



FIND YOUR VOICE. SPEAK YOUR MIND.

SENIOR PROJECTS 2015

Margaret Bennett

For my senior project, I wrote and published a four-hundred page novel. As the topics of religion and the afterlife have always fascinated me, I decided to write a more modern take on Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* with a "young adult" twist that would interest more readers. I came up with this idea in the spring of 2014, but didn't really have a chance to work on my book at all during the summer as I was working at a summer camp. When I returned home in the fall, I began writing in earnest. The writing portion of my project took four or so months, I was finished by early December, and then the editing process began. My father, who was an English teacher, and Ms. Henderson, who is an English teacher, assisted me with the grammar portion of this, and Sam Hersh helped me edit for content. Editing took another few months, and I began researching publishing this spring. Though initially I wanted to have my novel published professionally, in the end I opted to self-publish due to time and financial constraints. I emailed Mme. Zale for assistance on this front, and she pointed me towards a website called Blurb that lets people upload and publish their books for a small fee. With the assistance of Blurb I formatted and published twenty physical copies of my book, which I sold at Exhibition in May. This project was amazing and *Hellbound*, my novel, is now available to purchase online. Though in the future I would like to have my book published professionally, I am truly happy with the end result of my senior project.

Siena Burgess

My senior project is an exercise in photojournalism about women who pursue alternative lifestyles. I printed silver gelatin portraits, took digital photographs and accompanied them with each subject's interview. The project explored the definition of an alternative lifestyle, and I included anonymous responses to this question, and others regarding alternative lifestyles. My prints, digital photos, interviews, and anonymous responses were compiled into a book. This format was inspired by Robin Bowman's book *It's Complicated: The American Teenager*. Like Bowman's book, my book does not include any of my questions, only the responses. I chose this format because I did not want to insert myself and any of my opinions into the interviews. The subjects of my book are all women who pursue alternative lifestyles. I chose this theme because I wanted to explore the relationship between alternative lifestyles, gender, marginalization, and privilege. I researched women who pursue and have pursued living outside the norm, and they greatly influenced the project, and the questions I asked the interviewees. In April I exhibited my prints at Bang Bang Body Arts for Northampton's Arts Night Out.

Marcello deLesdernier

For my senior project, I studied the 'Ndrangheta. The 'Ndrangheta is the most powerful criminal organization in the world. It is from Calabria, a region in southern Italy. It is heavily involved in the global drug, weapons, and human trafficking trades. It has also managed to deeply infiltrate Italian politics, having connections to former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. I chose to study the 'Ndrangheta because I have always been interested in organized crime, and I also wanted to involve Italy somehow in my project. Going into the project, I already knew a fair amount about the 'Ndrangheta, because I had been studying it independently for years. I also soon learned that there is a completely different side to the 'Ndrangheta that I had no idea existed. Studying the 'Ndrangheta was fun, and at times also scary, considering my family has known people who were involved. My final product was a book, titled "'Ndrangheta- The most powerful criminal organization in the world". My dream is to keep studying the 'Ndrangheta and organized crime, and hopefully pursue a career in anti-crime enforcement in the future.

Claire DiLeo

This year I have worked to launch the Shoots and Roots Investment Club. Shoots and Roots is an initiative led by students at The Academy at Charlemont, and supports The Academy, Sustainable Agriculture, and Impact Investing. Each week ten students gather to discuss these issues. Throughout this year the Club has hosted speakers such as Dan Rosenberg from the worker-owned coop Real Pickles, Terry Mollner, co-founder of the Calvert Foundation and board member at Ben & Jerry's, Anders Ferguson, an impact investment advisor, and John Waite from the Franklin County CDC. Along with hosting interesting discussions weekly at The Academy, members attend many events revolving around these issues such as Invest Here Now Meetings in Northampton, and Entrepreneur Showcases hosted by Slow Money chapters.

