this paper references an ethnographic analysis of Collar City Mushrooms, an established urban vertical mushroom farm and community space in Troy, New York. Use of material from interviews with the owner are applied as a case study to determine how these transformations might be achieved.

## **Ethan Johnson-LeComte “Capturing ‘Truth’: An Exploration of Photography in the Iraq War”**

This thesis deals with photography in the Iraq War of 2003 and its production of distinct themes, trends, and motifs in relation to humanization and dehumanization. At the outset of the Iraq War, the United States sought to visually dehumanize its Iraqi subjects. However, as the war waged on, atrocities like Abu Ghraib ironically served to humanize Iraqis as they were captured on camera. At the same time, American soldiers were dehumanized as these horrors came to light, amplified by the perception of fighting a controversial and imperial war. Later in the conflict, American soldiers were humanized by the repository of soldier-produced photographs which depicted the banality and everyday horror of military life in Iraq. These instances in turn worked to amplify the ethical obscurity of the Iraq War and the photography that preserved it. Through this dynamic, photographic intentions and public reactions to their products reveal the complexity of depicting modern warfare, and the issues of interpretation that arise from often-conflicting narratives. By using the Iraq War as a case study, this work demonstrates the constructive and destructive power of access to myriad photographic perspectives, and the ways in which modern visual coverage of conflict comes to bear on how we perceive it.

strategically differed, the fact of their existence at all is worthwhile and important to archive and write about so newer cohorts of Asian Americans, whether immigrants or generational, can look back and acknowledge that Asian American culture not only has our globally spanning diaspora.

### **Quinn Magnus: “From the Courts to Culture: Intersectionality and the Transformative Legacy of Serena and Venus Williams”**

The multidimensional identities of the Black female athlete create a unique experience in American sports culture. I argue that the careers of Black female tennis players, Venus and Serena Williams, in a traditionally white-dominated sport, have directly changed the landscape of tennis for contemporary and future Black female athletes. The successes of their careers, despite experiencing moments of inherent racism and sexism, have allowed young Black female tennis players, such as Coco Gauff, to experience opportunities as a young Black female tennis player become more evident when one compares the treatment of Venus and Serena by the media and public with their treatment of Gauff. This paper documents this shift in public acceptance and aims to answer the question: why has this transformation occurred between 2018 and 2023? Analysis of media such as press conferences, news articles and social media shows that the popularity and influence of Serena and Venus Williams have changed the way that Black female athletes are accepted into tennis culture. Through comparison of the reveal the striking change in acceptance towards the reaction to Black female athletes in tennis.

**Caitlyn Matthews: “**

Barbie is a complex blockbuster movie that explores various ideologies in modern American culture while maintaining an entertaining narrative. While Barbie critiques these social systems, it also uses them to generate a larger profit. Through extensive marketing strategies that targeted various gender and age demographics, Barbie became a part of American consumerism in a way that was unusually normal.