Shoots and Roots has a mission to support the growth and development of a resilient local food system, provide a valuable connection between The Academy and the local community, and educate students about impact investing and building a sustainable food system that supports food access, healthy nutrition, and good jobs for farm workers. This mission is in alignment with key elements of The Academy's newly launched strategic plan. The Academy hopes to educate students to be "capable stewards of the planet's resources", "increase community connections", "differentiate the school's non-academic programming", and nurture "global and civic minded citizens". Shoots & Roots supports these goals through its mission and activities.

In its first year Shoots and Roots has raised over \$1,600 through various fundraising activities including selling local products and contacting alumni. This year Shoots and Roots has decided to invest in the Pioneer Valley Grows Fund, which invests in local farms in the Pioneer Valley, and the Calvert Family of Socially Responsible Investment Funds, which invests in sectors including small business, women's empowerment, and green technology. I look forward to continuing my involvement in impact investing and supporting the local food system throughout the summer as a PV Grows employee, and I am excited to follow the activities of Shoots and Roots next year.

Grace Engelman

My senior project, "The Importance of Being Whole," is a study of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), the practice of removing parts of the female genitalia for non-medical reasons. Over one hundred million women around the world are survivors of this cultural practice that restricts female sexuality and causes extreme physical and mental harm. I first set out to better understand FGM and its consequences. Through various books and

articles, I researched FGM in various cultures and communities. I then interviewed three experts on the subject: a nurse practitioner who has worked with organizations working to end FGM in Sierra Leone, an FGM survivor and leading anti-FGM activist in Sierra Leone, and a researcher who designs FGM policies and prevention programs.

After the research phase of my project, I learned how to be an activist for the anti-FGM movement. I screened a short film and hosted a round table discussion at school to discuss human rights in relation to FGM. I also wrote an op-ed piece about FGM for *The Greenfield Recorder* in honor of International No Tolerance For FGM Day. I became involved in efforts to pass a Massachusetts law criminalizing FGM, and I wrote to various Massachusetts politicians asking them for support on this bill. To educate the school community about FGM, I gave an all-school presentation.

I decided to fundraise for the Katanya Women's Development Association (KaWDA) and Tostan, which work to end FGM in Sierra Leone and Senegal respectively. Through various means, including hosting the exhibition dinner this spring, I raised \$2,173 to be split between the organizations. The final event of my senior project was hosting an educational and fundraising event at the Arms library in Shelburne Falls. Two speakers, Alyssa Wright and Marina Goldman, both spoke about FGM and their organizations.

The focus of my senior project was the relationship between culture and human rights. I came to the conclusion that basic human rights concerns should always outweigh cultural and religious traditions. Nothing can justify this harmful practice, and every girl and woman deserves to be safe, healthy, and happy. This project is made up of a series of events, speeches, and writings. It taught me the basics of being an activist and advocating for a cause that I am passionate about. I learned how to fundraise, organize events, and raise awareness about a disturbing issue. This project has been the focus and highlight of my senior year, and I hope to continue it beyond high school.

Carly Hall

My senior project was building and teaching a Latin and ancient history curriculum to students at The Common School, an elementary school in Amherst, MA. I taught four classes to a group of eight students who ranged from 10-12 years old. In addition to teaching at The Common School, I taught two classes in the Latin I class at The Academy at Charlemont. My goals for this project were to learn about teaching different age groups and content, to discover what my strengths and weaknesses are as a teacher, and to build my own curriculum. My final project was a sample curriculum that I built based on my time teaching at The Common School, which was designed for a class of sixth graders that meet once a week for four months.

Sam Hersh

For my senior project, titled "Human Sex and Sexuality" I decided to create a sex and sexuality guide for Academy students. My finished product includes a guide and curriculum proposal for a complete sex-ed course that outlines my ideas for a class that would take place over the spring semester of the 8th, 10th, and 12th grades separate from the pre-existing Health class. Originally, this proposal was going to be the main focus of my project including lesson plans, syllabi and potential assessments. However, somewhere around the middle of the year when the pressure I put on myself to potentially have to create an entire Health curriculum became too great and my struggles with time-management began eating away the semester, my focus shifted from a proposal that I would hand-in to the faculty to a guide that I made for the students. The final draft of my project includes the curriculum proposal as well as a semi-comprehensive self-education

guide for students in grades 7-12 that addresses topics such as basic anatomy and physiology, contraception, gender and sexuality, and STDs/STIs.

Although I felt that I had a pretty solid background in a lot of the topics I intended to write about, I learned a lot from this project about sex-ed materials and classes. Even though I eventually scrapped the detailed proposal, I found a lot of interesting resources about structuring classes and building syllabi and I did a lot of reading and synthesizing source materials which is not something that I've had a lot of practice with. I'm grateful for the opportunity to practice these skills and hope that the students and faculty will find my project helpful and interesting.

Sophia Keins

My senior project focused on learning about and researching the Israeli Palestinian Conflict. I started from basically no knowledge about these two nations and throughout the duration of the past year I have researched the conflict. I interviewed seven different people (conducting five interviews) in the Pioneer Valley who are pro-Israel, pro-Palestinian, or pro-peace. The five interviews I conducted and later transcribed were with Keren Rhodes, Moshe Wurgaft, Paula Green, Aliya Cynon and Ghassan Sawalhi, and Samar and Gabriel Moushabeck. I researched the information discussed in these interviews, compiling my research into short essays that I put in my book after the interviews as a way to inform the reader about the conflict. Lastly, towards the end of the year I wrote a paper on the chaotic state of the Palestinian government and I went to Dartmouth Model United Nations to participate in the Israeli-Palestinian Summit.

I have learned so much throughout the year, both through research and hearing stories about life in Palestine and Israel, and I hope my book will provide valuable, clear and interesting information to someone who knows very little about the conflict.

Wesley Wilder McCoy

The primary goal of my senior project was to create a venue for kids here at The Academy at Charlemont to explore our natural surroundings through outdoor education. To achieve this goal I ran a studio block during the spring semester. Every week, I took kids outside and taught them new skills like tracking, fire-building, and map-reading. I received help from my project advisor Mr. Forbes who accompanied us on many outings and provided the necessary adult supervision. The challenges ranged from menacing sleet to the energy of eighth grade boys, but by the end I came up with a model for the Outings Club so that it can remain a studio block for years to come.

Wil Neeley

For my senior project I built a stitch and glue kayak. I choose this project because I have been interested in kayaking for a long time and have been doing the Zoar whitewater kayaking program at The Academy for many years. I learned what is required to work with wood, and how to work with fiberglass and epoxy. I also learned that when building a kayak, one of the longest steps is waiting for glue to dry.

Clay Selleck

As technology continually advances and programming and knowledge of CAD (Computer Assisted Design) programs, CGI (Computer Generated Imagery), drones, and modern medical advances in prosthetics are always changing, I decided it would be useful to explore something to do with technology. I originally wanted to build a bio printer for my senior project but for multiple reasons - including time - I changed my project idea to building a 3D printer. While I did not come up with the design, language programs or

formats for the printer, I did complete assembly of all the parts from various outlets to complete a functional, working printer. I learned lifelong skills and physics equations involving current diagrams. Along with the skills needed to build a 3D printer, I also created a book that contains the majority of my work throughout the year.

Erin Wooldridge

I always knew that I wanted to choose a senior project that I would feel passionate about. My senior project was about the voices of women in country music, because I think that country music serves an important role in providing women an opportunity to say what they want and how they feel. Keeping in mind that the opportunity I have had at The Academy to pursue my love of music might not transfer to my future years at college, I decided to take advantage of my last year and create an album that reflects my personal take on country music, along with the stories of women like Dolly Parton, Loretta Lynn, and Patsy Cline. To supplement the CD, I created a magazine with pictures from my trip to Nashville and articles that I wrote about the music industry and what aspects of country music I find to be invaluable.

I also included interviews with local artists as well as an interview with Ashley Monroe, who I got to see perform live with Miranda Lambert. Through my project I discovered a passion for the genre as well as an insight to what it would be like to have a career as a musician. I completed my six track album and found that I have the ability to write and record my own songs. My project allowed me to fulfill my goals for my senior year, and complete an album that I will be able to look back on later in life.